

Bishop's Reflection

(Ideas for Families)

I would like to address myself to families and the time you have spent together. I would like to begin by acknowledging that it has not been an easy time for you. The added pressure of working from home, greater responsibility for the children, restless children and limited recreational outlets are only a few of the many stressors that affect both parents and children alike. I commend you for all your efforts thus far.

When it comes to the "faith dimension" of your lives together, I suggest you keep it as basic as can be. There is no point in introducing more work or unnecessary tension. Faith should never be some foreign intervention, some homework that needs doing, but is best passed on through family traditions, simple conversations and moments of prayer together.

Consider, therefore, the privileged times of your time together as family: 1) Dinner time, 2) moments of relaxation and 3) bedtime. A candle on the table, a short time of prayer before the meal begins and an occasional discussion starter (i.e. "If you could ask a question of anyone in the Bible, who and what would you ask?" or "If you could ask a question of God, what would it be?"). Allow the children a chance to answer themselves. You might be surprised what they say and how interesting the discussions can be.

Moments of relaxation are essential, too. Make sure you take some time from all the things that need doing and take a break together. I used to love the time our family spent outdoors, going for walks and finding new places to visit. Time together as family, be it inside or out, playing games or working at a puzzle together are a wonderful distraction from the rigours of life. It's amazing what gets communicated when the family takes time for to be family.

Moments of relaxation may also include art activities, ways of decorating our front window or front yard to symbolize our love for others or to communicate a message of prayer or encouragement to others. Social media can also be used to reach out to extended family, other families and other members of our community. Going on-line together and reaching out as a family may lead to other creative ideas to emerge (children love to be involved in something worthwhile (a family outreach project)). When something troubling happens, don't forget the power of prayer. Children receive a lot of comfort when they are able to vocalize their concerns in prayer.

Lastly, don't forget to create a good bedtime tradition. Children love to hear their parents read a bedtime story or pray with them. Why not introduce the stories of a good children's Bible or a children's book of the Saints? These can easily be interspersed with an assortment of other stories. Children often save their best questions and discussions for bedtime (it insures a few

extra moments of “staying up” and the affection of their parents). Make sure you aren’t rushed; you’ll end up treasuring these moments.

Once in a while, you can help your child in a little reflection exercise at bedtime. Great benefit is gained by developing the ability to reflect back on our lives and it is a necessary skill for children and adults alike. “If you had the chance, what would you have done differently? And why?” Is a good question when looking back on disagreeable times in our day/week. “If you could thank God for a time he really helped you, what would it be? And why?” God is involved in the entirety of our lives, both good and bad. By bringing him to mind and building on that relationship our children have with him, we help them to reflect on their lives, process their thoughts and gain new understanding of things.

It’s the little things that are most important. The things that can add meaning and joy to your time together as family. There are many days you are going to fall short of the ideal. There are many times you might even get it wrong. Remember to take some time to reflect on your own day, and don’t be too harsh. As St. Paul tells us, “be thankful always” and give God his due. If we can keep our families (and ourselves) grounded in him, and the love of his Son, he often takes care of the rest.