

# My Family and Our Dental Clinic

Abing Chan and her husband live in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Both work as dentists. Abing shares reflections and stories about her work, both as a mother and dentist.

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Last year, my husband and I celebrated our twelfth wedding anniversary, on the Feast of the Holy Family. On that day, in addition to being grateful for our marriage and our five children, I finally

understood why God wanted to begin the work of salvation "in a family," as Pope Francis has pointed out on numerous occasions.

My eldest child is eleven years old, and the youngest is two. As I accompany my children on their journey of growth, I think of Jesus. He also traveled a path of growth and maturity, just like everyone else. He learned from Our Lady and St Joseph how to speak, how to work and about life in general. The example of Joseph and Mary can be seen in the public life of Jesus, in the parables that He uses and in the way he cares for others. "New wine cannot be poured into old wineskins..." Could this not have been inspired by Jesus seeing Our Lady sew when He was a child? He also uses yeast as a metaphor... this could have also come from watching His Mother in the kitchen, raising dough. We also know what kind of

mother Jesus had when we see Our Lady in action at Cana, the first one at the wedding feast to realize the wine is running short.

The Gospel sheds light on our challenging duty as parents, which leads me to a personal story about my son. When he was in the third grade, he started developing the bad habit of telling lies. He would never admit his mistakes unless someone found evidence. Once, however, when we were praying the rosary together as a family, he volunteered to lead the decade, and said, "This is to pray for my habit of lying." We were all so happy for him because he was finally acknowledging his defect. One day, I found traces of pencil graffiti on the wall of the study room, and I asked my children who did it. He rushed out and admitted, "Mum, it was me." I asked him to clean up the wall. Although the wall could not be cleaned completely, I did not

punish him. I was overjoyed, seeing how Our Lady was helping him overcome his bad habits!

We often pray the rosary together with our children. The mysteries of the rosary provide a summary of the entire history of salvation, and through this custom, our children gain an initial concept of salvation and often experience the power of prayer.

Of course, supporting a family of five is not a simple matter. More than five years ago, my husband and I decided to open our private dental clinic, to support the needs of our growing family. We knew from the start that there would be risks and challenges, but we decided to take the leap. Despite difficulties, the clinic has opened up an ocean of opportunities to do good for others.

One lesson I've learned so far is that each patient is very different from

the next, just like my five children. I had to learn how to deal with each problem as an isolated case and to respect different personalities. I also have to listen patiently to their complaints, to try to empathize with them and understand them. Apart from interpersonal skills, I see that I also needed to improve my professional skills, so I can sanctify my work and be a confident and competent dentist.

In the clinic, we have several dental assistants working for us. We spent a lot of time training them, talking to them and thinking about how to help them improve as professionals. In some ways, you could say we "adopt" them as our children, keeping in mind their family background, patiently teaching them to pay attention to little things, to treat the patients cheerfully, and to avoid raising their voice while working.

Some patients have started to notice that the atmosphere is a bit different in our clinic. One patient told my husband, "I noticed that your way of speaking is gentle, and so is your assistant's. I like this very much because it makes me feel calm. I don't have that at my workplace."

There are two floors in the clinic. We framed our children's drawings and hung them on the wall along the staircase. Each one has its unique characteristics with vivid colors, and we change the paintings from time to time. This has caught the attention of young mothers who were inspired to do the same in their homes to encourage their children to be creative and imaginative.

In the waiting area of the clinic, we decided to place good books for adults and children instead of televisions, newspapers or magazines. Sometime later, the

waiting area became like a small library. I have often seen parents reading children's books for their children, or adults reading attentively. More than once, after the dental treatment, the children will ask their parents to continue where they left off. Some patients have even donated books to our clinic, while others ask to borrow books to read at home. We did not expect such a wonderful cultural atmosphere to arise, simply by having good books available!

Around Christmas time, we replaced the dental products in the display cabinet with a Nativity scene. My dental chair is right behind this cabinet and close to the waiting area. One day, I heard a mother telling her children about the characters in the scene, which is impressive because most people in Taiwan do not even know about them. Another time, we heard a child asking his grandfather

about the display, and he replied, "I don't know, it must be an antique from the dentist's collection."

I am very pleased that our clinic can be a place for us to sanctify our work, sanctify ourselves through our work and sanctify others through our work, as St. Josemaria said. With the help of God's grace, I hope that we can open paths to God for many people through our clinic. We want to care for the dental health of our patients and to offer them the possibility of a new attitude towards life. I pray that every family in the world will be blessed with God's light to learn about the love of the Holy Family.

*Abing Chan*

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