

Dear Friends,

When I reflect back on my years of seminary training, I remember many good times. When I was in the middle of it, though, I didn't think of it as being that great. There were many experiences that were both challenging and fruitful. In the seminary, we learned many skills that were to be of great benefit later. Interestingly, one particular thing that sticks out in my memory is the etiquette class that we had to endure during my first year living in the House of Formation at the Cathedral. It seemed that we seminarians were not very refined, so our superiors saw fit that we got a little education with regard to how to eat in a dignified manner at the dinner table.

Fr. Patrick Donohoe was called in to teach the class. We learned how to set the table, which utensils were used for which food, correct posture, and good table manners. I have to admit that, while I had already been taught most of those things while growing up, I did learn a few useful things.

It goes without saying that proper etiquette reflects our attitude about things and it also demonstrates to people that we care. In some way, it says something about what lies within. If we have good comportment exteriorly, chances are we will have a certain dignity interiorly. The discipline we develop with regard to these things helps to shape and mold us into disciplined human beings. This makes us far happier.

Let's use the example of a trained and untrained dog. A family brings a puppy home. Unfortunately, none of family members are able to dedicate enough time to it's proper training, so it becomes a little unruly. Once that occurs, it starts to develop behavioral problems and becomes unhappy because it has not developed a framework out of which to operate. It is restless and so it becomes mischievous. If it were to have been trained properly, both it and the owner would be far more happy.

This same principle translates into our attitudes with regard to faith. When we develop and show reverence in church, it effects an all around change within us. When we come in and genuflect before the presence of Christ in the tabernacle, when we sit in silence, when we stand, sit, (and kneel) in the appropriate places, we develop an attitude and framework that eliminates chaos and brings order and happiness to our lives. In a sense, it helps to mold within us a deep reverence for the Lord, and we are far much more happy and at peace.

Discipline and faith can be freeing. Likewise, we gain more respect ourselves and we begin to be like the tree in the first reading that is "planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream." In other words, we become much happier because there is order to our lives. It enriches our faith and makes us more proud of what we believe.

This discipline should be shared with our children, so that they learn to develop a greater sense of peace within because they know what is expected of them. Teach them the importance of standing and sitting in the appropriate places. Encourage them to pay attention to the homily, discourage them from getting up to go to the restroom during Mass. Keep them from playing digital games during Mass. This can be a real chore for the parents, but these little sacrifices on your part and that of the children, leads them to much greater respect for themselves and for their Faith. God bless!

Fr. Paul