



CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

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“ Building a Community of Disciples ”

September 23, 2007

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Who's Coming to Dinner?

The next time you're tempted to worry about whether you should cook dinner for your family or order take out, stop and remember that what your kids really want at the dinner table is YOU! Your undivided attention is the most important ingredient for your family's dinnertime because frequent family meals are one of the best ways to stay engaged in your children's lives.

Dinner is a perfect time to connect with your family on a daily basis. Asking your kids about their day and talking about yours, shows your kids that you love them and demonstrates that you are there to listen to them. If you make it a habit of staying engaged in your kids' lives and communicating with them now, your kids will be more willing to talk to you when they start feeling the pressure from their peers to start experimenting with cigarettes, illegal and prescription drugs or alcohol.

their children's lives. *Family Day* is celebrated annually on the fourth Monday in September, September 24 in 2007. Scores of families, non profit groups and corporations nationwide will celebrate *Family Day*.

St. Ignatius Loyola, the first church in the country to celebrate **Family Day** back in 2001, continues to be a champion supporter of *Family Day*. This year the family at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish will be joined by 20 Catholic archdioceses and dioceses across the country.

Since 1996 research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA*) at Columbia University has found that the more often kids eat with their family, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. CASA's 2007 report *The Importance of Family Dinners IV* found that compared to teens who have five to seven family dinners a week, those who dine with their families fewer than three nights a week are: three and a half times likelier to have abused prescription drugs; three times likelier to have tried marijuana; more than two and a half times likelier to have tried cigarettes and one and a half times likelier to have tried alcohol.

CASA launched *Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children™* in 2001 as a national initiative to remind parents about the importance of parental engagement in

It's only fitting that St. Ignatius Loyola embrace the importance of family dinners, given that sharing meals with loved ones played a significant role in Jesus' life. When Jesus was young, he and his parents would go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover as a family event.

Years later, many key events in Jesus' ministry took place while a meal was being shared with family and friends. Jesus was at a wedding feast with his mother when he performed his first miracle. On another occasion, after giving spiritual food to the crowd of more than 5,000 who eagerly listened to him teach along the mountainside, Jesus miraculously multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish and everyone present enjoyed a meal together.

After Jesus' resurrection, he not only met his disciples by the Sea of Galilee and allowed for them to catch 153 large fish, but Jesus also cooked some of the fish and he and his disciples ate breakfast together.

Jesus modeled the value of taking the time to break bread with loved ones. Too often we let outside distractions and the cares of this world keep us from slowing down and enjoying our family or staying involved in their lives.

“Jesus modeled the value of taking the time to break bread with loved ones.”



Unfortunately with today's demands and deadlines, not all families can eat together frequently. If regular family meals are impossible for your family, make sure to stay engaged with your kids and to communicate with them by having family meals on the weekends, meeting for breakfast regularly, sharing dessert, or chatting with them while you're driving them to their lessons or scheduling regular family activities.

Other ways that you can help prevent your kids from abusing substances include:

- knowing your children's whereabouts, activities and friends;
- setting fair rules and holding your children to them;
- maintaining open lines of communication;
- surrounding your children with positive role models;
- learning the signs and symptoms of teen substance abuse and conditions that increase risk.

Family meals can be a sacred time for you and your kids. Start dinner with a prayer of thanksgiving. Let the answering machine pick up calls and press pause on electronics around the house. Make sure conversation is lighthearted and give everyone a chance to participate.

Don't underestimate the power of parenting. Parenting is the most potent tool to prevent your kids from smoking, drinking or using drugs.

Keep gathering around the dinner table with your kids and you'll help to keep them substance free and you'll help feed their mind, body and soul.

For more information about *Family Day* visit www.CASAFamilyDay.org.

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Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Chairman and President
The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University
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