

How can I . npl en if there is no time left to care for my own soul? What is to be u vork s lost? Partners of church ministers started an approach to resolving this issue

Christina Bartels and Jana Weyh led two dicussion groups for partners of ministers during the IYC. Many wives and partners accepted this offer, some together with their men.

The ministry affects the entire family

As different as their situations in life may be, the women have agreed: God knows exactly whom He brings together. In many cases, the wives added strengths and aspects to the relationships that can help their husbands to accomplish their ministry tasks in a better way. In return, not only the men were able to benefit from the ministry, the blessing had an impact on the entire family. A participant clarified: „What is our perception of blessing? The Hebrew word for blessing is ‚barak', that means to be provided with healing power." In order to have this blessing to come into effect, though, wife and children need to be enabled to partake in it.

Open communication is the alpha and omega

Some of the participants had fathers who were ministers, and they still struggle with the high expectations that weighed heavily on their families. Christina Bartels encouraged them: „If you meet your limits then be sure to tell." Even though there is no master plan for successful relationships, the courage to communicate honestly with the partner is tremendously helpful. Passively aggressive statements such as „What a surprise, you are here already!" tend to make the situation worse. Joy over the time spent together, the struggle for compromises and the open conversation, however, are the best ingredients to provide for a good balance.

CWith respect to family time, Christina Bartels and Jana Weyh prefer quality before quantity. One participant confirmed: her own daughter had been so happy with the family situation during her childhood days that she had been convinced: „When I am grown up, I want to mary a priest, too."

The house of God is our joy

Nonetheless, it may sometimes rather feel as if the house of god were a burden. The participants collected practical advice how to keep joy in the Lord or how to revitalize it: a family calendar that is discussed regularly may help to organize the week. Sharing tasks is also possible in many ways, as the wife of a rector explained: „My husband usually holds the divine service every single Sunday. Hence, I go to church every other Wednesday while he takes care of the children. By these means, the other ministers do not get out of practice, and I get to experience divine service on a regular basis being able to absorb the word without distraction." Committed ministers tend to accept any task that comes up in the congregation. If the members of the congregation and the families of the ministers act in concert, it may be possible to lower one's sights temporarily: „Then, there is now floral decoration once. We will take home the blessing from the service nonetheless."

Ideas for the future

„It would be nice to have a big forum that can be accessed by any woman who is interested. Not everone has sisters in her own congregation to share her concerns with," says Jana Weyh. The positive feedback of the participants proves that such a communication can be fruitful. A youth bid farewell with the words: „Thank you, you have freed me from the fear oft he future."

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