

FEATURE

Lent a good time for family to practice 'ABCs'

I love the month of March. Both of my children were born during this month when we mark the advent of spring and the season of Lent. It is a season of renewal and rebirth. It is a time of year when we set goals, clean house and get busy.

During Lent, we are also invited to get busy in our spiritual life by deepening our prayer life and becoming nearer to God by serving those who are hungry, homeless and heartbroken.

But in the hectic hours of our busy days it seems that we hardly have the time to be there for those in our immediate family. How can we possibly find the time to pray more or to reach out to a family in need whom we have never met?

Today's Catholic families are presented with the challenge of discovering Jesus in the familiar as well as the forgotten families of our communities. To bring God's love to a broken world and to truly serve another person requires love, patience and time, all of which are at a premium in our busy lives.

Still, there are many ways to begin teaching Christian service to our children that don't have to require a lot of our time, only a commitment to faith and love. The most important way we educate our children about our faith in God and service to others is by setting examples of love, peacemaking and prayer in our own families. There are many other opportunities



family matters

By EILEEN MARX

for practicing simple acts of kindness as a family that can help create for our children a profound awareness and sensitivity for people in need.

Some of the following suggestions you may already be practicing in your home, but we need to remind ourselves and our children that these are all ways that we follow Jesus' invitation to "love one another." Here are 26 ideas - from A to Z - that family, friends, priests, sisters and teachers have taught me in recent years:

A Adopt a poor child in a mission program with every family member making a small contribution each month. Bake a cake with your kids and share it with a lonely neighbor. Compliment your son or daughter when you notice he or she is sharing.

D Donate food, clothing, furniture or your time to Catholic Charities. Encourage your children to use patience and fairness

in resolving conflicts with their friends. Fight against hatred and prejudice, and refuse to tolerate hateful attitudes, racial and ethnic jokes in your own family or anywhere else.

G Give an hour each week to a family member or friend who is struggling with an addiction or raising a child alone, visiting with them, sending a kind note and praying for them. Host a baby shower with your neighbors and donate the items to a local program for unwed mothers. Invite a friend for dinner who has recently lost her job. Listen to her fears and explore ways that you may be able to assist her in finding employment.

J Jot a note, write a letter or pick up the telephone to protest federal, state or local legislation that undermines human life and dignity. Kiss and hug your children often, because love begins at home. Look for examples of racism, sexism and violence when watching TV with your child and discuss them.

M Make a meal for someone in need - a person with AIDS, a single mother or father, a friend who has lost a loved one. Nurture your children's gifts of kindness, forgiveness and love and celebrate the many ways they express them. Offer to go food shopping for a neighbor or a parishioner who is recovering from an illness.

P Pray regularly as a family, especially for the needs of the poor, the lonely and the

oppressed. Quit saying how you wish you had the time to volunteer and do something small, then talk to your children about your experience. Read and discuss books with your children that emphasize compassion for others, such as a story of a saint or a champion of social justice.

S Smile at your children when you see they are showing love and compassion to a grandparent, a neighbor or friend. Take your older children to a nursing home or soup kitchen and hold hands with an elderly woman or a homeless man while you are there. Use your talents to offer assistance in your parish, your child's school the Special Olympics or a non-profit organization.

V Volunteer as a family once a week, once a month or once a year. Welcome new neighbors of all cultures into your community and new parishioners into your church with joy and warmth. "Xerox" an article that focuses on love, peace or justice and send it to a family member, a friend, a priest or teacher.

Y Yield not to society's pressures to buy excessive material things or violent toys, especially at Christmas and on birthdays, and explain your decision to your children. Zap hatred wherever you find it and replace it with love.

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.

After long delay, filmed version of 'Godspell' now available

NEW YORK (CNS) - The following are home videocassette reviews from the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrical movies on video have a USCC classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.



10, who listen to their wise animal friends tell stories that have lasted through the centuries in Saturday morning cartoon fashion and with emphasis on the moral of each tale. Entertainment the whole family can enjoy and from which it can learn.

Space Jam

Madcap mix of live action and animation as basketball star Michael Jordan joins Bugs Bunny, Tweety Bird and the rest of the Looney Tunes gang in a basketball match against animated aliens bent on winning the right to relocate the Looney Tunes back to their planet forever. As directed by Joe Pytko, the human and cartoon elements blend well together for a lighthearted wacky tale of hoop dreams come true. Some comic violence. The USCC classification is A-II - adults and adolescents. The MPA rating is PG - parental guidance suggested.

Harriet the Spy

Dark, overlong tale of an 11-year-old (Michelle Trachtenberg) whose nanny (Rosie O'Donnell) inspires her to write down everything she sees, but this causes much heartache when her sixth-grade classmates read what she has written in her notebook about each of them. Directed by Bronwen Hughes from Louise Fitzhugh's novel, the movie turns into a nasty revenge story, which is then slickly resolved in an unconvincing conclusion. The cruelty of youngsters and some crude language. The USCC classification is A-II - adults and adolescents. The MPA rating is PG - parental guid-

ance suggested.

A Very Brady Sequel

The lives of the ever-bouncy Brady Bunch are turned upside down when mom (Shelley Long) and dad (Gray Cole) welcome into their home a devious con man (Tim Matheson) claiming to be her presumed-dead first husband. Director Arlene Sanford makes feeble, goofy fun of the sprightly, stuck-in-the-'70s family who remain blissfully unaware they are in the nastier '90s. Numerous double entendres, fleeting comic violence and an instance of profanity. The USCC classification is A-III - adults. The MPA rating is PG-13 - parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1939)

Sprawling medieval melodrama from Victor Hugo's story of Quasimodo (Charles Laughton), the misshapen cathedral bell-ringer who rescues a kind gypsy dancer (Maureen O'Hara) from the gallows, then saves her from the clutches of the evil judge (Cedric Hardwicke) who

had been his benefactor. Directed by William Dieterle, the 15th-century Paris setting is vibrantly rendered, the crowded plot moves briskly and, at the center of the piece, Laughton's feeling performance transcends the character's grotesque features to win audience sympathy. Stylized violence and romantic complications. The USCC classification is A-II - adults and adolescents. Not rated by the MPAA.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996)

Animated tale set in 15th-century Paris where the cathedral's deformed bell-ringer, Quasimodo (voice of Tom Hulce), rescues a kindhearted gypsy (voice of Demi Moore) from the clutches of his cruel guardian (voice of Tony Jay) who raised Quasimodo as a monster unfit for human contact. Directors Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise stay true to the comic characters, sprightly songs and a happy-ever-after ending to the colorful proceedings, while not staying true to the book on which the story is based. The USCC classification is A-I - general patronage. The MPA rating is G - general audiences.

Godspell

Sparkling screen version of a musical based loosely on the Gospel according to Matthew, featuring an off-Broadway cast with Victor Garber as the Christ figure and David Haskell as both John the Baptist and Judas. What makes the movie so high-spirited is director David Greene's turning the entire city of New York into a giant stage which is used strikingly for presenting the parables in imaginative skits, many of which serve as springboards for irresistible tunes, such as "Day by Day" and "God Save the People!" The USCC classification is A-I - general patronage. The MPA rating is G - general audiences.

Adventures from the Book of Virtues

PBS series of six animated half-hour programs based on William J. Bennett's anthology of classic stories from around the world, each episode grouping the tales on one of the following themes - honesty, courage, work, responsibility, compassion and self-discipline. The episodes center on Zach, 11, and Annie,

THE PROBLEM PREGNANCY HELP CENTER, INC.

is a UNITED WAY DONOR CHOICE AGENCY #2015



The Problem Pregnancy Help Center is a grassroots, Catholic lay ministry offering alternatives to abortion to any woman in a crisis pregnancy. Hundreds of our clients can benefit from your gift to the upcoming 1997 United Way Campaign. You can make a difference by selecting the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Inc., Agency #2015, to receive your United Way Donor Choice donation. Help us protect the unborn!

Directing your gift to the Center is easy:

1. Obtain Donor Choice contributor information from your United Way Coordinator.
2. Select Option #3 on the donor designation card.
3. Enter the amount of the gift you would like to make to the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Inc., #2015.
4. Return the Donor Choice Card with your signed pledge card to your coordinator.

If you have any questions call the Center at 865-0360. THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU

You are invited

In Celebration of 25 Years

Birthright of Rochester

Friday, April 25, 1997
Burgundy Basin Inn
Social hour, cash bar, dinner
7:00pm, \$25 per person
425-8058 for information and reservations

BIRTHRIGHT