

*What is the Father's role in a Christian family?*

It is the father who will report to Father God about his family. He is assigned the primary responsibility, supported by the mother, of course. We read often in the Bible how God commands the husband to love and lead his family. It is the father's role in God's perfect plan. This fatherly role must be prayerfully accepted and honored by the family. In all this, however, both father and mother must be honored according to the fourth commandment. No Christian father would have it any other way.

Even secular statistics give evidence to God's plan. Study after study shows that children from families with a good father are more likely to grow up successfully. There is less crime and addiction and they in turn are more likely to grow into happier marriages of their own. In matters of Church attendance, young people who are required, especially by their fathers, to attend Sunday Mass, religious formation classes, and youth events, are far more likely to remain active Catholics as adults. Even those who forget about Church during college age are considerably more likely to come back. One surprising study actually shows that where the father is a strict Catholic, 90% of the children will live their adult lives as Catholics, even where the mother is a weak Catholic. In the opposite case, where the mother is a strict Catholic and the father is not, we find only about a 45% success. Children do naturally tend to take their identity mostly from their father.

The family is the Church in miniature. It is also the basic unit of society. God in Holy Scripture appoints the father as the Priest, Prophet and King of his family. As priest the father is called to be both the prayer leader and the gateway of grace to his family. As prophet he is the main channel of the Word of God to his family. For example; God went to St. Joseph and not the blessed virgin to tell them to flee into Egypt. As King, the father enforces morality and is the one who is ultimately responsible to lead his family to heaven.

In our crippled world this leadership role may sometimes necessarily fall on the mother but we find no specific command to her about this. Mothers are called the helpmates, cooperators and co-leaders (queens) who support God's plan. All too often today mothers become the backup kings by default where fathers do not know their roles or do not take their responsibilities seriously. Thank God for good Catholic mothers, but this is really plan B. Our recent catechesis on family life has been weak in the face of the secular agenda and a false model of Vatican two. We do, however, see some hopeful signs that all this is slowly changing back to the Christian ideal; back to God's plan for holy families. Bringing all fathers back to their traditional and biblical roles is the key to the future of family life.

Keep praying for fathers, family, Church and society.