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Working on Trust (7): An Unexpected Future

Parents' dreams and expectations about their children's future can sometimes conflict with what the children themselves want. Seventh video in the series "Working on Trust."

11/05/2018

When children need to decide about their future career in life, the first instinct of the parents can be to try to

influence their decisions, for their own good. Parents may wish to suggest a series of options that, according to their experience and opinion, are best for the child.

Each situation is different.

Sometimes a child wants to choose a path totally different from that of the parents, sometimes the same one. There may also be cases when a child finds it hard to decide.

In general, the imposition of one's own plans on children can lead to negative consequences, because the boy or girl is forced to walk a path that is not one that is freely chosen.

Parents need to support their children in their choices regarding their future after school, giving opportune advice but never overlooking their freedom. The educational challenge is to talk with one's children and get to know and understand their interests, and in

tandem with them to help them decide what is the best path for their future.

We propose some questions that can help you get more out of this video, when you see it with your friends, at school or in the parish.

Questions for dialogue:

- Do I know what my children's aspirations are regarding a future career? Do I show my support for their educational and professional choices, even if I wanted something else for them? Do I realize that the words of parents about a particular career can be very influential on children? Can I distinguish between my children's dreams and the dreams that we project on children as parents?
- Do I try to show interest in the educational and professional

future of my children with discretion, without putting pressure on one option instead of another? Do spouses talk about the career aspirations of their children? When children ask for advice about their professional future, do I help them understand that the final decision depends on them, while parents have the task of helping them choose well, accompanying them and highlighting their particular talents and pointing out what could be at stake in a specific professional choice?

- What kind of values do parents transmit to children about the meaning of study and work, professional horizons and the development of personal talents?
- What confidence do I show in my child's choices? How much

trust is there between the parents and their children?

Some suggested action-steps:

- Make sure that you and your spouse share the same ideals about respect for the freedom of your children in their professional and work options.
- Avoid forcing the conversation about your child's future plans.
- When you talk about their educational and professional future, find the right words to explain to your children that the responsibility for their future depends to a large extent on them, emphasizing your support as parents.
- Listen carefully to the reasons that have led your child to choose a certain path. Limit as much as possible, in this context, the advice regarding

what you consider to be the best option.

- If children are undecided, try to make them understand, together with your spouse, that the important thing is that the choice be theirs, not the parents’.

Quotes from Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church for reflection:

- Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person.

This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1738).

- The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. The family is a privileged community called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing"
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2206).
- When they become adults, children have the right and duty to choose their profession and state of life. They should assume their new responsibilities within a

trusting relationship with their parents, willingly asking and receiving their advice and counsel. Parents should be careful not to exert pressure on their children either in the choice of a profession or in that of a spouse. This necessary restraint does not prevent them -- quite the contrary -- from giving their children judicious advice, particularly when they are planning to start a family (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2230).

- And he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft (*Exodus* 35:31-33).

- Then David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and of good courage, and do it. Fear not, be not dismayed; for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished" (*1 Chronicles 28:20*).

Quotes from Pope Francis for reflection:

- The children, for their part, must not be afraid of the task of building a new world: it is right for them to want to improve on what they have received! But this must be done without arrogance, without presumption. One must know how to recognize a child's virtue, and parents always deserve honour (*General Audience, February 11, 2015.*)

- The parents of Jesus go to the temple to certify that the child belongs to God and that they are the guardians of his life and not the owners. This gesture emphasizes that only God is the Lord of individual and family history; everything comes to us from Him. Every family is called to recognize this primacy, guarding and educating children to be open to God who is the very source of life (*Angelus, December 31, 2017*).

Quotes from Saint Josemaría for reflection:

- Parents should also endeavour to stay young at heart so as to find it easier to react sympathetically towards the noble aspirations and even towards the extravagant fantasies of their youngsters. Life changes, and there are

many new things which we may not like. Perhaps, objectively speaking, they are no better than others that have gone before, but they are not bad. They are simply other ways of living and nothing more. On more than one occasion conflicts may arise because importance is attached to petty differences which could be overcome with a little common sense and good humour (*Conversations, 100*).

- Advice does not take away freedom. It gives elements on which to judge and thus enlarges the possibilities of choice and ensures that decisions are not taken on the basis of irrational factors. After hearing the opinions of others and taking everything into consideration, there comes a moment in which a choice has to be made and then no one has

the right to force a young person's freedom. Parents have to be on guard against the temptation of wanting to project themselves unduly on their children or of moulding them according to their own preferences. They should respect their individual God-given inclinations and aptitudes (*Conversations*, 104).

For further reading:

- **Authors Of Our Own Lives**

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(08/05/2025)