

## **Family, Faith and Sports: From A Parent's Perspective**

***By Pam Mavrin, Lockport***

Families lead very busy lives these days, including my own. My husband and I, along with our two boys, Nicholas, age 11 and Joey, age 9, are practicing Catholics in the Joliet Diocese. We, like most other families, have a hectic schedule to contend with on a daily basis. The busy work schedules, homework, band, sports, etc., can drive a family crazy! And like all families, our children were blessed with talent. My oldest son can play the piano beautifully, and my youngest son can play the game of ice hockey like a little pro. In fact, we travel out of the state or out of the country every other weekend throughout hockey season for our away games. That's just what you do when you have a child playing with an elite group of athletes.

A situation such as ours, I guess, is a little more extreme than the average family because of the amount of traveling we do. But when your child has a passion, a God-given talent, you make it work. It's true that we've had to give up things to fit music and hockey into our already busy schedule. But one thing we've never given up is family prayer and weekly Mass.

During our weekends away from home we have the opportunity to get to know other families from Joey's team. One thing we've noticed is that none of them go to church on these weekends. Maybe they feel that when they're away from home it's too difficult or not important enough. I don't know. But when Joey is asked in the locker room where he's going after the game and he says "Church", there's a complete silence that falls over what is usually an earsplitting place. Would I call this a quiet, innocent form of evangelizing? Maybe. But my son doesn't know that. He's simply answering a question that makes all the sense in the world to him.

Sadly enough, society doesn't make it easy on families. Saturday night games and Sunday morning practices are all too common in almost every sport, leaving parents wondering how they can keep weekly worship a part of their lives. It may sound like an impossible task, but it's not. In fact, we've been doing it for years. Mass has become our time to take a breather from our hectic schedule and refuel spiritually. It's that small, peaceful hour within the busy weekend where the score of last night's game or the timing of the piano piece doesn't really matter. I've heard families say that making Mass every weekend is not realistic. I can't think of anything more "real" than worshiping our Savior together as a family.

I'm hoping, through example and this opportunity to share, that other families may see that you CAN have a packed schedule and keep God as the center of your lives. You CAN find time to pray the Rosary together as a family, and you CAN keep your faith strong and alive (even if it does take a little bit of planning). We all know it's tough to raise a family today and cutting back on activities isn't necessarily the answer to having a less stressful family life. But I know (from experience) that attending Sunday Mass as a

family and keeping prayer in our daily routine has been a stable foundation for us to cling to, especially when times get tough.

Society has a way of imposing its secular views upon us. It can be challenging to keep faith first in a family, but certainly not impossible, if you simply make room in your schedule for that which is most important. With Christ and Catholic faith at the center of life, both for you individually and for your family, everything else will find its proper place. Set your priorities, commit to them, and don't let anything or anyone stand in your way!