

# A Holy Family Is Possible — Is Needed — In Today's World

*I remember, as a pre-adolescent, my parents load- ing us into the car and driving for what seemed an eternity, finally arriving somewhere that seemed light years away. We were visiting a former pastor who had to retire early because of polio. I was constantly impressed as the china cabinet had been converted into an altar so he could get to it in his wheelchair. "Wow, mass at home!" We kids would do our customary visit, and then be sent to the family's living room, the older ones responsible for the maintenance of the younger ones. Our parents would then be with Father anywhere from 30 to 40 minutes in spiritual direction, placing their spiritual and temporal concerns in proper order. This was done for themselves and their fam- ily — us kids growing more fidgety by the minute. I can't say for sure, but I think they even went to confession together. I can never remember one or the other leaving the room — unless the younger ones were getting out of hand.*

*There were those occasions when one or more of us would be called in to face Father, one-on-one or as a group, to discuss our behavior and to receive some well-needed direction of our own. It always ended in the form of receiv- ing encouragement in our making the right choices. This continued into my teen years, until Father died.*

— taken from  
"An Extraordinary Priesthood"

In a world so dominated by excessive demands in the workplace, long travel times, and extracurricular activi- ties of children, little time is left that can be set aside, truly devoted as "Family Time" unless there is a conscience effort made to do so.

"Family Time" is not spent in the car going from one place to the next, hurriedly shopping, picking up or dropping off. It is time when the entire family spends quality time in supportive dialogue, in playing games, sharing thoughts of a program or movie, in prayer — at home and at church. It is time spent with one set purpose for all members, such as a service project or church activity, where every family member has a stake in the successful outcome of a project and then equal time in sharing feelings and insights. No matter what, "Family Time" provides support and encouragement of each per- son's gifts and abilities. Who else would take the time to build up another? Who would have such a vested interest?

Sure, we all have friends who are greatly con- cerned about our lives. But can it be said there is not some personal concern included? Something sought in the person we have offered those friends? With a family, the

commitment takes the form of a great responsibility lasting much longer than a short time in a person's lifespan.

This is most important when faith is shared, when God is seen as the binding agent in the sharing, and in each family member growing in the gifts and abilities they are finding within their own being. In the prayerful family there is sup- port rather than envy, encouragement replacing jealousy, constructive cor- rection winning out over pettiness or belittlement.

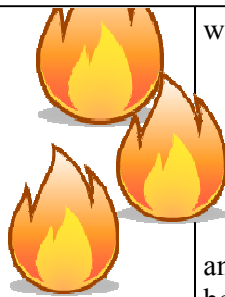


In this family rooted in God there is a realization that there are always more sets of eyes seeing the good and the bad in each other, and more than two hearts loving in all circumstances. In this God- rooted family, the sense of prayer is essential for sur- vival in itself and in the world. There is no fear in being found reading the bible or in praying. It becomes part of every day's activity.

## GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 18

*The Prayer of Awareness*



In this family rooted in God, attending mass is a celebration, a proud moment when the whole family is recognized by the other members of the community, especially when the family takes up an entire pew — and these families do exist even today. Each family mem- ber is recognized and supported in his or her own way.

And the holy family suddenly is embraced by the larger holy family of the Church, the parish family.

True "Holy Families" place GOD FIRST. They practice a certain awareness of God's presence in their lives and in the sharing of life with those entrusted to their care by God — other family members.

Holy Families do exist today. Perhaps families are seen in ways not encountered in years past. Perhaps they need to be even more holy because of their unique life situation. Nevertheless, they can and do exist. The key to a holy family is a conscious decision to live in union with God every day and to make that union come alive in each and every person of the family.

When did Jesus, Mary, and Joseph become a "holy family"? Was there a specific moment in time? Unlikely. Each grew in understanding, and then into the sharing that fostered and nurtured God's call and presence in each other. There is absolutely no difference between them, two thousand years ago, and us today. It boils down to a lived decision and commitment made by each family member.