

## LIFE SITUATION nº 2: Catholic parents and children without religion



Jaime and Paquita have always been very good Catholics and committed to their parish. Now that their children have grown up, they see with concern and sadness that they have departed from the faith; they criticize their parent's religious practices; they do not want to share in family prayer. And they plan their lives as couples without being married. Because of this, Jaime and Paquita believe that they have made mistakes in the education of their children. The children even question if it is necessary to have some religion to exist! What do you think about this? What would you advise this couple?

### 1. Objective of this life situation:

Place oneself in situations that are generated in a family when the children of the religion in which they were educated become separated from it and when they come to question the religious practices of their parents. Even when they question the necessity of having some religion to exist.

### 2. Short prayer time:

Begin this journey of reflection and enlightenment with a prayer, asking the Lord to be with you and let Him reveal what parents in these conditions today need to know in order not to shake their life of faith and to strengthen themselves as disciples / missionaries, so that their children do not lose the acquired moral values of their parents (that is, the human and Christian formation received from their parents).

### **PRAYER - put yourself in the situation of Jaime and Paquita, or any other couple or family that has children living with other religions or even with no religion:**

O God, Father of all, your law reminds me of the sacred duty of educating my children according to holy religion for the practice of virtues and of heaven.

They belong more to You than to me. One day, you will ask for them from my hands. Your word says: "Anyone who does not look after his own relations, especially if they are living with him, has rejected the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim 5: 8).

In addition to the temporal well-being of my children, you entrusted me with the greatest responsibility: the sanctification of their souls.

Help me, Lord, and enlighten me so that I may know my obligations and grant me the firm will and the utmost care to carry them out.

Modify our natural parental love: how often we become blind to their mistakes, forgiving them easily, without showing them their faults and hurting them deeply.

Give me the wisdom to be firm when it is necessary; Give me gentleness when I lack patience. Deliver me, Lord, from all scandal, that I may serve as a model to my children in all that is just, good, and commendable.

O God of all holiness, sanctify my children that you love and respect; give them docility and obedience so that they may become perfect.

I do not ask for riches for them, but health and strength to keep them in the vocation that you have given them.

Preserve them from the bondage of evil passions; keep them pure in the midst of this depraved and permissive world.

Grant to my children good company and exemplary guides; I would rather see them dead than to see them in a wasted life.

I deliver to You, O Father of goodness, each of my children, protect them and to save their lives.

Therefore, I have the firm hope of being able to say one day: "Lord, I lost none of those whom You trusted to me." Amen.

**3. Once more – a quiet review of this life situation:**

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**4. Think about the elements that make up this life situation (if possible, write them down):**

a) Element: \_\_\_\_\_

b) Element: \_\_\_\_\_

c) Element: \_\_\_\_\_

d) Element: \_\_\_\_\_

5. **Establish the core of the problem presented in this life situation: From my point of view, the main core of this problem is (*write this down*):**

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6. **From my point of view, and before reading the enlightenment presented below, a possible solution to this problem would be (*if possible. write this down*):**

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7. **Possible enlightenment to the life situation presented:**

**Let us look at Pope Francis's warning about the generalized "absence" of parents in today's families** (In: Agency Ecclesia, January 28, 2015)

The Pope warned at a public audience in the Vatican of the consequences of a crisis of paternity in families and civil society leading to a "feeling of orphanhood."

"Parents focus so much on themselves and their work, sometimes on their individual achievements that they forget about their families and leave children and young people alone."

Pope Francis revealed that as Archbishop of Buenos Aires he questioned parents about the time they spent playing with their children and that "in most cases" the father was "absent" and did not want to "waste time".

According to the Pope, after an "authoritarian" era, the father figure was "symbolically absent, unseen, "removed from Western culture, thus "going from one objective to another." "Today's problem does not seem to be so much the intrusive presence of parents, but their absence, their inertia, "he warned.

Pope Francis declared that the absence of parents causes "gaps and wounds that can be very serious, "because of "lack of example and influential guidance" and "absence of love." "The feeling of orphanhood that many young people experience today is much deeper than we think", he said.

The Pope stressed that, in addition to physical absence, there are parents who, even when present, do not dialogue with their children nor present themselves as constructive figures with "principles, values, rules of life". "Sometimes it seems that parents are not sure what place they have within the family or how to raise their children; then, in doubt, they give up, disappear and disregard their responsibilities," he said.

In this context, Pope Francis spoke unexpectedly to tell the parents present (in the public audience) that they should be a "companion" to their children, but without forgetting that they are also the "father", the "mother". "If you behave only as a companion, similar to your son, it will not do the boy any good", he warned.

The Pope pointed out that this crisis of paternity extends to the civil community, which "neglects or misuses" its responsibility towards young people, who are thus "crammed with idols" like money, amusements and pleasures.

See/search for some enlightenment in the following thematic areas:

**Old Testament; New Testament; Christology; Sacraments; Liturgy; Morality; Ecclesiology; Spirituality.**

**8. Personal or couple conclusions:**

**After you have consulted the suggested enlightenment, what conclusions can be drawn? What would you advise Jaime and Paquita, or another couple in this situation? (*Write a response*)**

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**Now read the story of Saint Monica and Saint Augustine (mother and son):**

Monica was born in Tagaste, in the present Algeria, Africa, in the year 331, in the bosom of a Christian family. From a very early age she dedicated her life to helping the poor, whom she visited frequently, bringing comfort through the Word of God. She had a very difficult life. Her husband was a very rude young pagan, named Patricio, who mistreated her.

Monica endured everything in silence and meekness. She found consolation in the prayers that she made to Christ and the Virgin Mary for the conversion of the husband. And God rewarded her dedication, for she was able to attend the baptism of her husband, who had truly converted a year before his death.

They had two sons, Augustine and Navigio, and a daughter, Perpetua, who became a religious. But Augustine was her great concern, a source of bitterness and many tears. Even by giving good advice and educating her son on the principles of the Christian religion, Augustine's liveliness, inconstancy, and insubordination caused the wise mother to postpone his baptism, fearing that he would defile the Sacrament.

And that would have happened because Augustine, at the age of sixteen, leaving home to continue his studies, took the path of vice. Monica's heart suffered greatly from the news of her son's misdeeds and so she redoubled her prayers and penances.

Once she went to ask for the advice of the bishop, who consoled her saying, "Continue to pray, for it is impossible for a child to cause so many tears."

Augustine became a brilliant professor of rhetoric in Carthage. But, trying to escape the watchfulness of his distressed mother, he embarked on a ship to Rome, and then to Milan, where he obtained the position of official professor of rhetoric.

Monica, desiring at all costs to see her son's recovery, also traveled to Milan, where, little by little, her suffering ended. This was because Augustine, at first by curiosity and rhetoric, then by spiritual interest, had become a frequenter of the encompassing sermons of Saint Ambrose.

This was how Augustine became converted and received the baptism, along with his son Adeodato. Thus, Monica harvested the fruits of her prayers and her tears.

Mother and son decided to return to their homeland, but when they reached the port of Ostia near Rome, Monica became ill and soon passed away. It was 27<sup>th</sup> August 387, and she was fifty-six years old

Pope Alexander III confirmed the traditional devotion to Saint Monica in 1153, when he proclaimed her Patroness of Christian Mothers. Her feast day is celebrated on the

day she died. Her body, venerated for centuries in the church of Saint Áurea, in Ostia, was in 1430 transferred to Rome and now rests in the church of Saint Augustine.

**REFLECTION:**

Saint Monica did not allow herself to be imprisoned by her sufferings nor to be intimidated by difficulties; but through them she undertook one of the most passionate fights for the salvation of her husband Patricio and their son Augustine.

Convinced that there is no happiness far from the ways of God, she transformed her suffering into "Spiritual Weapons" and fought with all faith, steadfast in prayer and with patience "suffered the inaction of God" (Eccl Ch2 v3), that seemed to go on forever, it was as if He admired such persistence and resignation displayed by his servant Monica, and this is how she obtained the conversion of her husband and her son who, in addition to being converted, became a bishop and great doctor in the Church of Jesus Christ.

May Saint Monica intercede for us and especially for parents and families who experience all kinds of suffering in relation to their children.