Five ways to stay sane in the holiday hustle

It’s the most wonderful time of the year – and sometimes the most stressful. Many American families today have such busy schedules and limited bandwidth that the holiday season can put us over the edge. How can we, as Catholic families, keep the spirit of tranquility and peace that should characterize the season of Our Lord’s birth?

1. Be realistic: Don’t overcommit to Christmas parties, programs and events. Sometimes we can get so busy we forget what it’s all for. Commit to a couple of holiday events, and be present, so you can truly celebrate.

2. Maintain healthy habits: Be sure to eat, sleep and take care of yourself in the midst of the hustle and bustle. This will help keep you well for the holidays and your whole family will benefit.

3. Keep the kids in a routine: Both before the holidays and during holiday travels we have a tendency to let schedules and routines go by the wayside, but this isn’t always good for kids. Many behavioral problems can arise when structure falls apart (just ask any teacher what things are like just before Christmas and summer breaks)! Try to stick to regular bedtimes, mealtimes and other family routines as much as possible.

4. Plan for family stress: If there are relatives who can be negative influences on the kids or family environments that bring out the worst in you, have an escape plan before venturing on holiday travel. For example, is there a movie theater or library near the house where you are staying? Plan to get away for a while when you and your own children need to take a break.

5. Pray and worship: At Christmas Mass we sing, “Come let us adore … ” The mystery of God made man is awe-inspiring and beautiful. Take some time to stop and pray, reflecting on the season and worshiping with the Church.