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# 10 Things Pope Francis Wants You to Know About the Family



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*Imprimi Potest:*

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Denver Province, the Redemptorists

Published by Liguori Publications  
Liguori, Missouri 63057

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p ISBN: 978-0-7648-2639-9

e ISBN: 978-0-7648-7071-2

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of the Redemptorists. To learn more about the Redemptorists, visit [Redemptorists.com](http://Redemptorists.com).

Printed in the United States of America

20 19 18 17 16 / 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition

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### 3. Fathers: “Waste time” with your children

Pope Francis has addressed the role of fathers rather directly many times, offering advice to dads and pointing out several concerns he has about how they help raise their children around the world. The pope has emphasized that fathers must love their children, spend time with them, and be good role models. Most of all, the pontiff tells dads: Don't be absent from your kids' lives.

Francis addressed fatherhood head-on several times during his weekly audiences in 2014 and 2015. He also spoke to fathers directly in March 2015 on the occasion of the feast day of St. Joseph, Jesus' earthly dad.

In two separate audiences in January and February 2015, the pope focused first on problems he identified with fathers today before highlighting some beautiful images of fatherhood he has seen.

Among the negatives he pointed out on January 28, 2015, Francis said many fathers today leave their children “orphans” by focusing too much on work and not finding time to “waste” with their kids. The children, the pope said, “are orphans in a family because their fathers are often absent...from home, but above all because when they are home they don’t act like fathers.”

Such fathers, he continued, “do not dialogue with their children, they do not fulfill their role as educators, they do not give their children, by way of their example and their words, those principles, values, and rules of life that they need like bread.”

Comparing today’s situation to the past, Francis said that before, fathers were sometimes too authoritarian and did not help their children take responsibility for their own lives. “As often happens, we have gone from one extreme to another,” the pope said. “The problem today does not seem to be so much the overbearing presence of fathers as much as it is rather their absence, their hiding” from their responsibility as parents, he continued.

The world today sometimes seems like “a world without fathers” where men are so focused on their jobs or personal fulfillment that they neglect their families, Francis said.

Focusing more on the positives of fatherhood on February 4, 2015, the pope said that while fatherhood is not easy, it is like a joy that overcomes every hurt or wound. “It is a joy that more than makes up for the hard work, that overcomes

every misunderstanding and heals every wound,” Francis said.

Fathers, the pope said, are there for their kids in all situations.

Detailing that availability, Francis said: “When they play and when they work hard, when they are playful and when they are distressed, when they are communicative and when they are taciturn, when they are daring and when they are afraid, when they have strayed and when they have found their way again.”

But, the pontiff also warned fathers against becoming too level with their children, saying that fathers cannot be “weak” or “yielding” with kids who need punishment.

Then, in what has become an infamous phrase because of its seeming acceptance of corporal punishment, the pope recounted the story of a father who he said sometimes slapped his children but did not do so on the face.

“Sometimes I have to hit my kids a bit, but never on their face so as not to humiliate them,” Francis quoted that father, saying that man respected his kids by punishing them in a just way that allowed them to “move forward.”

The pope also spoke of fathers who see that their children have made poor choices in life but know they cannot do much to help them. Those fathers, the pontiff said, have dignity in the tenderness of their wait for their child to return to a better path.

“Yes, fathers must be patient,” said Francis. “So many times there’s nothing left to do but wait, pray, and wait with patience, tenderness, magnanimity, and mercy.”

Speaking on St. Joseph’s Day, March 19, 2015, the pope said fathers and mothers help their children grow in “wisdom and age and grace.”

“I ask that you have the grace to be very close to your children, letting them grow but being by their side,” Francis told the fathers present in St. Peter’s Square for that weekly audience. “They need you, your presence, to be there, your love.”