The Children of Ordinary Times

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

If you become a teacher, you will receive *a lot* of advice along the way.

In the many years I have been blessed to make a living and a life in the classroom, I have also been blessed with much good advice. Perhaps one of the wisest and simplest things I was told when I started to teach was to remember, always, that all of my students are someone's child.

I teach adults. Therefore, sometimes, that reality is lost on me. It may also, sadly, be true that some have not had the blessings of a loving family.

Yet, when I stop to reflect, I know that each student who is one of thousands on campus, one of hundreds in a degree program, and one of dozens in my own classes is not merely a number, or a name, or a face. Each is, to his or her family, a beloved child (or spouse, or sibling, or parent, or grandchild.) Each is, to his or her family, someone whose well-being, happiness and flourishing is of deep, profound importance.

A good grade, a positive recommendation, a successful semester or the happiness when classmates become friends are not merely joys confined to my students themselves. These are the things that, in texts, video chats, phone calls and conversations around the Thanksgiving table will also be sources of joy to their families.

It is also true that the disappointments, stresses and angst of a less than perfect semester will also make my students' families worry. In the true meaning of "com-passion," they will carry those sorrows with their loved ones even if – and especially if – they are powerless to help.

I try to keep this advice in mind when serving my students – especially in difficult times.

Yet, I wonder if that advice – to remember that everyone is someone else's child – means something far more than guidance for teachers. I wonder, too, if believing that advice can change the way in which we treat each other.

The truth is that all those we encounter are someone else's child.

Some may not know loving parents or family in this life. Nevertheless, everyone I meet is a child of God. Remembering that my students have human families affects how I care for them. How much more should remembering that everyone has a Father who cares for him or her deeply affect how we care for each other.
All of our companions through this life have a Father who cares about their joys and sorrows, their triumphs and woes, their dreams and their fears. They have a Father who knows when they have been hurt, ignored, overlooked, or scorned. They have a Father who also knows when they have been loved, cherished, comforted and appreciated.

In a world that can be harsh, perhaps remembering this gentle truth can make a difference. Everyone we meet is someone's child. They are children of a Father who loves them through all the days of their ordinary times.

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