



ASIA/SINGAPORE-Importance of "Quality Family Time" by the Archbishop of Singapore

Singapore (Agenzia Fides) - It is urgent that families find "quality time" for their lives, which means to live "special moments" for dialogue, sharing, listening to each other, the deepening of Christian faith, prayer: this is the appeal launched by Archbishop Nicholas Chia, Archbishop of Singapore on the occasion of the International Day of Families, which is celebrated by the United Nations on May 15.

In a message issued in the Archdiocese, and sent to Fides, the Archbishop emphasizes "the importance of the family as the fundamental unit of a society" and points out that it has long been a fact that happy and productive adults are the result of their parents spending time with them. However, in today's world of constant media bombardment, high stress and longer working hours, families are finding it more challenging to spend "quality time" together on a regular basis.

The Archbishop said he noticed how often each member of the family is engaged with his or her respective "electronic device" and dialogue between the members of the family is absent. A study conducted in 2009 by Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) showed that when families ate dinner together at least three times a week, and without the distraction of handheld devices, their children were less likely to become involved with drugs and alcohol.

But, "being present at the same table" is not enough, the Archbishop observes: The real "magic" of the family dinner comes from stimulating discussions that serve to strengthen family bonds. The family meal is an excellent opportunity to discuss issues, make plans, and learn about one another's interests in a non-judgemental way. "It is also the perfect time to talk about values and the Christian faith, sharing stories from the Bible and one's own experience".

For this reason the Archbishop urges all the families of the Archdiocese to set aside "quality time" with their family, using their time to establish authentic relationships between parents and children and also to explore the Catholic faith together "as a family". The message offers the following unique suggestion on how to celebrate the International Day of Families:

"Read a whole page of the Bible", bringing the story into the modern-day context, knowing that "the family is a vocation to build the Kingdom of God." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 12/05/2011)