

# From the Chaplaincy



## WORK AWAY FROM HOME

By Fr. Francis Ongkingco

Working from home? Or perhaps, at some point during this confinement of more than six months, you are beginning to doubt whether the place could still be called home!

Web and zoominars have eaten quality-bonding family time. Flexi-time has redefined your work hours and added more

load than you can handle. Calls, emails and texts interfere with the sacred family atmosphere that you had wished to nurture. Finally, the constant creeping anxiety of not knowing how long this ‘new normal’ will last.

What is clear, until a COVID vaccine is found, we are in for a very long haul! What

can we do so that our work will not take us *away from* home but help us to convert that home into the center of our heart?

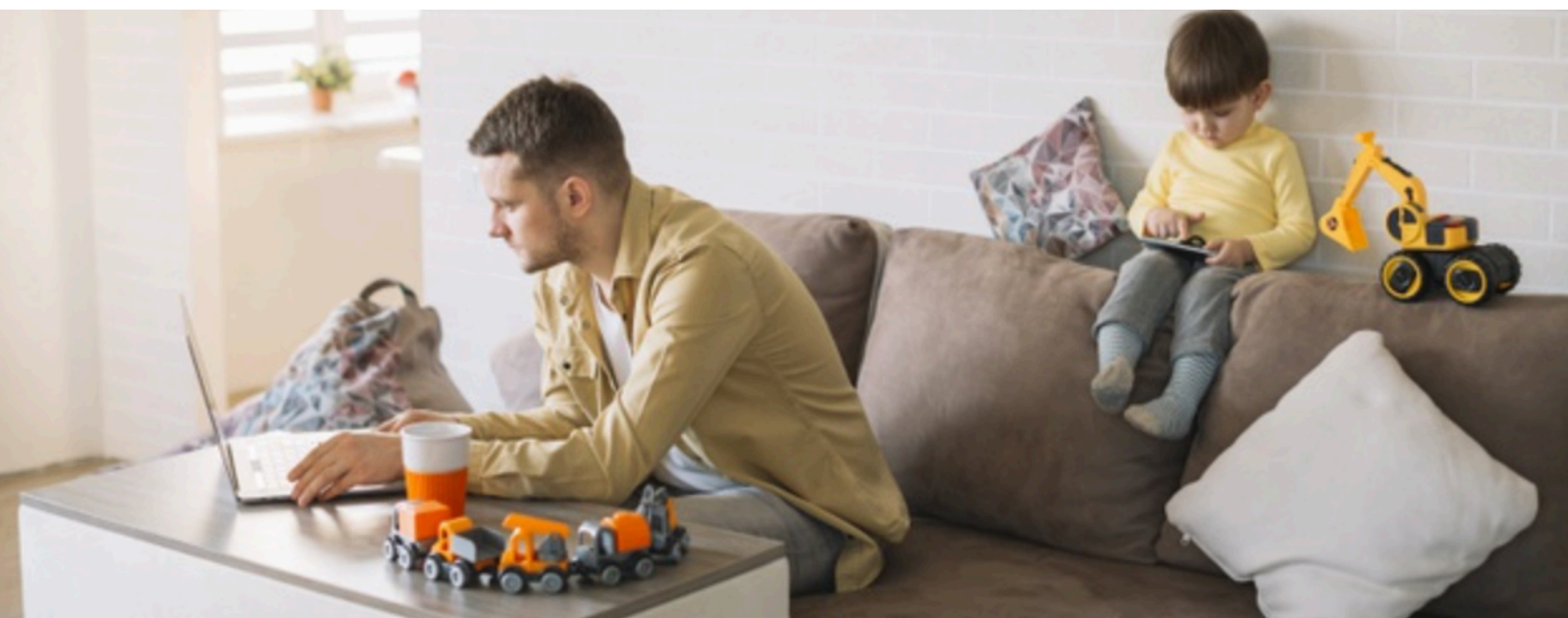
Here are a few ideas that may help:

## DEFINING SPACES / BOUNDARIES

Before the tablet and smartphone, children knew the difference between the playroom and the dining room. Today, they have everything in their gadgets. Likewise, at home spaces must be defined and respected. And these areas must not overlap with the other zones, that is, we try to work only inside the room or upon the desk in our study. Consciousness of these demarcations can help, so to speak, not to bring our work home. For example, even though our worktable is only in the living room, we strive to avoid bringing anything from that place to the dining table. All office work and materials must remain in that defined working space. The same goes for the places we might allot for rest and recreation.

## LINES OF TIME

Keeping ourselves within physical territories is easy, but it is trickier to stay within non-physical conventions as time. If, however, we make a gentle effort everyday to keep to a clear and realistic schedule of daily goals, we will in no time be able to accomplish more and also help foster deeper family moments. Time and space have to be set in motion together. When we are not conscious of time, we could fall into workaholicism; when we don't draw the space for what we do, we easily waste time in trivial things. But let's not forget the keeping up with time is not only a matter of efficiency, but also of our thoughtfulness towards the others. Thus, when it's time for dinner, we serenely step out of our workspace and move into the warm family dinner.

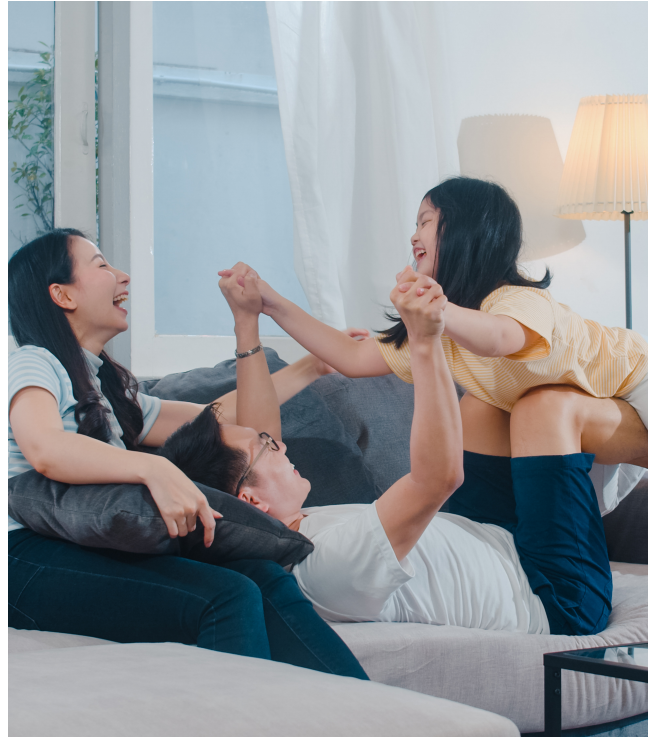


## REMEMBERING TO BE REMINDED

Attentiveness to space and time is crucial in our days of confinement. But our minds and bodies could be intensely engaged in what we are doing that we can forget other essential things. Thus, to time and space we add remembrance. This is like the soul that penetrates both time and space: that I am working, cooking or cleaning while remembering those I am working, cooking and cleaning for. Likewise, we are open that other family members remind us, not only for lunch or dinner, but also to greet us, take a peek or drop a cup of coffee in between activities, etc. These gestures of materialized remembrance allow time and space to bear fruit.

## FORGING SPIRITUALITY

Finally, the ultimate bonding element to time, space and remembrance is spirituality. When we make sure to start and end our work, or any other activity for that matter, with a prayer for the family. In this we are becoming part of something bigger and wonderful. This unique prayer never fails to bring peace, joy and the constant spice of one's hidden sacrifice for the other members.



When we make the sincere effort to combine these elements for working from home, we will surely be more *at home* than away from it. And from within, we will constantly set one another afire with the blessings we reap from our work, recreation and rest.