

...in the Things We Do



When Saint Ignatius of Loyola taught people to find God in all things, I wonder if he had ever experienced searching for God in a house filled with people whose only goal in life seemed to be creating chaos?

A Messy House

Coming in from work with three bags of groceries, I am greeted by white scrapings on the living room rug from the plastic foam that Daniel transformed into a tombstone for his English project. He said he would vacuum, but he was up past midnight, working on this project, which was due this morning. The kitchen isn't much better. Katie started the dishwasher before she left for school, but I guess that in the rush to help Dan with his assignment, she didn't notice the pan now caked with dried food. After putting away the groceries and changing into more housework-appropriate clothes, I plug the vacuum into the outlet.

While pushing the vacuum, I realize once again that all the plans for family organization and chore sharing can easily come apart in the bustle of daily life. Looking around this house that six of us call home, I sigh at the sneakers, skateboards, CD's, and notebooks scattered about the living room. I hope one of my more perfect neighbors does not choose this moment to ring the doorbell. I would have to pretend I'm not home. I know some families are efficient and organized: everyone knows what his or her tasks are, and somehow these get accomplished. But we have always had a different, more casual approach to maintaining the household.

I give you a new commandment: Love one another. (John 13:3)

That phrase from John's Gospel whispers itself into my ear while I am straightening up the mess before the kids return from school. Jesus didn't leave us with a lot of rules by which to live a Christian life, did he? He did give us that one commandment, though: *Love one another*. If you get that one right, everything else will fall into place. That's the theory, anyway.

"Love one another. If you get that one right, everything else will fall into place."

I smile as I pick up scraps of paper, remembering that last evening Mike stayed up all night with his younger brother to help finish his project. He worked to compose a poem, because Daniel needed a rhyming eulogy to inscribe on the tombstone of the poet he was assigned. Dan is a great artist and wonderful skateboarder, but he's never been very comfortable with words. Mike, on the other hand, is glib, sarcastic, witty, and versatile with the English language. These two boys of mine have been wrestling each other in one way or another since the day Daniel came home from the hospital, but when they need each other, they find the time and the energy.

I realize that when St. Ignatius of Loyola taught us to find God in all things, all people, and all events, he did not mean just in the quiet but also in the chaos, in our thoughts, and in our work and actions. Of course. Two brothers working together to get through a tough assignment. I don't need a neon sign to point to the presence of God amidst the skateboards, stray socks, dirty dishes, and projects worked on together long after these two high school kids should have been asleep.

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