

GROWING *Together*

ISSN: 1481-9465

NURTURING FAITH IN THE HOME

Janice Richards sits down to breakfast with her two children, 11 year old Sarah and 7 year old Derek. Before they say the table grace together Janice reads from a booklet of devotions. This morning Sarah's stomach is in knots because she doesn't want to go to school. Her friends have suddenly turned against her and are purposely excluding her. They are saying nasty things behind her back. Over their cereal, the three talk about how Sarah will deal with her friends.

Two doors down the street Susan Edwards is quickly wiping the toast crumbs from the countertop, thinking about the stack of papers on her desk at work. Evan, 14, runs out the door to catch the bus as his father Earl is arriving home following a 12-hour night shift. Jason, a high school senior, has left the house an hour earlier for band practice.

Families today have to be very disciplined in order to manage demanding schedules. How do we place faith into already disciplined lives? Built into our being is a real hunger to know God, which we want to nurture in our children. Despite our desire to pass on faith, we are not always sure how to go about it. Why?

- It is difficult to ignore what society promotes "successful" living: a new SUV, a large house, a good job. Parents struggle with setting priorities.
- We let schedules take over and remain hectic.
- Parents often feel they should leave teaching to the church.
- Daily devotions have not been popular family practice in the last few years. Are there alternatives?
- Parents feel ill prepared and uncertain speaking of faith with their children.

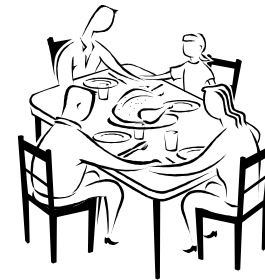
Despite our worries, cultivating faith within family life can become as natural a discipline as 6:00 a.m. hockey practices and daily homework schedules. Short blessings on the lips of parents spoken as children run out the door, conversations in the van, planning a family "giving project" at Christmas time are conscious disciplines that draw families closer to God.

Valuable printed resources, available from most bookstores also encourage creative responses for family faith formation. Here are a few suggestions:

- **FaithTalk Cards** - 192 cards have multiple uses for games and discussion starters (available from Augsburg Youth and Family Institute, Campus Box 70, 2211 Riverside Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55454)
- **Rituals for Home and Parish: Healing and Celebrating Our Families** - (Rathschmidt and Cronin, Paulist Press, 1996) is an example of the many books that offer resources for family worship and celebration.
- **Faith Chest** - Each child is given a "faith chest" that includes items such as favourite Bible stories, Sunday school papers, baptism anniversary cards, books and pictures that have special meaning. As the child grows, journals and other age-appropriate items may be added. Birthdays may be the occasion on which old items are removed and new ones added.

Conscious efforts to nurture faith at home provide for healthy spiritual growth and open discussion about God. It may have been a little awkward for Janice Richards when she first whispered a blessing to her children as they left for school. Within a short time, however, the children were reminding her to say the now-expected prayer, "God's peace go with you this day."

Empowered by her mother's blessing, Sarah sets her face toward school on this difficult day, reminded that God cares about her.



GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.

Prairie Centre for Ecumenism
250-B Second Avenue South
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1K9
CANADA © 2002



phone: (306)-653-1633
fax: (306) 653-1821
email: pce@ecumenism.net
www.ecumenism.net