

# St. Joseph Church

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All forms of community draw from experiences in the family using the language of family to describe community relationships, e.g. father, mother, sister, brother. As the basic unity of society, the family exerts the greatest influence in shaping an individual's philosophy of common life and common good. In some societies, the tribe is the form of family most familiar; in others, including the United States, the nuclear family (parents and children) make up the usual household. Other family styles include the commune and the extended family.

What does the family offer that can prepare one for successful community living? In a best case scenario, family members receive acceptance, a sense of belonging, instructions in being human (using intelligence and will), sharing, help when afflicted, nourishment of body and spirit, protection and a certain sense of security, and a stable environment in which to mature. Unfortunately that is more ideal than real.

Broken marriages and childbearing out of wedlock lead to single parent households. Drug and alcohol abuse cause unemployment and underemployment with Poverty close behind, these and other stresses result in uneven development and loss of the ideals listed above. Even when both parents are present but dysfunctional many negative values become ingrained in family members. Some families teach that the individual needs to be strong and entirely self reliant; others pamper their members into self-centeredness. Fears, arrogance, loss of stability, lack of responsibility afflict each one. The family does not prepare its members in these conditions to become healthy community members .but rather leaves them candidates for exploitation by gangs, cults, and individuals who will promise acceptance and approval.

Who can one trust? What instruction leads to a fruitful life as an individual and a community member? How does one provide for sufficient security without abandoning freedom?

To be continued