

SECTION 49
Upbringing of Children
Part 1: The formation of good behaviour.

You cannot become a good person if you are not raised as a good person. Therefore, in "Amoris Laetitia", ("About love in the family"), the Pope places great emphasis on what he calls "*the moral education*" of the child. In doing so, it is necessary to "*recall the importance of virtues,*" he says (AL 206). Such a virtuous life prevents a person from becoming a slave to his own selfish tendencies, he writes (AL 267). After all, human freedom is shaped, strengthened and nourished by a life according to human values.

During childhood and adolescence, education to be a well-brought-up person plays a very important role in the family. The family is "*the first school*" where children learn to embrace human values and make proper use of their freedom, states the Pope. (AL 274).

In the family you learn how to behave towards others, listen to others, share, tolerate, respect and help each other (AL 276). "*Many people act in a certain way throughout their lives, because they have adopted this way from their childhood on and consider it to be good*" (AL 274) "*That's how I was taught*". "*That's what I learned to do*". (AL 274).

Children learn to behave well and adopt human values, when parents and other educators enter into conversation with them, writes the Pope. You teach children the importance of human values, principles, and norms not by imposing them from above as commands or instructions ("Do it because I say so"), but by talking to them about what they do or experience themselves. In doing so you must speak a language that children can understand (AL 264).

By talking about it in the family, children also learn to listen critically to the messages conveyed by the various means of communication (AL 274).

A Reflective Moment

" Parents rightly entrust
the basic education of their children
to schools.

But the moral education of their children
they can never completely pass on to others.

Someone's moral development
is ultimately based on the experience
in the family,
that parents are trustworthy.

Through the love for their children
and the good example they give
parents will instil in their children
trust and loving respect.

When children no longer feel
that, despite their mistakes,
they are important to their parents;
or no longer feel
that their parents are genuinely concerned for them,
they will bear
deep pain and a great burden
on their way to adulthood.

The feeling of being left to their own devices
causes more pain to children
than the dressing-down they sometimes will get
when they've done something wrong."

(Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, n. 263, free translation).