

Service in the Family
Deacon Tim Sullivan

Marriage requires a spirit of sacrifice on the part of the spouses, and so does the interaction between all the family members.

On the morning my oldest daughter was married, we arranged to have a priest friend offer Mass for our family. During his homily, the priest used FAMILY as an acronym, explaining that the letters in FAMILY stand for “Forget About Me, I Love You.” My children often recall that part of the homily.

With all of our modern appliances, it is more difficult today for parents to think of ways their children can contribute to the well-being of the family. Parents often decide that it’s just easier to do something themselves rather than train one of their children to do it.

This topic was once discussed in a men’s group I was part of. During our meeting, I told the men, all fathers, “If you don’t give your children a chance to do something for the whole family, you’re stealing from them.” My point was that every child needs to know that he or she adds real value to the family. The family needs them.

One of the men in the group was motivated by our discussion to tell his teenage son he needed to paint his own room. The boy objected and argued that this request was totally unreasonable. The father persisted, the son relented, and the boy painted his room. The father told us at a later meeting that every time someone came to the home now, his son took them upstairs to show them the room he painted.

The service of the members of a family within the family will eventually lead to service of others outside the family. Generosity and self-sacrifice become habitual and contagious. It’s very gratifying for parents to see the positive impact their adult children are having in their respective communities.

“Jesus, inspired by Your example and sustained by Your grace, may our family cultivate and share a spirit of self-sacrifice, generosity and service to one another and to those outside our family.”