

Families Have a Vocation

A vocation is a calling from God, but individuals are not the only ones who have a calling. Each and every family has a vocation to live as a loving community, and Lent is a good time to begin thinking about your family's vocation.

A family is a small group of persons sharing their lives together on a deep, personal level. Sometimes relationships within a family are almost too close for comfort. Disagreements will arise, and resentments will set in, disrupting the delicate balance needed for an atmosphere of emotional comfort. It takes a lot of laughter and forgiveness to offset the negative forces in any family situation. Learning how to foster the spirit of forgiveness is key. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Luke 11:4) Forgiveness is a prerequisite for a peaceful home.

When a man and woman have children they become a new creation, a family. The children must then learn how to do their share to build a loving community. Selfish-



ness will always rear its ugly head, but all is not lost, love can overcome all kinds of selfishness. "Love can make it easy, and perfect love can make it a joy." (Taken from the Old Rite of Marriage.)

What else can a family do to promote harmony? Pray! With God's help all things are possible. If family members pray together, attend church together, listen to the Word of God together and receive the Eucharist together, there is a good chance they will achieve that elusive balance needed for a happy home. To become a loving community everyone in the family needs to make a commitment to the goal of happiness.

The husband-wife relationship sets the tone. On their wedding day the couple make a public promise to God that they would share their love for one another with any children God might send them. In the marriage ceremony they invoked Jesus as Lord, and took a vow binding themselves to this life-long love commitment.

Announcing such a courageous public declaration is one thing, but making it stick is quite another. Normally, when the honeymoon is over the lovers begin to learn that true love is in the will. Romantic emotions can only last so long. When romance

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wanes, faith can be a powerful motivating tool in overcoming the problems that plague every marriage. "Lord, not my will be done, but yours." (Matthew 26:39)

† There can be great suffering in the homes of those who do not know how to forgive and forget. It is a skill that takes time to develop. Good intentions alone may not be enough to break through some of the tenacious resentments that plague family life. In such cases a spiritual counselor might be helpful.

In all circumstances, the important thing is to foster the sense of the family vocation.

When Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you," he was speaking to each and every member of the family. He was calling members to cooperate in building a community of love.

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