

Homily.Holy Family.12.26.21  
Saint Bernard Church  
Deacon Tim Sullivan

With all that is going on in our culture today, there is so much that could be said about what is needed for a truly Christian family life. I remember knowing about a book written in the early 1990's entitled, "Only Heroic Catholic Families Will Survive."

At the time, I thought that was an extreme statement, but now I think it might be very true.

Anyway, here are some recommendations for family life that can be taken from today's scripture readings.

1. Mothers and fathers, consecrate yourselves. Like Joseph, Mary and Hannah, give yourself to God. Dedicate your life to be obedient and faithful to Him. Make Jesus the center of your life. Take adult ownership of your Baptism.
2. Consecrate your children. As Hannah did in today's first reading, give your children to God. Commit yourself to help them live out their Baptisms. Do all that you can to make sure they get to heaven. When one of my sons was a teen-ager, I prayerfully gave him to God. I said, "Lord, He's yours. I'm not giving up on doing what I must do as his parent, but I am entrusting him to you." It was a bit like Abraham and Isaac. I might add that God came through for me. This son today is a very faithful Catholic, a great husband and father.
3. Make sure that you, your spouse, and your children all know well that all of you, even the adults, are children of God. This theme comes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading. If your children see that you acknowledge your dependence on God, that you are committed to being faithful and obedient to Him, and that you believe in His love, His truth and His grace, your example will have a powerful impact on your children.
4. Know and rely often on the Holy Spirit. The last line of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading says that we know from the Holy Spirit that Jesus is present in us. Study the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible and read portions of them to your children. What the earliest Christian community experienced is available to all of us as well.
5. You're going to make mistakes. Not on purpose, but mistakes will happen. If Mary and Joseph can lose Jesus on a trip to Jerusalem, and He still turned out okay, you can make mistakes with your children and they can still become great Christians.
6. God does not need you to be perfect parents, and you are not solely responsible for how your children turn out. God can use other people in addition to you to be a positive influence on your children, and He has a lot of time to use them.
7. If your children stray, in their behavior or their faith, or both, love them and be patient. Consistently demonstrate your love without compromising your values. And pray for them often and with confidence, confidence in God and His love for your children.
8. Finally, a word about the role of fathers. In the First Reading, Hannah, thank goodness, pretty much takes over for her husband, Elkanah. We know, however, that fathers have a profound impact on the faith of their children.
9. There's a book out called "Rebuilt," which is about a Catholic parish in a suburb of Baltimore that made discipleship the absolute top priority of the parish. As part of their

strategy, the parish focused on the men. They talked about reaching the men in their planning meetings. The clergy prepared homilies with the men in mind. They based the music at Mass on what the men liked. They figured that if they could get the men on the path to becoming disciples, the wives and children would come, too.

10. So, men, wake up to your privilege and responsibility to be the spiritual heads of your families. If you haven't already done so, start your training to play this role, so that you are equipped to be the leader God called you to be. And, by the way, your training never ends, and neither does your responsibility as a spiritual leader.

In the world we live in today, if your family is normal, if you're running with the pack, you're in serious trouble.

We need real courage. We need to be very intentional, if want our families to be solidly Catholic and healthy in every way.

May God bless all of the families represented here today. May He inspire all of us with a spirit of dedication to do all we can to bring all of our family members to love and obey Jesus and His Church.