

HomeWord

Dedicated to household harmony & family faith

Sharing About

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Remembering Family Moments by Kathleen Finley

Quick—what day is it today? And what season? Those questions, and time itself, have become an increasingly important part of my prayer in the last few years. Perhaps this is related to my reaching fifty and realizing anew that I won't be young forever, but I suspect it's much more than that. I've always had a deep desire to celebrate special seasons and days. Just ask my family.

I have come to believe that we have more reasons than we know to celebrate each day. Besides the birthdays and anniversaries of friends and family and saints' feast days, there are the did-you-know-on-this-date-in-history events and even festivals and holidays from other parts of the world to commemorate.

To keep track of all these and more, I began a homemade family book of days over fifteen years ago, with the help of a newsletter on family ritual and later the magazine *Family Festivals*. As I heard about feast days and holidays from around the world, and as events would happen in our family that I wanted to remember, I added them to the appropriate page in the three-ring binder that sat on our kitchen counter. Accidents, illnesses, trips and vacations, first steps and first words, first jobs, retiring the high chair, getting our cat, the cat's eventual death—it's all gone into the book of days through the years.

This process has helped me pray because it has changed the nature of time for me and, I hope, for my fam-

ily, as we name our own days. Although we have a calendar on the wall every year, filled with plenty of appointments and comings and goings, a different quality of time underlies all that activity.

In the past few years, the action of *remembering* for me has become increasingly linked with the notion of *recalling* that we are *members* of one another. So whether it's a saint's day or a holiday celebrated halfway around the world, remembering reconnects me to people who are a part of me and a part of the Body of Christ.

When our children were younger, we also used the book of days as a starting place for family conversation. Where is Tanzania where they celebrated a holiday today? Who was Saint Peter Claver whose feast day is today? What about issues like the labor movement, racism, or the women's movement, based on an event commemorated today? What about the kind of music or books or inventions produced by someone born today?

I am convinced that what happens in our days and nights are gifts from God—even the events that look least like gifts. I am also convinced that in order to listen to what is happening around me and to appreciate it as a gift, I need to take some time each day to see and

remember how God is present to me in each moment of my life.

Kathleen Finley is an educator in marriage and family topics. She and her husband, Mitch, have three young adult sons.

You can get your own book of days! Kathleen Finley has recently published *Our Family Book of Days: A Record Through the Years*. In a lovely format with a tasteful hardback cover, the book provides just the right kind of space to record your family's precious and sacred moments through the years. The book also makes a great gift for newlyweds or new parents. (Available from Saint Mary's Press, 800-533-8095.)

A Parent's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

by Jennifer Christ

As parents we sometimes wonder how the Lord expects us to cope with all the challenges of family life. I often joke that even Mother Teresa wouldn't have enough patience for my brood of four. We forget that along with the challenges of parenting, the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, has also provided us with all the resources we'll ever need.

Recently our friends Brian and JoAnn gave birth to their fifth child, Anne—a wondrous event, a miracle to be sure! Like all miracles, this one demands a great deal of faith on the part of all involved. A new baby stretches the family in a multitude of ways. Each relationship must adjust and change to make room for the new member. The whole family must practically be born anew. It's a change that demands faith.

As the fifth child, Anne will certainly have her share of hand-me-downs. So instead of buying her another cute outfit, we gave her family the BAD DAY BOX. Taped to the box was a message addressed to JoAnn, who is at home full-time with the children:

Do not open this box today. Rather set it aside for the BAD DAY. How will you know it is the proper day to open the box? You will know because . . . it is 10:30 a.m. and you haven't yet showered. Anne has been up all night, insisting on being rocked. She has filled her diaper twice in the last fifteen minutes. John and James are out to get one another. Thomas has forgotten his potty training lessons, and Marie's tone is getting a tad sassy. It's pouring rain, the dog is throwing up, and your Mom has called three times "just to see how everything is going." Today is the day to open the BAD DAY BOX. Enjoy!

Inside the box was a Ziplock bag for each of the four older siblings. The bags contained puzzle books, crayons, Matchbox cars, and a snack. There was a toy for the baby, and for Dad, who has a junk-food tooth, there was a soda and some munchies. JoAnn's package contained two recycled issues of my favorite periodical for mothers and this prayer:

A Parent's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit,
I am exhausted. I am crabby.
I have run out of everything a
parent needs. In my emptiness I
am also open . . . waiting to
be filled by all that you have to
offer me.

Today I could especially use
new ways to be patient and
gentle with these children.
Fortitude is a charism I long for.

I am spent, dear Holy Spirit.
I rely on you to fill me with
everything I have used up
today, and more.
Amen.

Jennifer Christ ministers as a freelance consultant for Adult and Family Ministry in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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Reflections for Parents

A spirituality of parenting and family life lies not in tips and ideas but in attitude and core identity. Take a moment to review your parenting efforts and reflect upon one or more of the following questions: Can I see the face of Jesus in my children even when they terrorize one another, or when they swarm around me like pesky flies at the most inopportune times, or when they so effortlessly bring out the very worst in me? Can I forgive them seventy times seven times? Do I remember that I am simply a steward of my children's journey until they can steward their own journey? Can I remember that my goal is not to shape my children in the image and likeness of me, but rather to nurture them to become the true persons God has created them to be? Do I turn to our faith to guide my decision making? No parenting decision ever seems minor at the moment. Can I remember to turn to prayer (and other believers) for guidance?