Dealing With Conflict

How do we live as "Holy Families" when there is conflict?

Very few people enjoy conflict. Conflict can be difficult especially when experienced in family. Yet conflict is a normal reality of life, especially in families. The way we handle conflict can promote healthy relationships or it can be dangerously unhealthy.

Jesus knew we would face conflict, so he addressed the issue directly and gave us a blueprint and model for dealing with conflict. This can be found in Matthew chapter 18:

> *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)*

Jesus gives us three specific steps to follow in dealing with conflict. The first step is to go to the person directly to talk about the conflict. So often, we talk about someone rather than talking **to** them when we have a problem with them. This leads to confusion, gossip, hurt feelings, misinformation and the conflict is never resolved. Healthy families deal with conflict directly. Holy Families deal with conflict directly as Jesus told us to. In many cases, the source of conflict is misunderstanding.

If talking directly to someone about your conflict, concern or hurt does not bring resolution, the next step is to invite someone to come with you as you talk about the issue a second time. Understand that sometimes resolution means agreeing to disagree and always should involve love and care. Frequently, resolution involves an apology. Apologizing to someone is not about who is right or wrong in a situation; rather it is recognizing a hurt. As a parent it is important to apologize to our children when we inadvertently hurt them.

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The final step, if the first two do not bring resolution, is to involve a larger group, such as the church leadership or the whole family. This would be a rare occurrence!

How we decide to handle conflict will determine whether or not the conflict is resolved and will either allow relationships to grow and deepen or will hurt and hinder them. This is most profoundly true in family. While conflict may be a reality, we can be thankful knowing Jesus gave us a model for dealing with one another. He walks with us in the midst of conflict and can redeem all conflict for good.

Living as Holy Families

Topical conversation starters to help parents stay "on the same page" with each other and their families.

Things to Pray and Talk About:

a) *How do you face conflict? How do you think others feel when they face conflict?*

b) *How can you ask God to help you when you face conflict?*

c) *How does what Jesus tells us about conflict help you deal with it in a healthier way?*

d) *How can you trust God more in the midst of conflict?*

Asking for God's Blessing:

God, we thank you that you are always with us and always love us. Walk with us in the midst of conflict. Help us to have the wisdom and courage to handle conflict the way Jesus taught us. Use the conflict we face for good in our lives, our families and the world. Draw us closer to you in the midst of any conflict we face and help us to trust you in all things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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