

YOUR FAMILY: A Work in Progress *Tips for Growing in Holiness as a Family*

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by Dr. Lauri Przybysz

Daily family life within the domestic Church, the Church of the home, gives witness to Christ's mission of sharing the Good News with all people and of building God's kingdom on Earth. In this month of February, traditionally dedicated to the Holy Family, here are six ways in which all families can grow in holiness.

1. RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF WHAT YOU ARE ALREADY DOING.

Ordinary family practices—displaying Christian symbols in the home, saying grace in the restaurant, helping the poor, and telling stories of the saints—are ways we pass on our faith to our children and grandchildren. Faith-filled celebrations of the Sacraments, holy days, and holidays can evoke strong memories and feelings years after they occur. Research shows that the biggest predictor of adult religious practice is being able to recall one's practice of religion in childhood, especially daily conversations in the home about God and faith.

2. PRACTICE HOSPITALITY.

The Church has always taught that every guest is to be treated like Christ. A Christian family can practice hospitality in ordinary ways by welcoming new neighbors or by including those who are alone for the holidays. In a world that can be cold and unwelcoming, a friendly home is a blessing.

3. VALUE PRESENCE MORE THAN PRESENTS.

Resist the urge to bring more and more material things into the home. Give the gifts of your time and attention instead. Organize family nights that don't include electronics and family trips that aren't expensive. Make memories that will last by sharing your talents.

4. SPEAK KINDLY, LISTEN THOUGHTFULLY, ACT LOVINGLY.

Say "Please," "Thank you," and "I'm sorry." During unsettled times, let family members know you are there to support them. Invite discussion of possible solutions to conflicts. Keep the lines of communication open by asking questions. Parents, make decisions only after carefully listening and follow Mother Teresa's example of doing small things with great love.



5. RESPECT DIFFERENCES.

Healthy families do not insist that all family members share the same beliefs or feelings, or that they enjoy identical activities. One family member might like sports and rock music; another may prefer books or stamp collecting. At the same time, everyone should know what behavior is expected and why the family has rules. This includes explaining the importance of going to Mass to worship as a family.

6. BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE.

One who can remain calm during conflict is a gift to the whole family. Keep in mind that you can only change yourself. When you fly on an airplane, you are instructed that if the cabin pressure declines, "Put on your own oxygen mask first, before helping others." Remember this image when there is turbulence in family relationships. Manage your own emotions before trying to help other family members.

GOD'S GRACE AT WORK

God is present in the ordinary events of daily family life. When you as parents spend time together nurturing your marriage, you help your whole family grow in holiness. When your family members reconcile after hurts and disagreements, you are signs of God's love to one another. When your family comforts the sorrowful, takes meals to and visits the sick, and goes to church to participate in the liturgy, you are witnesses to the Gospel in ways just as powerful as those of any evangelist. Your family IS holy because God's grace is at work in you!

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