

Thoughts on Sharing the Faith with Loved Ones

By Mrs. X, a member of the Catholic Church, addressed to other members, 11-5-2023

Have very low expectations for conversations with your family/friends.

It's been a long, challenging road to get to where you are today, a member of the true Catholic Church. You had to care about it. You had to really want it. You had to work for it. You may have traveled a long way to search for God. You had to listen to audios and videos and read articles. You had to fight for it.

You had to be uncomfortable with loved ones over the Faith. You got into arguments. You got so angry over the nonsense being spewed forth against God's honor that righteous indignation welled up in you and you courageously spoke the truth, fearing the near-term result of doing so, but you spoke it anyway. Maybe you were mocked, lied about to others, humiliated, shunned, threatened, hated, screamed at, punished in various ways, physically harmed, etc. You had to suffer the pain of realizing all the lies you've been fed for your entire life. It was draining and exhausting, and sometimes dreadfully lonely.

Working on our own souls does come first; I remember a guy so long ago saying, "it's an individual pass/fail test." That is, our particular judgment before God. That is really all that matters; we will have to answer for every sin before the face of God. In the end, we don't have the power to make our family desire the truth and change their lives in order to live the faith. It was a very difficult lesson for me. I kept thinking that if only I could state things more clearly, more charitably, more humbly, more succinctly, etc., perhaps the result would be better. None of that matters if they hate the message of the Catholic Faith and they hate the True God. They will pay the ultimate price if they do not repent and convert before death. That's it.

God gives each of our family members enough loving, merciful grace to save his soul, if only he will cooperate with it. Everyone goes online every day. It has never been easier to learn anything for free. Our relatives could also work toward the goal of finding out about the Church, but with their free will, they choose not to. They choose not to go on the website. They choose not to engage in any discussion about faith or morals. They avoid us. We are sadly forced to conclude, at least for now, that they are of bad will; their hearts are hard.

When one comes into the Catholic Church for the first time, God takes away past sins and all the punishments due to them. What a tremendous gift! We can never thank God enough for his mercy toward us, his loving guidance, his small and large helps in tumultuous times. In charity, we pray that our loved ones can also experience this. But remember, as Br. Richard says, "you don't need them. They need you."

What Catholic charity is expressed to loved ones who are given the chance to be instructed! God is the one who gives us the courage and strength. On my own, I'm just a coward! When things became difficult with family, I asked God to help me to go on offense!!! (my children were in a lot of sports!)

Each soul here is the one who made the decision to put God first. I know it is painful to lose your family/friends/former parish life/neighbors. It is even more painful to come to understand that they don't want to have a real discussion about the Faith. They want worldly things, like a party after a sacrament, social events and friends at church, and for everyone to "get along." Jesus said

He came to bring the sword in families. “Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword: “For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s enemies shall be they of his own household.” (Mt. 10:34-36)

I pray that God will give you the strength and courage required to separate from family members of bad will. Our Lady of Sorrows was a great consolation to me when undergoing these trials. I also thought of Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane when his closest friends kept falling asleep. Of the Apostles, only the Beloved St. John was with Jesus at the foot of the Cross. St. Peter did in fact deny Our Lord three times. Then of course, there is the contradiction of Palm Day vs. Good Sixth Weekday. Our Lord was viciously hated, and He was perfect. Through many long years of challenges in my home, I knew God was with me, protecting me, and giving me the words to say when I had none left of my own. I asked the Holy Spirit to give me the words, and then after yet another disappointing family conversation, it was so clear that I had had help! The truth is that words do not exist to soften a heart of bad will. That was a very tough reality check for me. God gave each of us free will, and God doesn't interfere with it. We each get to choose. Most choose themselves over God, for all ages.

From Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:10-12):

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake, be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.”

I used to read this over and over when things with the family became so difficult. Also, it may be good to repeat this part from the Corpus Christi that we pray each morning after Prime: “Passion of Christ, strengthen me.” God showed me that I cannot do anything by myself, but that it is His strength I need to handle these situations. There were countless times when I did not have the right words to say, but simply asked the Holy Spirit to give me the words I needed at the time, and He did. Every time. The hard truth is: It is not the exact words you speak, or the “tone” of your voice, etc. If the other person is not of good will and does not care what God says about a topic, or hates God’s commandments, it does not matter which words we choose. Their problem is not with us, it is with God and His Holy Laws and His One True Church.

RJMI Bible Commentary, excerpts taken from pages 1063-1064 from The Holy Catholic Bible, revised by RJMI

Hard Hearts

“Therefore he hath mercy on whom he will; and whom he will, he hardeneth.” (Rom. 9:18).

He hardeneth: Not by being the cause or author of his sin, but by withholding his grace and so leaving him in his sin in punishment of his past demerits and obstinately evil heart. Hence God hardens hard hearts; that is, hearts that have been given many graces and chances to repent but would not; and thus because of their obstinacy, God withdraws his grace and hardens their hearts even more.

“But the house of Israel will not hearken to thee because they will not hearken to me, for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and an obstinate heart.” (Ez. 3:7)

The danger of men with hard hearts is that God will pull all his grace from them and leave them in a graceless state until they die and thus they will end up in hell. If God takes away all of his grace from an obstinate (hard) heart, then that heart is as hard as it can get and thus cannot repent or do anything good with a good motive in such a condition unless God returns to it by bestowing his grace upon it. And if God lets a hardhearted man die in such a state, then that is a sure sign that this man was an ultimately evil soul (of the reprobate), as known to God even before the world was created, and thus is justly damned to hell:

Therefore, it cannot be said that God wants ultimately hard-hearted men (the reprobates) to be damned, as God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3- 4), but that God in his foreknowledge knows all things and thus knows who will cooperate with his grace and be saved and who will not. Above all, let no one say that God is unjust in anything that he does, even though we may not be able to comprehend all that he does because of our lowly knowledge and comprehension compared to God's.

For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men

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