

Pasquaney *archives*



I want to talk to you today about family, and what I think a family value is and what that means.

So much of who we are, is where we've come from.

A family is like a country. Each has its own language, its own culture, its own size and shape. A family has its own population; its rulers, its laborers, its artists, and sometimes its criminals. Like it or not, we are all from our own unique country, all from our own unique family, whatever it looks like. Like countries, sometimes families can be similar to one another. The United States and the United Kingdom share a common language – kind of. Brazil and China do not.

Our differences can cause us headaches and separate us.

Each day walking around the hillside is like being at the Family United Nations. One moment, you bump into someone whose background is similar to yours, other times you bump into someone who may as well be from the other side of the Earth.

Perhaps most importantly, like every country, every family has its history. Napier once wrote that, “In each family a story is playing itself out, and each family's story embodies its hope and its despair.”

So we not only come from different places, but we are each caught up in the plot of our own lives, the story of our own family. And just like a book, you cannot read a person's story by looking at their cover, by looking at the outside of them. We must be willing to listen and open our pages to one another for that to happen.

... If you were to ask me what the hardest part of life is, I would say it is watching those you care most about suffer and feeling powerless to help them. However, just like on a hike, in our moments of utmost despair, when we feel physically broken and emotionally spent, we learn to put one foot in front of the other and to keep going. As Gordon Matthewson told me about the Long Walk, you learn that the hard parts come and go, and that you can survive them. In the same way, the hard parts come and go for our families.

So, back to the original question, what is a family value? Well, I can tell you that in my family, the greatest thing to be valued was each other, no matter what. We valued laughter and laughing together. As Shaw said, “If you can't get rid of the family skeleton, you can at least make him dance.” We knew that each of us had deep flaws, and had suffered greatly – but we believed that a measure of a person is not just the heights to which they had risen, but also the depths to which they had sunk. We valued honesty, the kind of honesty that looks in the mirror and sees its beauty side by side with its warts. We always valued self-improvement – not being satisfied and saying, “Oh that's just how I am and I can't change that.”

Two thousand, five hundred years ago Confucius wrote that, “To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.”

This last point is where camp comes in. Here we learn to set our hearts right. Here we learn and get to practice in a safe place the values of honesty, loyalty, unselfishness, sensitivity to others, grace and humility. Those

values form the backbone of a family, a nation, and maybe someday the world.

This place is the greatest luxury in the world. Where else do you have a community of people whose daily purpose is to help you grow to become your best self? Embrace that luxury, I beg you, do not take it for granted like a spoiled child sleeping upon a hill of diamonds.

Learn each other's stories. Seek to understand and live by the values that we share here. Grow as a person. And when you leave the hillside, strive to put what you can aright, one step at a time.

Let us rise and sing Hymn number 126, For all the Saints.