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Working on Trust (5): "Can I have a party?"

A great opportunity for dialogue between parents and children can arise even when tensions exist regarding their choices, such as when planning a big birthday party or other celebration. Fifth video in the series "Working on Trust."

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"Working on Trust" is a series of videos drawing on the teachings of

Saint Josemaria, who was an ardent defender of freedom and the educational role of parents. The videos suggest topics for conversation between spouses and with other families. Each video is accompanied by a selection of texts for reflection, questions for discussion, and links to further material.

Seeing one's children growing up is both beautiful and challenging. We are not always ready for the choices that come with maturing in life. It's clear that growth is something personal, but it is also the job of the parents to be close to their children, to help and accompany them.

Adolescence is often characterized by a lack of dialogue between children and parents. If certain moments are handled well, however, they can

provide wonderful opportunities to establish a closer relationship. An empathetic attitude offers us the resources we need to know how to listen, to learn from and to better understand one's children.

Below are some questions that can help you take advantage of this video, when you see it with friends, at school or in the parish:

Questions for dialogue:

- What can I do to better understand how my children think? What model of life can my children look up to? And what about their friends?
- Do I have an attitude of openness toward my children? Do I try to express my ideas in our conversations in a way that is adequate to their understanding? Am I aware of the fact that I can hurt my children through my lack of

trust? Do I accept and praise some of their proposals? Do I try to understand the motives behind them?

- What kind of parties are worth having? Why is it important to celebrate reaching adulthood? How is it typically celebrated today in your part of the world?
- What might be an opportune way for parents to help their children become aware of and participate in the family's economic situation? How can the economic aspect of organizing a party become a learning experience? Can you explain with naturalness the point behind living temperance? What about when the families of your children's friends set an opposing example?
- How do you normally handle the material needs of your children at home (i.e. when

they ask for money, clothing, extraordinary expenses ...)? How can you respond to your children when they say they would prefer to live like other families that embrace a different kind of lifestyle? Do you have family traditions when it comes to celebrating birthdays, graduations, etc?

Some suggested action-steps:

- Make sure that you and your spouse have a shared vision about the lifestyle you would like to adopt with regards to your children's parties, above all with regard to the most important milestones.
- Don't wait for your son or daughter to propose one single option: try to anticipate with creative proposals that put the family and friends at the center.

- Listen to your children's proposal attentively, as well as their motives for wanting the type of party they would like to organize, even if you know it will be impossible. In the moment of dialogue, do not appeal too much to the differences between current customs and the customs of your youth: it's not a very convincing argument.
- Children are very attentive to their parents' attitude in a conversation. Don't close the door, and don't take it for granted that your reasons as a parent are immediately obvious.

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

- “What will you do on the festival day, the day of the LORD’s feast?” (Hosea 9:5)
- “Therefore I praised joy, because there is nothing better for mortals under the sun than to eat and to drink and to be joyful; this will accompany them in their toil through the limited days of life God gives them under the sun.”
(Ecclesiastes 8:15)
- “Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?” “I am” (Rite of marriage)
- “Parents’ respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young

children and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2228)

Quotes from Pope Francis for reflection:

- “Family life itself, regarded through the eyes of faith, looks better to us than the toils it entails. It looks to us like a masterpiece of simplicity, beautiful precisely because it is not artificial, not false, but able to incorporate within itself all aspects of real life. It looks to us like something 'very good,' as God says at the completion of the creation of man and woman (cf. Gen 1:31). Thus, celebration is a precious gift of God; a

precious gift that God gave to the human family: let's not spoil it!" (General Audience, 12 August 2015)

- “In a society so often intoxicated by consumerism and hedonism, wealth and extravagance, appearances and narcissism, this Child calls us to act soberly, in other words, in a way that is simple, balanced, consistent, capable of seeing and doing what is essential. In a world which all too often is merciless to the sinner and lenient to the sin, we need to cultivate a strong sense of justice, to discern and to do God's will. Amid a culture of indifference which not infrequently turns ruthless, our style of life should instead be devout, filled with empathy, compassion and mercy, drawn daily from the wellspring of

prayer.” (Homily, 24 December 2015)

Quotes from Saint Josemaría for reflection:

- “Listen to your children. Give them your time, even the time that you have reserved for yourselves. Show them your confidence; believe whatever they tell you, even if sometimes they try to deceive you. Don't be afraid when they rebel, because, at their age, you yourselves were more or less rebellious. Go to meet them half-way and pray for them. If you act in this christian manner, they will come to you with simplicity, instead of trying to satisfy their legitimate curiosity by taking it to some rough or vulgar friend. Your confidence, your friendly dealings with your children,

will receive an answer in their sincerity in dealing with you. Then, even if there are quarrels and lack of understanding, they will never amount to much; and this is what peace in the family and a truly christian life mean.” (*Christ is Passing By*, 29)

- “We children of God, who are citizens with the same standing as any others, have to take part fearlessly in all honest human activities and organizations, so that Christ may be present in them. Our Lord will ask a strict account of each one of us if through neglect or love of comfort we do not freely strive to play a part in the human developments and decisions on which the present and future of society depend.” (*The Forge*, 715)
- “It is urgent that we strive to rechristianise popular celebrations and customs. It is

urgent that public amusements should no longer be left to face the dilemma of being either over-pious or pagan. Ask God to provide labourers for this much-needed work which could be called the 'entertainment apostolate'." (*The Way*, 975)

- "It is essential for them to realise that simple and heartfelt piety also calls for the exercise of human virtues and that it cannot be reduced to a few daily or weekly pious acts. It must penetrate our entire life and give meaning to our work, rest, friendships and entertainment, to everything that we do. We are children of God all day long, even though we do set aside special moments for considering it, so that we can fill ourselves with the awareness of our divine filiation which is the essence of true piety. I was saying that

young people understand this very well. I might add that anyone who tries to live it will always feel young. A Christian who lives in union with Jesus Christ can relish, even if he is eighty, the words we pray at the foot of the altar: 'I will go unto the altar of God, of God who gives joy to my youth' (Ps 42:4).”
(Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá, 102)

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