

Creating a Christian Environment in the Home (Abbot Tryphon)

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Creating a Christian home begins with the icon corner. The bright corner becomes the center for every domestic church, where the family devotions take place. This is also the family's way of declaring to visitors that this is a Christian home, where Christ is head. Because the husband is a sort of domestic priest (the priesthood of all believers), it is important that he be the one who leads the entire family in prayer.

Each member of the family should have their own patron saint's icon. A wonderful practice from ancient times is to have a family icon written so that all their patron saints are represented in the same icon.

The family should try as best they can to have dinner together every night of the week. Watching TV while eating dinner is a very bad idea, for the meal should be the time when the parents can talk to their children about school, or other

activities. In these modern times there are almost always school or work related activities that don't always allow everyone to be together for that all important family meal, but every effort should be made to make this happen as often as possible. The blessing of the food, with the father or mother making the sign of the cross over the meal with their fingers together as they do when blessing oneself, should never be avoided. If we always say a blessing over our food at home and give thanks to God for all He has given us, we are more likely to do so when at school or in a restaurant.

We've all seen those bumper stickers that read, «Kill Your TV». Television and the overuse of the Internet are wreaking havoc on family life. Don't allow these foreign invaders into your home to replace Christ as head of your household. Bad habits are hard to overcome, so replacing these with communal time in the living room may be hard at first, but is necessary for the basic foundation of any Christian home.

Guard your home from other invaders as well. Magazines and other reading material should be appropriate for the Christian home. If you'd not want your priest to see a magazine or book in your home, it shouldn't be there in the first place. The music played in the home should also be uplifting and devoid of profanity and vulgarity.

Regular family meetings where everyone has an opportunity to talk about things and where the atmosphere is loving, open and safe, help create trust and a sense of security for everyone. It is natural for parents to argue on occasion, but this should never take place in front of children. They need to feel secure. Boys need to see their fathers as icons of Christ in the home, demonstrating the biblical image of a husband and father. You men need, for the sake of your children, to give witness to the importance of prayer and church attendance. Statistically, children whose father is a church goer are far more likely to stay in church as adults. Don't leave spiritual instruction up to your wives. You will be held accountable before the Throne of God for your children.

Men should not let their wives do all the house cleaning and cooking. In an age where both husband and wife often need to hold down jobs in order to make ends meet, a woman's work is not just household work. She should not have to come home from work and be expected to do all the housework and cooking by herself. Men need to teach their children by example to help around the house.

Children should be given a small allowance (according to age) so they can learn to manage money, and an important part of money managing is the tithe. The biblical

command to give ten percent of one's income back to God is almost never taught in the Orthodox Church, which is why so many clergy are given such meager salaries, and parishes have to hold church festivals. When we fail to tithe we are stealing from God! A child who tithes ten percent of his allowance will grow into an adult Orthodox Christian who tithes.

These are basic suggestions for creating an Orthodox home. If you begin to implement these suggestions, the Lord will reward you with a family that stands strong and your children will grow up as spiritually healthy Christians, grounded in biblical teachings and moral fortitude. Your grandchildren will, in return, be raised with the same biblical principles and you will be the most blessed grandparents on your block!

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