



SPIRIT ALIVE FOR FAMILIES!

I once heard a homily at my church that presented Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as the ideal family. During this homily there was a man seated in the front pew who kept muttering to the point he was distracting. Finally, the question was asked of the man, "What seems to be your problem, sir?" The man promptly responded, "This is all a waste of time. You talk about Jesus, Mary and Joseph being the ideal family, but look at what you have – Mary was the sinless one; Joseph the faithful one; and Jesus was God. How can you expect any family to realistically model themselves on the Holy Family?"

I suspect many parents feel this way. The pressures of daily life in America today can leave us exhausted and discourage. How could we ever measure up to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and become a "holy" family?

The homilist explained it this way. "Holy" means to be separate for the Lord. He then went on to explain how our families might find ways to be "holy."

His first suggestion was the "**Families need to find JOY**. They need to goof around, laugh and not take each other too seriously. Families need to find ways to have fun, whether it's a vacation to the beach, playing a board/video game or just being silly and having a pillow fight. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Joy is the serious business of heaven." We need to be joyful because the one who brought joy to the world is present in our homes.

Fathers' second suggestion for families is the need to spend TIME together. He went on to say, "If a little child could spell love, he/she would spell it, T-I-M-E." I think T-I-M-E spells love for everyone. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph spent time together. Mary and Joseph shared and taught Jesus Jewish tradition, including scripture and the Mosaic law. Joseph taught Jesus his trade, that of a carpenter. I'm sure Mary expected Jesus to help around the house and I bet they spent time doing daily chores together. Today, families are far too busy. Children and adolescents are involved in far too many activities. There are far too many activities which take parents and adults outside the home. Families are pulled in far too many different directions. Sometimes, in order to carve enough time for "family", we have to say "no" and limit the number of individual activities we are involved in and find ways to be together as a family.

The third way to make our families "holy" is PRAYER. Our families need to be families of prayer. Grace before meals, morning and night prayer, weekly Mass are the bare minimum that our families should be participating in. We hear a great deal today about family values. Very often, it is a vague term that is used in political realms, usually concerned with morality, laws, and culture. But true family values cannot be legislated or imposed; they must come from within the home

You can send your children to the best Catholic schools or enroll them in the best religious education programs, but without the home, without willing parents, we are wasting our time they have to be lived.

Parents have a duty, sacred duty, a divine duty to form human hearts, minds and souls. It's been said that a person's set of values is pretty much in place by the age of seven. It all begins in the home.

It has been said that every family home is a little church. During this time of "Spiritual Renewal", may your home be a little church, a place where your family plays together, prays together and finds joy in a deeper relationship with Jesus the Christ.

(Contributing this article; Father Christopher E. Linsler – Homily Dec. 30, 2007 – "The Holy Family")