



CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

980 PARK AVENUE AT 84TH STREET • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10028 • (212) 288-3588

WWW.SAINTIGNATIUSLOYOLA.ORG

September 24, 2006

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

FAMILY DAY FAMILY DINING

Never has it been more important for parents to be engaged in the lives of their children and there is a comfortable, simple and effective way to do so: frequent family dinners.

Since 1996 research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University has found that the more often children eat dinner with their parents, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. Compared to teens who have five or more family dinners per week, teens who have two or less are much likelier to smoke, drink and use marijuana. Teens who have infrequent family dinners are twice as likely to smoke daily and get drunk monthly, according to CASA's recently released report *The Importance of Family Dinners III*.

CASA's surveys of teens over several years consistently finds that teens who have dinner with their families five or more times a week are likelier to get A's and B's in school compared to teens who have dinner with their families fewer than three times a week. Teens who typically receive grades of C or lower are at twice the risk of substance abuse as those receiving all A's or A's and B's.

Moreover, teens with high levels of stress and boredom are much likelier to get involved with drugs. Here again, teens who have frequent family dinners evidence low levels of stress and are far less likely to be bored.

The idea of getting to know your loved ones better by breaking bread together is nothing new. Jesus regularly shared meals with his disciples. He knew the value of spending quality time with his family in Christ. Unfortunately, too many parents today have forgotten how sacred family time should be. If you make it a point to spend time with your kids and to communicate with them early on, they will be more inclined to turn to you later when they feel the pressure from their peers to smoke, drink or use drugs.

In an effort to inform parents about the benefits of family meals, CASA launched *Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children™* in 2001 as a national initiative that promotes regular parent-child communications and frequent family dinners as simple and effective ways to reduce children's and teens' risk of smoking, drinking and using illegal drugs. Celebrated on the fourth Monday of September every year, *Family Day 2006* will be observed on September 25th. What started out as a small grassroots movement has exploded into a national event that gains momentum with each year!

Last year, more than 1.3 million Americans joined CASA and TV Land and Nick at Nite's *Family Table*:

Make a Date for Dinner



Parent Power is the most potent and under-utilized tool to prevent children from using substances or engaging in risky behavior.



People committed to eating together with their loved ones on Family Day can go to:

www.FamilyTableinfo.com

to pledge to have dinner with their family and friends.



St. Ignatius Loyola was the first church in the nation to celebrate *Family Day*.

Share more than Meals by pledging to have dinner with their loved ones on *Family Day*. This year the goal is to get millions more to log onto www.familytable.info to take the pledge.

St. Ignatius Loyola was the first church in the nation to celebrate *Family Day*. It has been a dedicated supporter of *Family Day* since the beginning. The family at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish continues to lead the way for other Catholic churches that recognize the value in spreading the message about the importance of family dinners.

This year thirty-four archdioceses and dioceses across the country are rallying behind *Family Day* and promoting family meals among parishes and schools. From the Dioceses of San Bernardino in California and San Angelo in Texas to the Dioceses of Orlando in Florida and Brooklyn right here in New York, Catholics across the United States are joining in the celebration.

In this day and age, with the high incidence of two-income families and single-parent households, and the increasing demands on kids' time from school and other activities, it is not an easy task to get the whole family together at the dinner table. Given the importance of frequent family dinners and the powerful impact parental engagement has in preventing teen substance abuse, every family should work to overcome the barriers to frequent family dining, especially during the dangerous decade from 10 to 20, those years when our children are most likely to be offered alcohol and drugs.

Along with starting your meal by saying grace, you can make dinnertime special by turning off the TV and not answering the phone. To keep the conversations going, make sure everyone has a chance to participate. Talking about extracurricular activities or current events with your son or daughter can make for great dinner conversation.

Parents who have frequent family dinners are involved in their kids' lives. They know their teen's friends and the parents of their teen's friends, get engaged at their kids' schools, chaperone their teen's parties, set fair rules and hold children to them, maintain open lines of communication, surround their children with positive role models and tend to be alert to the signs and symptoms of teen substance abuse and situations that increase risk.

America's drug problem will not be solved in courtrooms or legislative hearing rooms, by judges and politicians. It will be solved in living rooms and dining rooms, and across kitchen tables, by parents and families. So eat dinner with your children on Family Day and everyday and take an active role in helping your kids grow up to be the kind of men and women God created them to be.

For more information on Family Day visit www.CASAFamilyDay.org

**Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Chairman and President
The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
at Columbia University
and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and
Welfare**



The Holy Family At Table, Jacques Callot, 1628

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