

2018

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Loucks, Autumn. "Sr. Roseline: The Role of the Family and Education" (2018). *Ask a Sister: Interview Wisdom from Catholic Women Religious*.

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Autumn Loucks

Sister Roseline: The Role of the Family and Education

Abstract: This paper contains the interview with Sr. Roseline, a woman religious, who works in education, and her theory as to why the number of young Catholics has declined.

“Family life has been struggling,” Sister Roseline explained. When families are destroyed so is society. What happens is that when people lose their family ties, they turn to society for what is valuable. Society values “beauty, wealth, bad stuff” as the most important. She described today’s society as being a “me, me, me” society. The connection between the strength of family and the health of society are strongly linked to her.

However, there is a problem in the family. Sister Roseline, who works as an educator, argues that education “transforms” youth but ultimately, the family's religiosity determines the faith of the child. Her theory is that faith is ultimately instilled in children through their faith. Children replicate what they see. They learn religion from their families more than school. Even subconsciously they are affected from what they observe and what they do not. This is similar to the concept that mothers are the ones who pass down the faith. This is seen in McGuinness’ *“Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America”*. Because of this notion, the Ursulines were to give a religious education to all “future mothers”, which simply meant girls. However, unlike the Ursuline sisters of the 1800s, Sister Roseline just refers the role of educator to the “family.” More specifically to the parents. Although she ranks familial education over that from Catholic schools, she does argue the importance of Catholic education. After all if children do not receive education in regard to their faith at home, they have to get it somewhere else. Mainly, a parochial

education is important because that is where the students are “transformed” so they can “flourish.”

One important part of a formal education is that it is not only for the children. It can help parents if offered to them. The Felician sisters who taught in Detroit during 1896 were also aware of the role of the parent; “They [parents] want their children to study and become wise, but you can’t find any such traces of parental concern or influence in the children.” The parents had little interest in their children’s education. However, for the sisters who were teaching at that time, the complaint arose by lack of support in term of numbers. There were not enough teachers and a large enough percentage of them, who went into the religious life right out of high school, did not have enough formal education to teach. While the concern may have been rooted in a different concern, the source is the same- a lack of parental influence.

One aspect about her order-which works in education- is that it extends its hand to adults, namely parents. They offer catechetical education to parents so as to create “faith based conversation.” One concern Sister Roseline stated was that if the children become more educated than their parents then how will the family be able to pray together? Even if the children gain knowledge about their Catholic faith, it is not the role of the child to pass their faith to their parents. Of course, it would not be likely that children who attended a Catholic school but did not come from a religious background would bring their knowledge to the home. The goal of educating the parents is not only so faith can be passed down but so to reunify the family. Sister Roseline gave the example of a family going to pray together except, the parents do not know how to. Without the cohesion of family and faith, faith is not likely to form.

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