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“Make time for your children.”

St Josemaría encourages parents to make time for their children. This is why Jorge Claude says, “My children need to see that I spend time on them.”

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Balancing the equation of work and family is not an easy task. In fact it is a constant challenge, which demands eternal vigilance.

I was born in Chile, in a family that was French on both sides. My parents were always concerned to educate us in the human virtues, and to keep up a close relationship with my brothers and sisters and myself. I still love to recall the passionately interesting, deep conversations we used to have after dinner.

I'm now 47, married, with twelve children ranging from 18 down to just a few months old. Although I've always been firmly resolved to dedicate time and effort to the great project of raising my children well, I'm fully aware that it's not easy.

My job is very absorbing. Here are some guidelines I've found very helpful in looking after my family life without prejudice to all the many other things that have to be done:

Prayer. I pray hard for my wife and each of my children. What I do is pray to each of their Guardian Angels

every day, say a *Memorare* for each of them, offer one mystery of the Rosary for my wife and another for my children, and say at least one prayer to Saint Josemaría from the prayer-card for each of them. (If any of them are in particular difficulties, I'll say many more prayers for them.)

Spend time with each of them, starting with my wife. “When you bring order into your life your time will multiply, and then you will be able to give God more glory, by working more in his service,” says Saint Josemaría. We generally go away together for the weekend every six months, and we regularly have lunch together during the week.

As for the children, they need to see that I spend time on them. What I usually do is go out for an ice-cream, or simply a walk, with each of them. Like that they each have the opportunity to feel that they are an

“only child”, even though there are so many of them. Another key point is being prepared to give them a lift home from whatever activity they’ve been doing, either in the evenings or at night, depending on their age, because that’s usually a very good opportunity to talk, when they’re happy and relaxed. That applies to any age, because it’s good for them to get into the habit of chatting to their Dad from when they’re quite small.

Introduce the children to certain devotions so that they see them as something natural. At home, as well as going to Sunday Mass, we say grace before meals and say the Angelus at 12 o’clock. We also have the habit of saying good-night to each of them in their own rooms, blessing them with holy water on the forehead. To the children it’s an important ritual which they value and even demand.

Jorge Claude

Chile

(Except from St Josemaría's homily entitled "Marriage: a Christian Vocation.", n. 29)

"Listen to your children. Give them your time, even the time that you have reserved for yourselves. Show them your confidence; believe whatever they tell you, even if sometimes they try to deceive you. Don't be afraid when they rebel, because, at their age, you yourselves were more or less rebellious. Go to meet them half-way and pray for them. If you act in this Christian manner, they will come to you with simplicity, instead of trying to satisfy their legitimate curiosity by taking it to some rough or vulgar friend. Your confidence, your friendly dealings with your children, will receive an answer in their sincerity in dealing

with you. Then, even if there are quarrels and lack of understanding, they will never amount to much...."

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