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# **Symposium on the Family: Houstonians come together to strengthen families**

On Saturday, September 16, 2000, people from all parts of Houston gathered at Rice University to attend the Symposium on the Family: An Oasis of Love. The guest speakers were Bill and Leigh Bowman of Arlington, Massachusetts, who, in conjunction with other parents, founded Montrose School, now in its twentieth year in the Boston area.

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The presentation began with the Bowmans encouraging couples to give their marriages priority in

family life: in order to be a good parent once must start by being a good husband and wife. When rearing children, parents need to remember that each child is an individual, unique person, with his or her own particular strengths and weaknesses. This uniqueness should be taken into account as parents administer justice and encourage piety in their children. When discipline is necessary, let the punishment fit the crime. To teach children to pray, the first element is example. In addition, parents must learn to balance work with family time. Only by placing the family in the proper *ordo amoris* (God, family, work) will parents be able to foster a community of love in their home.

The Symposium also featured a panel discussion moderated by Wendy O'Bar, who read written questions solicited from the audience. The panelists were Bill and Leigh

Bowman, and Marty and Margie Hayden, a Houston couple and parents of five small children. The questions were very practical in nature asking for applications of the principles expounded upon by the Bowmans. The questions ranged from how to discipline toddlers and discourage fighting to how to encourage chastity among teenagers and how to find time to get away as a couple when there is a new baby in the house. The answers were very helpful, and the anecdotes offered by the panelists were most encouraging; many couples came away with a sense of hope and increased solidarity in their effort to raise good children. In an age when the family is attacked from many different directions, it was wonderful to see 50 couples and 10 single professionals gathered in one room to promote the well-being and happiness of the family. We hope that this Symposium on the Family, organized by

Southgate Study Center with the collaboration of six mothers, is a sign of good things to come from Houston, Texas.

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