



**TASTE Reflection Questions #10
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Confessions of an Imperfect Catholic

Colleen Duggan

www.tasteprogram.com



1. What aspect of Colleen's message grabbed your attention? Please explain.
2. If you are currently parenting young children, what did Colleen teach that brought you strength or comfort? For those in a support role (i.e. grandparent, godmother, aunt....) what will you take to the women in your life who are still raising their children?
3. What are some strategies to combat the lure to consent to the secular world's definition of a "good" or "ideal" mom?
4. Have you ever experienced a type of "identity crisis" (see p. 2) similar to the one Colleen Duggan described in "The Hidden Life?" Looking back on that time, do you see how the Lord was working in it? If comfortable, please share.

The Hidden Life by Colleen Duggan
From <http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/>

When I was a new mom, I slipped away for a silent weekend retreat. Before we adjourned on Sunday afternoon, the organizers invited the participants to randomly pick a holy card. On it, was a virtue we were supposed to cultivate throughout the upcoming year. I offered a quick prayer to the Holy Spirit to guide my selection and when the woman came around to me with a fan of holy cards situated in front of her, I stuck my hand in the middle and pulled out a laminated card.

The virtue I “chose” was The Hidden Life. *Really, Lord?* I scoffed. *Why not charity or fortitude or justice? Why do you want me to go hide under a rock somewhere?* If you know me in real life, hidden is not a word you would use to describe me. Loud? Yes. Opinionated? That too. Extroverted? Yep. But hidden? Absolutely not. Even though I didn’t like it, I knew there was something about hiddenness I needed to consider.

A year before I attended the retreat, I quit my very public job as a high school religion teacher in order to become a full time stay at home mother to my rapidly growing family. The switch from the very public life as a full time teacher to a full time wife and mother produced an identity crisis like I’ve never had before. Before I managed classrooms of at least thirty kids and delegated responsibilities in afterschool clubs and now I changed diapers and fed babies.

Who was I now that I wasn’t an overachieving type A, contributing something valuable to the workforce? What grand accomplishments did I have to share after a long day of child wrangling and disciplining? When my husband came home, my reports included updates about organizing the pantry and keeping the toddlers out of the street (which is a heroic task depending on the kid, let’s be honest.)

Will this decision to stay home reap lasting rewards? I wondered. The long, sleepless nights of pacing the floor with an infant felt more like a purgative sentence than anything else! I was grateful to be at home, but I struggled to see my value of my role as an at home mother in the same way I was able to see the value of my work at the school. The Hidden Life? I was drowning in it....or so I thought.

The scriptures tell us that after Jesus’ birth and flight into Egypt, Jesus spent most of his daily life at home, without evident greatness. He worked and fulfilled religious obligations. He was “obedient” to his parents and he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (CCC, 531). He lived a simple life of silence, deep familial connection, and purposeful work.

As it turns out, the invitation to consider the Hidden life was a special one handpicked just for me. Jesus wasn’t asking me to retire to my home and become a hermit; He was asking me to practice the same daily habits Jesus did in the thirty years before he became a miracle worker.

He was asking me to grow in my love of silence and obedience, especially in cultivating a love for daily duties I didn’t particularly care for. He was asking me to grow in areas where I personally struggled—especially in difficult parenting and spousal challenges—so that I could develop greater patience and wisdom. He was asking me to practice a balanced life of work, play, and rest in a way I never had before.

The Hidden Life wasn’t a death sentence to my professional and social life. It was an invitation to a deeper, more abundant one where I met Jesus in a personal way. The years I spent at home weren’t wasted years, hidden from contact with the outside world, but were years of preparation and growth. It was a time God used to develop in me skills I didn’t have but needed in order to be a good wife, mother, and disciple.

Embracing a hidden life meant learning to love the life Jesus gave me, it meant allowing Jesus to refine me through the challenges I faced. As it turns out, the Hidden Life was *exactly* the virtue I needed, even if it wasn’t the one I would have picked for myself. I guess the Holy Spirit knew what he was doing after all.