

It's all the Parents' Fault



This week of Pentecost has been an eye-opener with regard to views on the reason for the problems experienced by the young people in our community.

Firstly, we experienced the Pentecost lessons; at the same time *The Kingdom* became available with a strong emphasis on the youth.

We have had views expressed by Bishop Jo , Megan Winn, the writings of Mark de Fries of the University of Illinois.

All make challenging points, and also display encouraging signs.

Bishop Jo has championed the Synodical project of “ Turning houses into Homes” and as quoted by Setjea George Mahlaela, says that *“families are separated by hard demands of work. Some parents are too rich and too busy with other things. They try to make their children “happy” with expensive toys and loads of pocket money. Some children do not know what family is. There is no family sense and fellowship. Schools have therefore come to replace homes. School hostels are sanctuaries where some children hide from the unhappiness of their own homes and families.”*

At the level of St Francis, Megan Winn, outgoing Youth Pastor, writes in the Kingdom, quoting a lecturer at Pretoria University who quotes Mark De Vries of the University of Illinois :*“Increasingly isolated from the adult world, more children and youth simply fend for themselves, often under the dispassionate care of television and other technology, sometimes under the thumb of shameful abuse and neglect”. De Vries goes on to state “ the church often isolates the young people by separating them from the “church’ by having separate youth gathering, children’s church etc.*

She describes how the youth group of St Francis decided to get the parents and young people connected, and get them talking. They staged a Parents and Youth evening which in a nutshell concluded that the secret to a sound family was simply communication. She goes on to say that *“We need to get the parents to help with resources and to give of their time to pray for the youth. Adults need to be encouraged and motivated to want to help out. **The youth are desperate to find someone to look up to, trust and relate to.**” This begs the question: Why not their Parents?*

In another context, this group saw their role as *“Getting the youth involved in changing our families is vital, but I think we are missing the fact that many of the kids come to youth on a Sunday night for solace and a place away from home where they can get advice and talk about their problems in a safe environment, so the number one focus of the youth leaders should ultimately be the youth and their issues, and not their families”* Clearly, lack of support within the family is the cause of the flight of the youth to a refuge, where the focus is on themselves.

Archbishop Thabo last year cited the well-known scripture text **Romans 12: v4-5.** *‘For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another’* So it can be in a family, if we all make it, parents and children working together.

Whose responsibility is it?

Archbishop Thabo saw it as his responsibility to personally act as an example and role model to his children – he saw it as a parental responsibility. They also had responsibilities – like one limb to another.

This Lent, the diocese made a study document available that focused on building families – making Houses into Homes, which among other issues raised the issue of seeking out the good in family situations rather than bemoaning the bad. It followed a core Christian practice of “counting one’s Blessings”.

In St Francis, confirmation candidates took part and the Lent Course groups were deliberately made to be diverse. Discussion was frank.

A suggestion was made in the material distributed that we each write to each member of our family and identify to them the blessings they represent to us. A wonderful sentiment – but how to put it into practice? One of the young members of our group reflectively said, in response to an enquiry as to what had made an impression on her:

“I have very poor relationships with my family members and I have decided to go home and write a letter to each one pointing out to them the blessings they represent to me”

One feels sure that this would have proved to be a fruitful opener to communication within her family.

Positive actions speak louder than words

Can not each one of us, parent and offspring, act as role models, one to another, and to our associates, not by words (except those in letters making peace, identifying blessings) but by what we do and how we behave, and care one for the other?

Christ taught by being a role model. He put into practice what he said in words; deeds replaced words, and His example became followed, even sometimes without words being necessary. “Who is this who can cast out demons”?

The message of Pentecost

This Sunday was Pentecost and an inspiring slant was put upon the interpretation of the significance of this event in the life and development of Christianity.

Father Tim pointed out that in reality, the event was a uniting one. **Communication** made it so. Since everybody could comprehend the other, understanding emerged. Differences disappeared.

But not everybody understands the words, yet unity can still result.

It can easily happen, when you show the way – **let your deeds communicate the message.**

A parent’s role-modelling is their most powerful tool.

The maxim of the best parent is said to be: Don’t do as I Say, Do as I do .

May we put forward a suggestion to you, and each family member – write a letter to each of your family and point out the blessings they put forward to you – tell them the example they represent to you as a role modelling experience. Yes, it is possible to learn from your children, they are wiser from their experiences than we realise. It’s worth the effort!

Discuss the idea over a family dinner table – indicating that you care about how others care for one another.

Make it a family goal to THINK POSITIVE!