

Families Urged to Adopt a "Media Policy"

Parents Encouraged to Use Reason in Setting Rules

ROME, MARCH 28, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- An international university research group is encouraging families to establish their own media policy regarding the use of technology in their homes.

The Rome-based Family and Media Group, which was established in 2005, studies how the family is presented in the media and how the institutions that promote the family communicate their message and help present a better portrayal of the family in the public space. Last month, the organization launched their English-language Web site.

The project coordinator, Norberto González Gaitano, a professor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, told ZENIT that one of the things the group emphasizes is the habits of media use by the family.

He said, "We are telling parents and families: You are the protagonist of your family life, and since the media is already there -- yourselves, your children, your family lives are already in a media environment -- so you have to have a 'family media policy.'"

Gaitano explained that this means "applying practical reason to the use of media."

He continued: "For example, no parent in their right mind would put a refrigerator in their child's bedroom so that they could manage their own diet.

"Many parents nevertheless delegate the decision regarding their 'media diet' to their children. A television or a computer connected to the Internet is to be found in their room at their command."

Research

Gaitano noted that there has been a lot of research on media effects, "but mainly pointing at the influence on children, especially regarding the amount of violence portrayed in media."

"As far as I know," he said, "no research considers the family as a whole; very few studies lay down the basis of what the family is all about."

"Above all," the professor noted, "most of the research leaves parents confused, discouraged or helpless."

He affirmed, "If ever they come to know the results of most researches, they become satiated with data, about media consumption by children for example, and then are asking themselves, so what should we do?"

"You can, and should take advice from experts," Gaitano said, "but you mustn't delegate the decisions to the experts. Everybody can instruct your children; only you can educate them."

He added, "We aim to be a think tank mainly for family associations and ultimately a help for families."

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On the Net:

Family and Media: www.familyandmedia.eu/en.html

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