



LIFE MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford
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Life is not a math equation, part II

By Mitch Striedl

In part one of “Life is not a Math Equation” from September’s Life Matters, we looked at a *New York Times* article about the increased frequency of couples who conceive twins through In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) choosing to “reduce”, i.e. kill, one of the two babies in the womb for mere “convenience” sake. This article also highlighted the increased frequency of doctors who are complying with these killings. At the heart of this phenomenon lies a culture that has increasingly turned selfish and feeds that selfishness with abortion on demand, artificial contraception, and artificial reproductive technologies such as IVF.

As we celebrate “Respect Life Month” this October, we need to ask ourselves several questions. First, are we helping to feed into this selfish culture or are we trying to transform this culture by imitating the self-sacrificial love of Christ? Are we open to and trusting in God’s generous love, especially when given through the presence and love of those that God places in our lives? Do we reciprocate the gift of God’s generosity by being generous with our time and talent, especially with those that God places in our lives? Lastly, are we seeking to do God’s will or seeking to do our will?

We are all called to be “salt of the earth”, transforming the world by spreading the generous, self-sacrificial love of Christ and seeking to do the Lord’s will.

Just as salt can take a bland meal and transform it into a flavorful meal, so too are we called to transform the world, not conform to it! This attitude stands in stark contrast to the predominant attitude of our culture and the predominant attitude displayed in the *New York Times* article.

Also standing in stark contrast to this predominant cultural attitude is the Kilmer family. The life of this Catholic family of 13 from the D.C. area was recently chronicled by the *Washington Post*. While the angle of the article was to look at a unique family and wonder “how they make it work?”, what comes through most clearly is the generous, self-sacrificial love that the family members have for each other.

At one point in the article the mother, Jen Kilmer, talks about how people often ask, “How do you have time for yourself?” But as if it is second nature, Jen says, “But when you realize there’s more to life than yourself...I think time to yourself is overrated.” How different this attitude is from the couples chronicled in the *New York Times*, who lamented that having twins would be too much of an inconvenience and was not what they wanted. Jen Kilmer highlights how Christ’s sacrificial love draws us out of ourselves and moves us to think of others. We are called by God to open ourselves and be a gift to others, and often times when we do we will find that in fact “time to yourself is overrated.”

The article about the Kilmers also shows how the children value having many siblings. As one of the children puts it, “You always have someone to play with”, while one of the older children states, “When you’re close in age with someone, you have best friends.”

Often times in our world we can think that what is going to make our children most happy is living in a nice house or having the latest game or ipod, when in reality, the greatest gift is really our presence and love. What the children in the Kilmer family value most is each other, not material things.

The father, Larry, extols one of the other benefits of a large family. In a companion piece from LifeSite News, Larry states, "A large family helps to instill in a person many of the strong values and virtues that a society needs in order to survive and continue...in my opinion, the issue of putting others first is at the heart of a large family as you work and exist with other human beings in a close-knit environment."

Instead of seeing children, the disabled, the sick, and the elderly as a potential burden, we should see it as a gift of God's generous love. The presence of these individuals is part of how God is present to us and shares His love with us. Large families like the Kilmers help to illuminate these truths for others to see. But, it is not just the Kilmer's responsibility to help others see, it is all of our responsibilities as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Let us go forth in this Respect Life month to build a culture of life; a culture that is other-centered, not self-centered. Let us encourage others in word and deed to look at human life as unique and special; as an invitation from God to accept His generous love and imitate His generous love. Through it all, let us put our trust and our will at the feet of God and ask that His will be done in all things. As Jen Kilmer states in the article, when we trust in Him, "somehow God provides...in ways you don't even know."

Let us take the Kilmer family as an example of how family life is meant to be a reflection of our Triune God. If we do these things we can indeed transform our world and build a culture of life.

In the end, what we need to remember this month and throughout the year is that Life is not a math equation, but a unique and irreplaceable gift from God!!

For additional commentary on life issues, check out "Life Lines" on the first Friday of each month in *The Observer*.

How can you help the Respect Life Office?

1) The Respect Life Office is supported through the Annual Diocesan Stewardship Appeal. Your generous support of the annual appeal is crucial to helping the Respect Life Office fulfill its mission of building a culture of life.

2) Support the Respect Life Office by using GoodSearch, a cost-free internet search engine, at www.goodsearch.com and by selecting "Diocese of Rockford-Respect Life" as your charity to support. Every time you search the internet or shop online at your favorite online retailers through the website's GoodShop section, you will help raise money for the Respect Life Office, and it will cost you nothing extra!

3) Please consider making a lasting gift to the Respect Life Office by remembering the office in your will, naming it as a beneficiary of a Charitable Gift Annuity, and/or making a donation to the Respect Life Office Endowment. If you are interested in more information, you can contact Dave Hougan at 815-399-4300 or learn more at www.foundationrockford.org and clicking on the folder titled Planned Gifts.

4) Volunteer your time and talent with the Respect Life Office.

If you have any questions concerning all the ways you can support the Respect Life Office please contact us at 815-399-4300 or email us at mitchstriedl@rockforddiocese.org

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