

Raise your hand if you're an only child or your one of two. Now Raise it if you're one of three children. How about FOUR OR MORE. Interesting isn't it, how the number of hands decrease as the number of children increases. The modern perception seems to be that big families are too much of a hassle: too much work and effort. They are perceived as being too expensive economically and too stressful on the parents. In our modern day era families are becoming less and less the miniature society they once were, but rather small households with only one or two children. Despite all the negative ideas that are supposedly associated with large families, there are countless joys and pleasures that can be found. I myself acclaim to this, being the eldest in a household of 5. Five children, not just five family members.

According to an IAD Social Research Division Report conducted in 2005, large families, (which are families with three or more kids) make up only one fifth, approx 20% of all families with dependent children, with the remaining majority of families being made up of single child or two child families. In a recent survey, it was shown that on average, a family will only have 2.4 children per family.

According to the report, large families are more likely to expect hardship than a smaller family. This is understandable. A smaller family means fewer mouths to feed, clothes to buy and less time to have to spend on each child as a parent.

Yet even though these facts may be true, on the other hand, a large family is one of the best things a person can possibly be a part of.

When Mother Teresa of Calcutta was asked by a young mother about the best way to proceed with pro-life work, she responded emphatically, "Have a big family. That is the best way to end abortion!"

How this works is not difficult to understand. By having large families, you demonstrate once again to the world that children are God's greatest gifts. The more children there are in society, the more pro-life that society will become, and the easier it will be for the tragedy of abortion to cease to occur

Secondly, children who have many siblings learn early to share. They learn to take turns and to put the needs of others before their own. Being in a large family, you learn to be patient and generous, whether it be sharing your last piece of chocolate with your brother, or letting your sister use the bathroom first even though you KNOW she'll be in there for hours. Boys who have sisters learn the dignity of women. This is a trait which current day man seems to lack in, with domestic violence and rape numbers ever on the rise. Boys with sisters learn to treat other girls and women with respect, as they consider how they would like their own sisters to be treated. The bond formed between brothers and sisters is lifelong, and stronger than the bond between the closest friends. As said in The Book of Psalms 133:1-2: "How good it is, how pleasant, where the brothers dwell as one!"

***Having large families can also be seen as a positive because in actuality, the people of the world are our greatest resources.*** What if Nelson Mandela's parents had only had their first two children, or if Michael Jackson's folks stopped after two.... We would

have been robbed a great artist and an even greater figurehead of peace and conciliation. It is human ingenuity that discovers creative solutions to the problems which confront us. People without children should remember that it will be someone else's child who will become the doctor that performs their life-saving operations. Someone else's child will become the firefighter that saves their house. Someone else's child will become the railroad engineer. As Mother Teresa once said:

***"How can there be too many children? That's like saying there are too many flowers."***

It most certainly is economically difficult having a large family. Yet as a child of five, I feel these hardships have in fact helped not hindered me. A child in a large family learns the most precious gift: charity and generosity. There are no "mine and yours" boundaries.

Yet the most important and heartwarming characteristic that comes from a large family is the sense of unity and solidarity one feels. Whatever happens, they are always there to support you. Many children mean that down the line we have a strong family support system. We will never be left completely alone. We will have each other. Best friends, protectors, confidants and shoulders to cry on are always available.

Large families are dwindling in our 2.4 average children per family world. Children are growing up without the correct morals and values in place. Crime is on the rise, and true love is on the fall. The question is, when your time comes, will you grace the world with many of God's children, because I most certainly will.

I have four children. I hope to have many more. I hope to top ten. My children are precious to me. With each new birth my love for each child grows. Since the birth of our daughter seven months ago I've had the enjoyment of seeing a new side of my boys. One I've never seen before from them. A compassionate, nurturing and truly caring side. Nothing melts my heart like when all three boys run over to comfort Lorelei as soon as she starts crying.

Do you know how much fun it is to listen to a symphony of little voices in the back of the van? Better than any radio station I've ever listened to.

All three of my boys share a bedroom. They won't sleep any other way. They share every toy. They are learning that more important than what's mine, is what I share with others. Many hands make for light work. Cleaning their room speeds by when we all work on it together.

The noise. The constant, ever changing noise. The laughter and giggles, squeals and chatter. Even the tears and cries and yes, sometimes screams. I have the loudest house on the block and I revel in it.

One day, hopefully a long time from now, my husband and I will pass on. When we do, my children will have a strong family support system. They will never be left completely alone. They will have each other.

I have one sister. I love her but we're not what I would call close. I wish I had a sister or a brother that I was very close to, that I really connected with. When you have more siblings, you have more of a chance that there will be someone in the mix you really hit it off with.

Play dates, schmay dates. My children have a constant play date.

Best friends, protectors, confidants and shoulders to cry on are always available.

My older children are learning to be parents. They get to practice now, under a watchful adult eye. My sons will be amazing fathers and will never be afraid to hold a newborn.

I love my large family. And as it grows, I love it even more. Our house is so full of love it may burst at the seams. I pray that it does! For when love bursts forth it touches everyone around us.