

When are **You** Most **Aware** of **God** in Your **Family** Experiences?

'Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made.'
ROMANS 1:20

Home is a Holy Place Because God's Presence Graces All Creation

We can say *Home is a Holy Place* because *all* of God's creation is holy and graced by God's continuing presence. This is a perspective that can help us all, as couples, families and individuals, to expand our consciousness of God's presence at home. It is about helping one another to see the familiar things, and the same old (and young!), loveable (and maddening!) people, *differently*. We do well to see our family as God's family, as the family through which God reveals and expresses God's love. This is a new sort of seeing, a re-vision of the family and its relationships. It involves, in a sense, seeing people as God's couples, as God's children, parents, brothers and sisters. It invites us to see our relationships as God's relationships; to see our homes as God's home; to see our love as God's love. So, when are you most aware of God in your family experience?



Talking it Through:

Does Seeing God at Home Matter?

During *Listening 2004* we discovered a great deal of ambivalence around matters and practice of faith in God. Families' church lives and their home lives are often disconnected, for a whole variety of reasons. On the other hand, families really valued the teachings of Jesus in helping them to make sense of their lives. Feedback from those who have become more aware of God's presence at home, more aware of the ways in which they participate in God's life-giving love, suggests a renewed self-confidence and sense of family-worth. Matthew's gospel (chapter 25) assures us that God is at the heart of all that we do in love and care for our families and for others. When Jesus wanted to set an example of Godlike activity, he washed feet. You can't get much more down-to-earth than that. How might we think of God while cleaning out the car, washing clothes and dishes, straightening the daily mess, ferrying kids to "practice", overseeing homework and so forth?

Awareness of God

'Big family meals when everybody's there, all jabbering away.'

'My grandchildren, certain things they do or see and I know that life goes on through them.'

'I do feel like there's this pair of hands just holding us and pushing us on.'

Responding to the challenge

How can we see better God's presence at home? The great spiritual teachers have traditionally identified three ways to look at our lives. With one set of eyes we see only our physical surroundings, the surface of all that surrounds us. The image on the front of this sheet shows an adult and two children preparing to eat. The eyes of the mind penetrate deeper, perceiving the meaning beneath the surface. Is this a father and his children? What will they eat? But the deepest set of eyes, the eyes of the spirit, see everything from God's perspective. These eyes see the hands and heart of God at work in our own and in our family's hands and hearts. Our kitchens, dining and living rooms are spaces where we share food. And every meal, as Bishop John Rawsthorne says in the DVD, has an element of Eucharist about it. What else, besides food, do you and your family share when you eat together?

In small groups analyse photographs of family gatherings using these three sets of eyes: the eyes of the body, the eyes of the mind and the eyes of the spirit. Record your reflections on a flipchart – these could be typed up and displayed alongside the images in church. If you need more help with this 'ways of seeing' process you can find a fuller explanation at www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk

More Questions

- **What obstacles in your everyday family life prevent you from recognising the presence of God around you?**
- **The DVD connects God's presence in family life with the Sacraments of Holy Orders and the Sick. What connections can you make between your family life and the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation and Matrimony?**
- **What practical steps can you take to help your family remember God's presence at home? How would you like your parish to celebrate that Home is a Holy Place?**

For Groups:

Family Focal Point

Invite your guests to bring an object from home that best represents for them God's creation (eg a paintbrush, a wooden spoon, a spanner). Cover a small table with an ordinary tablecloth. Light a candle that is usually found at home—the small, squat variety are best. Invite everyone to place their object on the table and to say a few words about their choice and what it means to them. Say a short prayer of thanks to God for God's presence at home.

A Prayer to the God Who Fell From Earth

If you had stayed
Tightfisted in the sky
And watched us thrash
With all the patience of a pipe smoker,
I would pray
Like a golden bullet
Aimed at your heart.

But the story says
You cried
And so heavy was the tear
You fell with it to earth
Where like a baritone in a bar
It is never time to go home.

So you move among us
Twisting every straight line into Picasso,
Stealing kisses from pinched lips,
Holding our hand in the dark.

So now when I pray
I sit and turn my mind
Like a television knob
Till you are there
With your large, open hands
Spreading my life before me
Like a Sunday table cloth
And pulling up a chair yourself
For by now
The secret is out.
You are home.

John Shea

Further resources available:

www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk