Diary of a Catholic Mom: Scheduling in Time for Faith

As the August days begin to shorten and cool down, my conversations with my friends shift from summer vacation plans and pool dates to the exacting nature of planning out fall schedules. Is Adam going to preschool two or three days a week? What extracurricular activities are you planning for Veronica? Do you think Paul is ready for traveling soccer this year?

These conversations generally lead to questions that we debate endlessly but have trouble answering in a satisfactory way. How much should I let my child choose their activities? If I don't allow her on the gymnastics team now, am I closing a door for her in the future? If I let him quit piano, am I shortchanging his education? When will my 7-year-old have time for free play? How can we keep holy the Sabbath when we have soccer games and swim team on Sunday mornings?

This time of year, when we are signing up and making schedules, excited for the year ahead, it is a good time to think and pray about these questions.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote: "Work and rest are intimately associated with the life of families. They influence the choices the family makes, the relationship between the spouses and among parents and children, and they affect the dealings the family has with society and with the Church." It makes sense, then, that we step back at the start of a new school year to reflect on our priorities and plans as a family. Much like our home or possessions, in a family we give our time to each other, seeing it as something to be shared. Thus it makes sense that every soccer practice, Girl Scout meeting and band practice be considered for its impact on the whole family, and on our family life, as well as on the individual member.

So, maybe sit down and consider the ways in which you want your family to grow as you begin making those new schedules.

• Do we hold family dinner as sacred time? Or night prayers?
• How will we make sure everyone in the family has time for productive rest and free play?
• How can everyone's needs (for social outlets, activity, quiet time or solitude) be met?
• How can we keep our time with God (particularly in the Eucharist) central to our family life?
• How can we reach out in service to our wider community?

Though your questions may be unique to your family, this season of new beginnings is a great time to ask them.

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