

Western Catholic Reporter

Canada's founding values teach trustworthiness, cooperation

Printed: Western Catholic Reporter, March 22, 2010

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OTTAWA - The erosion of Canada's founding values will have a negative impact on the future happiness and success of Canadians, says Brian Lee Crowley. Canada's founders had a theory of what made people happy and it centred on the value of the family, honest hard work and the virtue of self-sacrifice, Crowley told the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada (IMFC) conference here March 11.

"The family is the place where we learn to master our selfish instincts and begin to become of value to others," said the author of the bestselling *Fearful Symmetry: The Fall and Rise of Canada's Founding Values*.

The greatest gift parents give their children is to instill character so they can rise above their selfish instincts, Crowley said.

Without the inculcation of virtue and self-restraint, he said, a person will fail to find the happiness that comes from self-mastery, self-respect and success that comes from the ability to delay gratification for future pleasure.

Over the last half century, Canada has lost sight of its founding values endowment through seeing freedom as liberation from any constraints on behaviour, he said. Tradition came to be seen as "an obstacle to the realization of our authentic selves."

SELF-SACRIFICE

The effort involved in forming and nurturing a family and overcoming the natural desire to avoid work were seen as part of the self-sacrifice that defined a mature adult, he said.

If parents are unable to discipline their offspring, it is not just terrible for the parents, it "casts a lifelong shadow on the prospects of success" for the children, Crowley said.

KEY TO SUCCESS

The family teaches people how to become trustworthy and cooperative, two essential ingredients for the workplace and for economic success, he said.

The family is the first little society and the first little economy. What happens within the family has a direct bearing on "how free we can be and how rich we can be collectively.

"If we don't have self-control, control must be imposed from outside," he said.

Crowley said that in advanced welfare states, working for success and happiness is no longer valued.

The high level of family breakdowns means fewer children are learning self-discipline in the home, he said. Once a child becomes an adult, it becomes much more difficult to develop character and self-discipline.

Crowley noted Canada has to be careful not to create societal conditions where women are actually having fewer children than they want.

If divorce is easy and marriage and husbands are not dependable, a woman faced with the reality of marriage breakdown will focus on developing a career before having children, he said. That is a rational cost-benefit analysis to the prospect of being abandoned with several children.