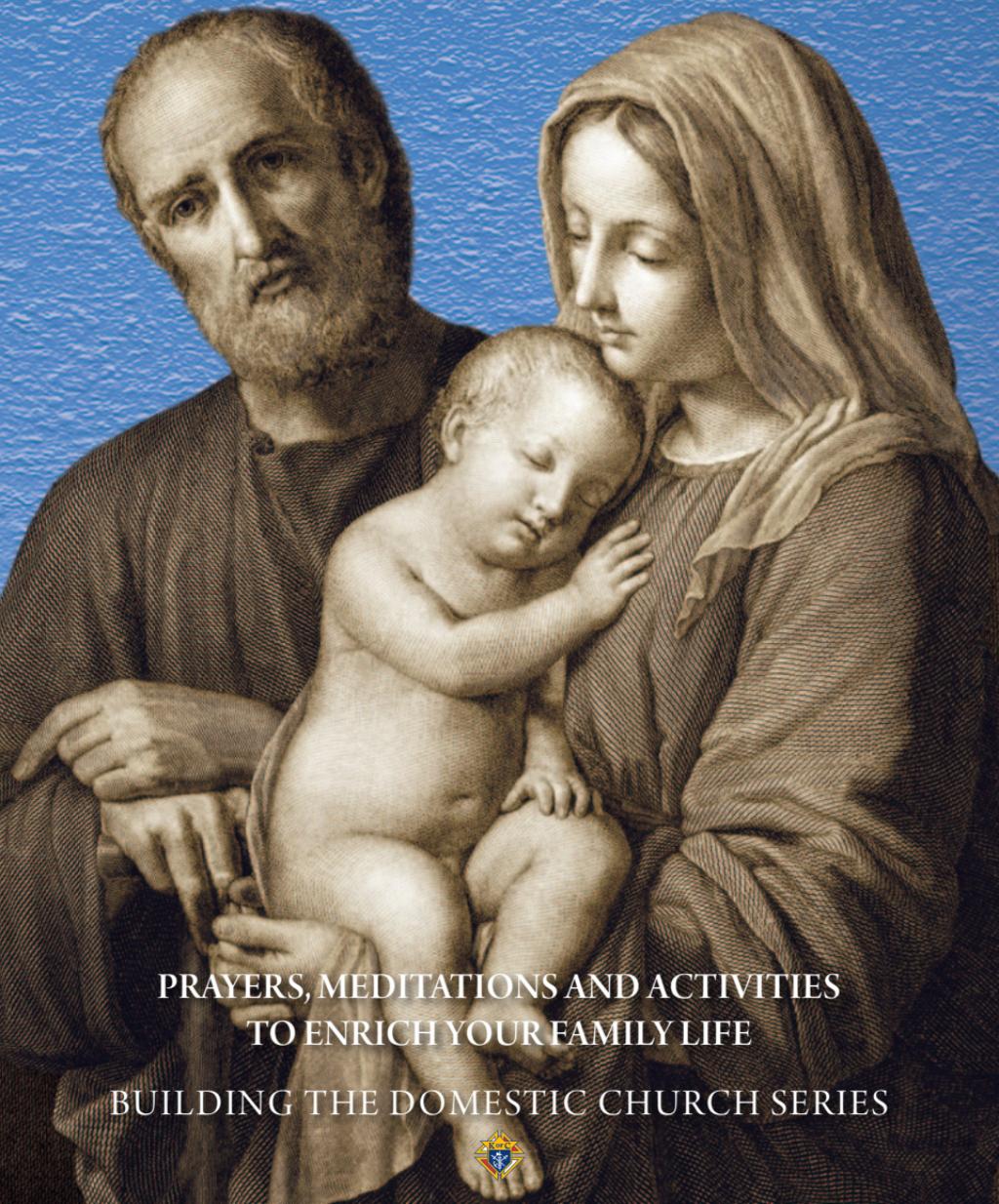


The Family Fully Alive

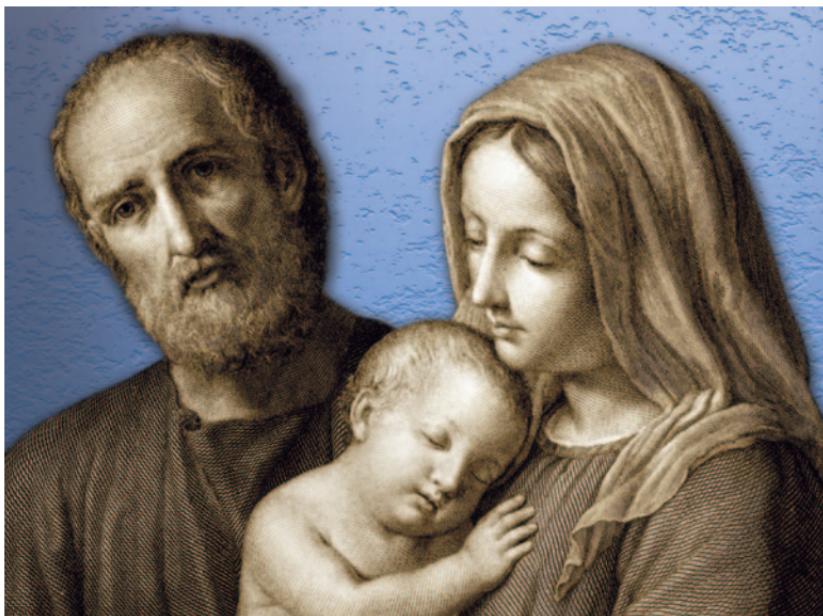
BUILDING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH



PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS AND ACTIVITIES
TO ENRICH YOUR FAMILY LIFE

BUILDING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH SERIES





Building the Domestic Church

While Strengthening Our Parish



“The family as domestic church is central to the work of the new evangelization and to the future sustainability of our parishes.”

— Past Supreme Knight Carl Anderson

*The Knights of Columbus presents
The Building the Domestic Church Series*

The Family Fully Alive

Building the Domestic Church

Prayers, Meditations and Activities
to Enrich your Family Life

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INTRODUCTION

In founding the Knights of Columbus, Blessed Michael McGivney sought to respond to the crisis in family life affecting Catholics in 19th-century America. As a young man he witnessed firsthand the challenges his widowed mother faced with seven children at home. Later, as a priest, he confronted on a daily basis the problems affecting the families of his parish community due to poverty, violence, alcoholism, immigration, anti-Catholic prejudice and discrimination.

Blessed Michael McGivney's vision for family life was not only that each family might find financial and material aid. He understood that holiness is the calling of all baptized Christians. And considering that two brothers followed him into the priesthood, we can understand how truly important the sanctuary of the home was to the McGivney family.

His family was a living example of what the Second Vatican Council later taught: Each man, woman and child is called to holiness through proclaiming the Gospel and communicating the divine gift of love in the activities of their daily lives.

When Christian families respond in this way to the design of the Creator, they become a "domestic church" that, as Pope Paul VI explained, mirrors "the various aspects of the entire Church."¹

The modern family recently has been a topic of particular focus for the Church, with the two-year Synod on the Family and the post-synodal exhortation by Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*. During this time, the Knights of Columbus has been involved in supporting families in their Christian vocation through our new Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative. This initiative, which includes The Family Fully Alive program, is designed to help families become more centered on their task of serving God, neighbor and parish.

Since the Second Vatican Council, and especially during the pontificate of St. John Paul II, it has become clear that the family is "the way of the Church."² In one sense, this obviously means that the family is the object of the Church's evangelization efforts.

But the Christian family too has its own indispensable mission. As St. John Paul II wrote in *Familiaris Consortio*, “The family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love.”³ This mission is at the heart of the “community of life and love”⁴ that begins with the married couple in the sacrament of matrimony.

To lead us in that mission we are fortunate to have a guidebook — Pope Francis’ exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* — to help us build the Catholic family as a domestic church. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis describes the Church as “a family of families.”⁵ He reminds us to view the family as the sanctuary of life and love that is at the heart of the domestic church.⁶ Our Knights’ families can take special guidance from Pope Francis as he calls us to a new “family apostolate” based upon “joy-filled witness as domestic churches.”⁷ Our parish-based councils also have a role in connecting men and their families with the parish.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us, “Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter. ... It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul.”⁸ In other words, sacramental marriage involves not just an agreement between the spouses but a radical transformation of the spouses.

As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Deus Caritas Est*, “Marriage based on an exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God’s way of loving becomes the measure of human love.”⁹

In this way, the witness of husband and wife within the daily life of the family can guard, reveal and communicate love as they make their own the gifts of marriage — unity, indissolubility, faithfulness and openness to new life.

A Vatican document on the role and mission of the family states, “The family needs to be rediscovered as the essential agent in the work of evangelization.”¹⁰ It also points to the necessity to better understand the “missionary dimension of the family as a domestic church.”¹¹

These observations echo those of St. John Paul II, who said, during a meeting with the Latin American bishops in 1979, that “in the future, evangelization will depend largely on the domestic church.”¹²

Clearly, the role of the family in the work of evangelization is not primarily a matter of programs, projects or strategies. These all have their place, but they are secondary. Their place is to be at the service of what is essential — the love between a husband and wife that, sanctified through the love of Christ, radiates to each member of their family.

The family as domestic church is a place of encounter with Christ within the community of a particular Christian family — a place where each member of the family has an important role.

The “mission” of the family in the task of evangelization is to be what it is called to be — that is, to live its daily life as a Christian family. As St. John Paul II said so often, “Families, become what you are!”¹³

The family’s mission to “guard, reveal and communicate love”— like the parish community — does not exist in an ideal place. The truth and beauty of the family must be communicated to every Christian family, even those that are fragile, wounded or broken. These families too may read the words of St. Paul with confidence: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:35). And they may find in that confidence a path of hope and healing.

During his visit to the Philippines, Pope Francis cited the need for “holy and loving families to protect the beauty and truth of the family in God’s plan and to be an example for other families.”¹⁴ Our Building the Domestic Church initiative and The Family Fully Alive monthly devotions are concrete ways that Knights of Columbus, in solidarity with Pope Francis, can offer holy and loving families for the Church’s mission of evangelization in our time.



Past Supreme Knight Carl Anderson

WHAT IS THE DOMESTIC CHURCH?

“Christian marriage, as a reflection of the union between Christ and his Church, is fully realized in the union between a man and a woman who give themselves to each other in a free, faithful and exclusive love, who belong to each other until death and are open to the transmission of life, and are consecrated by the sacrament, which grants them the grace to become a domestic church and a leaven of new life for society.”

— Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 292

The term “domestic church” describes the identity and mission of a Christian family. Its roots are scriptural. As Past Supreme Knight Carl Anderson notes in his book *A Civilization of Love*:

Today, it is increasingly common to speak of the family as the “domestic church.” This is not merely rhetorical. The ideal of the family as a domestic church goes back to the Old Testament. It was stated most simply and eloquently, perhaps by Joshua: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” It was developed in the New Testament: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.”¹

In Ephesians 5:21-35, St. Paul exhorts husbands to love by a new measure, as Christ loves the Church. This new dimension of love indicates that Christian marriage, by virtue of Christ’s saving grace, now participates in Christ’s union with the Church. This participation makes the Christian family a manifestation of the communion of the Church.

These scriptural passages, as well as others that speak about the sacredness of marriage and the home,² prompted further reflection by the Church on the meaning of a Christian family as a domestic church. The early Church Father St. John Chrysostom taught that the name domestic church means much more than the space in which the early Church or the family prayed. He explained this, saying, “make your home into a church” where “all, even the smallest ones, must feel actively committed to seeking the message of the Word of God and to living it together.”³

Moving forward to 20th and 21st centuries, while the domestic church was referenced by the Second Vatican Council,⁴ Blessed Pope Paul VI⁵ and Pope Benedict XVI⁶, it was St. Pope John Paul II who significantly deepened the understanding of the Christian family as a domestic church. Pope Francis has further developed John Paul II’s understanding with his spirituality of the Christian family in *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*.

In his major papal work on the family, *Familiaris Consortio (On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World)*, St. John Paul II writes, “The family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride.”⁷ In that same text, he famously sums up the mission to Christian families with the exhortation, “Family, become what you are!”⁸

According to St. John Paul II, a family is called to become a domestic church, which is the communion of life and love founded upon the sacrament of holy matrimony. In a unique way, the family as domestic church participates in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus Christ and his Church.⁹ By doing so, the Christian family becomes “one heart and mind” in faith (Acts 4:32).¹⁰

The Sacrament of Matrimony

Marriage is the life long union between a man and a woman established by God and ordered toward the love of the spouses and the procreation and education of children.¹¹ As St. John Paul II frequently noted and Pope Francis reaffirms, marital communion is above all characterized by the total gift of self that husband and wife give to each other.¹² This total self-gift protects the love of spouses from slipping into selfishness and egoism that can all too easily creep into the best of marriages and destroy spousal unity.

Marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman is a sacrament.¹³ As a sacrament, married love is taken up into God’s trinitarian love.¹⁴ The couple’s bond is indissoluble, which means it lasts “until death do us part.”¹⁵ The spouses are also given graces to love each other sacrificially and generously, like Christ loves them. They image, or mirror, in their communion the love of the Trinity and Christ’s love for the Church (Eph 5:21-35). “Christ’s love becomes the form of married love.”¹⁶

The sacrament of marriage itself — with its responsibilities of totality, fidelity, indissolubility, fruitfulness and the reflection of God’s love — is the first gift the family brings to the world and the family’s primary way of evangelizing as a domestic church. The Christian family’s three-fold mission of priestly, prophetic and kingly service is an unfolding of this sacramental mission and communion.

Priestly Mission of the Domestic Church

The priestly mission of the family is lived by praying together and offering the family’s daily life and activities to God. Members also live their priestly mission by receiving the sacraments as a family.¹⁷ When families pray, they welcome God into their home and embrace the new manner of love

found in Christ that helps them overcome their struggles, doubts, fears and uncertainties.

Prayer is the act of directing one's mind and heart to God with the help of the Holy Spirit because "we do not know how to pray as we ought" (Rom 8:26).¹⁸ Through reading the word of God together, families grow in their faith and increase their devotion for God. Through sharing the very personal act of prayer together, families become unified in trust and love. They begin to see their loved ones "with the eyes of God," seeing "Christ in them."¹⁹ They develop a supernatural outlook on life that increases joy and sustains them through difficult moments. As Pope Francis says in *Amoris Laetitia*:

Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening this paschal faith [in Christ's death and resurrection]. A few minutes can be found each day to come together before the living God, to tell him our worries, to ask for the needs of our family, to pray for someone experiencing difficulty, to ask for help in showing love, to give thanks for life and for its blessings, and to ask Our Lady to protect us beneath her maternal mantle. With a few simple words, this moment of prayer can do immense good for our families.²⁰

The act of prayer extends beyond the words said together; the verbal prayers tune the mind, the will and the senses to the peace that comes from God, a peace that should carry through all activities and moments of daily life. When times are difficult, family members can maintain their peace by transforming annoyances and hardships into a quiet prayer offering of love for God and for one's own family, in union with Jesus on the cross.

These daily offerings should be united with the perfect offering of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. When the gifts are being brought forward at Mass, give over sufferings to the Lord for him to transform them into an ever greater love, sealing anew the marriage bond:

The family's communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist. ... Jesus knocks on the door of families, to share with them the Eucharistic supper (cf. Rev 3:20). There, the spouses can always seal anew the paschal covenant which united them and which ought to reflect the covenant which God sealed with mankind in the cross. ... For the food of the Eucharist offers the spouses the strength and incentive needed to live the marriage covenant each day as a "domestic church".²¹

Families should also seek to strengthen their domestic church by frequently receiving the sacrament of reconciliation together. In a certain sense, just like in the Eucharist, every experience of reconciliation by spouses is like a renewal of wedding vows because it removes sin and releases the graces flowing from the sacrament of marriage.²²

Prophetic Mission of the Domestic Church

As family members grow in prayer and trust, a domestic church becomes a sanctuary from the hardships of the world. Within this sanctuary members are able to live out the prophetic mission of the family, which is announcing together the word of God and witnessing to the faith.²³ Their witness of faith begins with spouses offering witness to each other and continues as parents witness to their children.

It is to their parents that children first look for guidance and explanation; because of this, parents have a grave responsibility to teach them about what is true. They must share with them not only academic and practical knowledge, but also provide solid religious catechesis centered in the reality of Jesus Christ and opportunities for practicing virtue. As Pope Francis reminds us, “Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. It follows that they should take up this essential role and carry it out consciously, enthusiastically, reasonably and appropriately.”²⁴

Created by God, children are deserving of all parental efforts to develop in them good sense, faith and virtue — traits which will aid them in understanding their vital importance to the community and their essential role in bringing about the kingdom of God in the world. As St. John Paul II said, “It is important that the ‘communion of persons’ in the family should become a preparation for the ‘communion of Saints.’”²⁵

However, a family’s witness to the faith should not stop with one’s children. It must also become a witness for the whole world. We have an obligation to set the light of faith on a lampstand (Mt 5:15). In fact, “the work of handing on the faith to children ... helps the whole family in its evangelizing mission. It naturally begins to spread the faith to all around them, even outside of the family circle.”²⁶

Many people fear that by talking about their faith they may be unfairly imposing upon someone or appearing as proud. However, evangelizing is not imposing but rather sharing with another a great good that has been discovered. It is natural to want to do this with a good that will enrich their lives. But even better than just sharing the faith through conversation is also accompanying someone along the road of holiness, so that the truth is conveyed with love.

Kingly Mission of the Domestic Church

The mission of the family is to charitably serve the Church and the world; it is a kingly mission because it mirrors the service of Christ the King.²⁷ Pope Francis has memorably called the Church “a field hospital after battle”²⁸ and said the family “has always been the nearest hospital”²⁹ to care for all those who are physically and spiritually wounded, especially those who are poor and outcasts to the larger society. A married couple is called to be a reflection “of that divine love which comforts with a word, a look, a helping hand, a caress, an embrace” and to join “God’s dream” by building “a world where no one will feel alone.”³⁰

Pope Francis is calling for families to live together in charity. Charity is not just a form of dutiful service meeting the immediate physical needs of people. It is also the joyful love of neighbor, grounded in the love of God, which seeks to heal human misery.³¹ “This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support,” Pope Benedict explained.³²

Families can live this divine charity in many ways. They can join one of the Church’s charitable organizations, participate in local parish ministries or go on a mission trip together. Most of all, family members can practice charity within the walls of their home through hospitality and attentive care to others, because it is true that charity begins at home. With its first principle of charity, the Knights of Columbus offers many methods of living this virtue in practical ways. The possibilities are endless. Families should discern with God what he creatively wants them to do.

When families live charity within their homes, their parishes and the broader culture, they begin to build up what Pope John Paul II called “the civilization of love.”³³ By doing this, families become not just a “saved community” blessed with grace — they participate in the mission to evangelize all people as a “saving community.”³⁴ It is this civilization of love that the world desperately needs:

Where is that person of whom the saints said, “The glory of God is man fully alive?” Where is the person created and redeemed by Christ? Where is the person who joyfully lives the vocation to love to which humanity has been called by Christ? Where can we find this “new” Adam in the day-to-day world around us? It is the responsibility of Christians to show the world this new Adam. They will do so by their actions, by their attitudes, and by their influence. But above all, they will do so by their love.³⁵

LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF YOUR DOMESTIC CHURCH

Prayers, reflections, meditations and family activities

Consecration to the Holy Family

Composed by Archbishop William Lori, Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus

O Lord Jesus,
you lived in the home of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth.
There you grew in age, wisdom and grace
as you prepared to fulfill your mission
as our Redeemer.

We entrust our family to you.

O Blessed Mary,
you are the Mother of our savior.
At Nazareth you cared for Jesus
and nurtured him in the peace and joy of your home.
We entrust our family to you.

O St. Joseph,
you provided a secure and loving home for Jesus and Mary,
and gave us a model of fatherhood
while showing us the dignity of work.
We entrust our family to you.

Holy Family,
we consecrate ourselves and our family to you.
May we be completely united
in a love that is lasting, faithful
and open to the gift of new life.
Help us to grow in virtue,
to forgive one another from our hearts,
and to live in peace all our days.
Keep us strong in faith, persevering in prayer,
diligent in our work, and generous toward those in need.
May our home, O Holy Family,
truly become a domestic church
where we reflect your example in our daily life. Amen.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!

To cultivate life as a domestic church, a family must deliberately welcome God into its home. This program has been created to help each family do this. In the pages that follow, you will find monthly themes, reflections, meditations, family projects and Scripture verses designed to help each family place God and the Catholic faith at the center of its life. Through prayer and reflection each family has the opportunity to grow in holiness together.

Adapting This Program to Your Family

The Family Fully Alive program is designed to be flexible to meet the continuously changing needs of your family. This booklet is laid out for the opening of the Church's liturgical year in December, with the season of Advent, but you can start during any month of the year, completing projects and saying prayers at the times and places most suitable for your family. Some suitable times would be after family dinner or shortly before bedtime, making it easier to deal with the challenge of bringing the entire family together.

You may wish to read a month's theme, reflection, meditation and Scripture reading all at one time. Alternatively, you may set aside a regular time each Sunday of the month to go through the "Breaking Open the Theme" reflection, meditation, Scripture passage and family project successively over four weeks. Please note that some family projects require advance time and preparation over the course of the month, so it is always a good idea to read those in advance. You can also choose to utilize the meditations and questions for spiritually engaging conversations with your children during family dinners. Another approach could include inviting over other families on Sunday to offer this prayer together and to build community among families. Whichever method your family chooses, we encourage you to set aside a regular time each Sunday to pray together as a family, using this book as a resource.

Suggested Weekly Format

Designate a space in your home where your family can gather together for prayer. The space should be free from distractions and, if possible, decorated with religious images and sacramentals to help direct the family's thoughts toward God. Open each week with the Our Father, Hail Mary or one of the other prayers included in the appendix of this book. Next, ask a family member to read the theme. Then, proceed with the month's prayer and activities. Then, offer some petitions with each family member, adding personal intentions to the prayer. Conclude together by reciting Archbishop Lori's Consecration to the Holy Family (see page 9). Feel free to add to this

basic structure other devotions, songs and whatever your family finds spiritually enriching for prayer.

Role of Children in Prayer

Children of all ages should be encouraged to have an active role in family prayer. With younger children, parents can read the Scripture passage aloud and then ask them to draw an image inspired by the reading. They can then talk about the image and its meaning. Parents might also read the monthly prayers and projects in advance in order to provide clearer explanations and adjust the materials to their children's level of understanding and involvement.

Older children can read the Scripture passage, reflection or meditation, while parents can direct the conversation that follows afterward, making sure each child understands the meditation questions and has time to answer it. Families with older children may also want to use the traditional practice of *Lectio Divina*, a holy reading of Scripture, by having one person read the verse aloud slowly and with reverence. Then, ask someone else to read the verse a second time. While it is being read, everyone should begin to meditate on its meaning. Next, all family members should be invited to silently choose a sentence or word from the passage that strikes them. Finally, everyone should contemplate these words and ask God how they apply to his or her life.

If there are children of multiple ages, then a family may want to do a combination of prayer methods at the same time, giving young children the freedom to simply listen as attentively as possible and offer their own prayers when appropriate. Also, consider alternating between formal prayer and informal prayer that might be more accessible to younger children, like songs and conversation to God.

Additional Faith Resources

In addition to the monthly themes and prayers, this booklet has additional sections to help build your family's faith and inspire family prayer. There is an appendix of "Prayers for Every Family" (p. 54) and "Liturgical Celebrations Throughout the Year" (p. 66). Discuss with your family the importance of such prayers and liturgical feast days by considering the reasons why we pray and how we should pray as a family. A short exploration of these questions, along with a summary of Catholic beliefs and additional meditations on family life, are found in the back of this book.

Being a Family of Families

At the heart of this program is the mission to enrich both the domestic church and the parish. Through prayer and activity each week, families build

upon the graces received through their participation in the sacramental life of their parishes. In turn, each family's active contribution to parish life is what makes the Church a "family of families."³⁶ To accomplish this integration further, participate in other programs and activities of the Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative of the Knights of Columbus. Such domestic church activities include:

- Holy Family Prayer Program
- 5th Sunday Rosary Program
- Journey to the Inn: An Advent Celebration
- Father's Day Affirmation of Wedding Vows
- Consecration to the Holy Family

For more information, visit kofc.org/domesticchurch.

Getting Started

Sometimes the best way to start a new routine is to take a deep breath and jump right in, realizing that it may take some trial and error to get it right. This advice is especially important for families who are not accustomed to praying together.

The following month-by-month guide opens with December to coincide with the beginning of the Church's liturgical year, which begins with the first Sunday of Advent. Because Advent is a season of new beginnings culminating in the remembrance of the Savior's birth at Christmas, it is an excellent time to begin a new family prayer practice. But you are free to begin the Family Fully Alive program in any month of the year.

However you decide to incorporate the Family Fully Alive program into your family's busy schedule, one thing is certain — it will change your life. The monthly cycle of themes, prayers, reflections, meditations and family projects will help your family focus on the important things in the world. They will help build your domestic church as a place of faith, hope and charity, where each member will grow with grace toward his or her full potential in God.

DECEMBER – JOY

Joy is an attribute of God's divine love. To reflect God in our family life, we are called to be joyful by developing our relationship with Christ.

Breaking Open the Theme

It is often remarked that faith is caught more than taught in the family. One of the best ways faith is caught is through joy. Joy is not an emotion that can be faked or forced. There is something authentic about it that points to a deeper reality.

Joy should be part of the regular fabric of Christian life. The Lord promises his disciples that “no one will take your joy from you” (Jn 16:22), and we are instructed by St. Paul to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4).

But how is it possible to be joyful when there is sorrow in our lives? The answer is that joy in its deepest sense is not dependent on positive circumstances or upbeat feelings. Joy means having an encounter (*encuentro*) with God's infinite love for us, which is always present in our lives.³⁷ It “adapts and changes, but always endures,”³⁸ even amid great sorrow. It takes the form of a quiet assurance, a reminder that we are God's beloved sons and daughters. At other times, joy means that one “rejoices with the truth” (1 Cor 13:6), praising aloud the Lord and thanking him for his gifts. But above all, joy comes from “an expansion of the heart”³⁹ through prayer and gestures of love toward others, creating a bright, warm and cheerful atmosphere.

Meditation

From Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia

The expression “*chaírei epì te adikía*” [“rejoice over wrongdoing”] (1 Cor 13:6) has to do with a negativity lurking deep within a person's heart. It is the toxic attitude of those who rejoice at seeing an injustice done to others. The following phrase expresses its opposite: *sygchaírei te aletheía*: “it rejoices in the right”. In other words, we rejoice at the good of others when we see their dignity and value their abilities and good works. This is impossible for those who must always be comparing and competing, even with their spouse, so that they secretly rejoice in their failures.

When a loving person can do good for others, or sees that others are happy, they themselves live happily and in this way give glory to God, for

DECEMBER – JOY

“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). Our Lord especially appreciates those who find joy in the happiness of others. If we fail to learn how to rejoice in the well-being of others and focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence, for, as Jesus said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The family must always be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that others will be there to celebrate it with them.⁴⁰

1. What are some joys we have experienced in our family? Are there ways to build upon these joys to create a more joyful home?
2. In what ways could we add more joy to our family? Could we be more cheerful in giving and complain less? Could we focus less on our own needs and more on the happiness of a family member? Could we rejoice in our family’s love by affirming each other more with compliments? Could we smile more at our family members?
3. Do we base our lives on the joyful awareness that we are beloved sons and daughters of God, or do we let something rob us of the joy of the Gospel? What is it that robs us? Is it anxiety, fear or impatience? How might prayer help with these things?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 33:1-7, 20-22

A prayer of praise and rejoicing before the Lord

Rejoice, you righteous, in the LORD;
 praise from the upright is fitting.
Give thanks to the LORD on the harp;
 on the ten-stringed lyre offer praise.
Sing to him a new song;
 skillfully play with joyful chant.
For the LORD’s word is upright;
 all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right.

The earth is full of the mercy of the LORD.
By the LORD’s word the heavens were made;
 by the breath of his mouth all their host.
He gathered the waters of the sea as a mound;
 he sets the deep into storage vaults.

DECEMBER – JOY

Our soul waits for the LORD,
he is our help and shield.
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust.
May your mercy, LORD, be upon us;
as we put our hope in you.

Family Project

Put joy into practice by singing together Advent and Christmas hymns, hosting an Advent or Christmas party with special treats, and reading a Christmas story out loud. The story could be Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* or a book more suitable for young children, like *The Legend of the Poinsettia* by Tomie dePaola.

Also consider creating a family book of favorite religious hymns and carols. Have each family member choose a song that they enjoy and make copies to share. Then sing together Advent and Christmas songs at times that are convenient. For instance, a family could sing before its family prayer, before bed, before lighting the Advent wreath, before opening presents at Christmas, or at another time. If you have young children, sing a few simple songs to them so they can begin to learn the lyrics.

JANUARY – FAMILY PRAYER

The Christian family needs to put first things first by cultivating a relationship with God together through prayer. Prayer is essential for families to develop Christian joy, faith, hope and love.

Breaking Open the Theme

The Christian family is called to offer to Christ all of its activities through a life of prayer. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives this advice about prayer: “We cannot pray ‘at all times’ if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it.”⁴¹ In other words, families need to set aside a definite time for formal prayer together in order to have prayer infuse everything they do. Family members must build their life around God rather than fit God into their busy schedule. If families attempt the latter, then they are sure to find prayer dry and will eventually leave it out of their schedule altogether.

To help nourish a shared prayer life, it is a good idea to learn more about different ways of praying and to establish a rhythm of praying. Different forms of prayer include vocal prayer (saying out loud a formal prayer, giving praise, asking for forgiveness, thanksgiving, adoration, petition, etc.); meditation on Scripture or other religious writings; and contemplation, in which a person just listens to and talks with God as one would with a friend.⁴² But there are other ways of praying, such as through song and art.

A family should consider its rhythm of prayer, such as morning or evening prayer, grace before and after meals, and prayers before bedtime. Some rhythms are weekly, such as Sunday Mass and entering into the Sabbath rest. Some rhythms are yearly, such as the liturgical year and its feast days. Finally, some rhythms of prayer should be unique to each person’s family, such as prayerfully celebrating birthdays, anniversaries of family members’ weddings, baptisms (or other sacraments) and patron saints. The possibilities are endless, but it is necessary to develop a rhythm because “life is shaped by rhythms: the rhythm of heartbeat and breathing, the rhythm of day and night, of meals, of weeks, and so on. Mental prayer should become a daily event as vital to us as the basic rhythms of existence. It should become the breathing of our souls.”⁴³

Meditation

From Pope John Paul II’s Familiaris Consortio

Family prayer has its own characteristic qualities. It is prayer offered in common, husband and wife together, parents and children together.

JANUARY – FAMILY PRAYER

Communion in prayer is both a consequence of and a requirement for the communion bestowed by the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. The words with which the Lord Jesus promises His presence can be applied to the members of the Christian family in a special way: “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Family prayer has for its very own object family life itself, which in all its varying circumstances is seen as a call from God and lived as a filial response to His call. Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations, wedding anniversaries of the parents, departures, separations and homecomings, important and far-reaching decisions, the death of those who are dear, etc. — all of these mark God’s loving intervention in the family’s history. They should be seen as suitable moments for thanksgiving, for petition, for trusting abandonment of the family into the hands of their common Father in heaven. The dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic Church can be achieved only with God’s unceasing aid, which will surely be granted if it is humbly and trustingly petitioned in prayer.⁴⁴

1. Is prayer at the center of our family life? If not, why?
2. How can we better build a rhythm of prayer into our family’s life? In what way can we mark significant family moments throughout the year with prayer?
3. What are our family members’ preferred ways of praying — vocal, meditative or contemplative? Is there a way to incorporate each family member’s preferred way of praying into family prayer?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 65:6-14

A prayer of gratitude for God’s blessings

You answer us with awesome deeds of justice,
 O God our savior,
The hope of all the ends of the earth
 and of those far off across the sea.
You are robed in power,
 you set up the mountains by your might.

JANUARY – FAMILY PRAYER

You still the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.

Distant peoples stand in awe of your marvels;
the places of morning and evening you make resound with joy.

You visit the earth and water it,
make it abundantly fertile.

God's stream is filled with water;
you supply their grain.

Thus do you prepare it:
you drench its plowed furrows,
and level its ridges.

With showers you keep it soft,
blessing its young sprouts.

You adorn the year with your bounty;
your paths drip with fruitful rain.

The meadows of the wilderness also drip;
the hills are robed with joy.

The pastures are clothed with flocks,
the valleys blanketed with grain;
they cheer and sing for joy.

Family Project

The *Catechism* recommends that we find places favorable for prayer. One of the places it suggests is a “prayer corner” in the home.⁴⁵ If you do not already have one, make a prayer corner in the home in order to facilitate prayer. This sacred space could be a simple table with a nice cloth over it, a Bible, religious images and statues, rosaries, candles, prayer cards, a family prayer intention book, a vase for flowers, etc. Make the corner unique to your family and have each family member contribute one religious item to the prayer corner. For further ideas, see the following resource: *The Little Oratory: The Beginner's Guide to Praying in the Home* by David Clayton and Leila Marie Lawler.

FEBRUARY – THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

The foundation of the domestic church is the sacrament of marriage. It is therefore important to reflect often on the mystery and calling of this sacrament. Also, our children may be called to become spouses and parents, so it is important to help them understand the type of love that is necessary in marriage and family life.

Breaking Open the Theme

The sacrament of marriage is a wondrous divine mystery. As Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen liked to remind couples, it takes “three” to get married: husband, wife and God.⁴⁶ By virtue of the sacrament of baptism, Christians no longer belong to themselves, but to Jesus Christ. As a result, when a baptized man marries a baptized woman, Christ himself is the one who gives the spouses to each other on their wedding day.

It is Christ who also receives their vows as the Church witnesses their exchange of love and blesses it in Christ’s name. This is why it is important to celebrate the sacrament of marriage in a church where the Blessed Sacrament is present and also why the Church recommends that Christian marriages take place within a Mass.⁴⁷ Christ, who is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, is made present in the love of the spouses. He becomes the source and unshakable guarantor of their unity as a couple.⁴⁸ He transforms their love: “Spouses love each other with a love that is greater than themselves, in fact, with the very love that brought them into existence in the first place!”⁴⁹

By virtue of the great sacrament of holy matrimony, human love participates in Christ’s own sacrificial love wherein he gave up his body for sinners on the cross. To receive the graces of this sacrament fully, married couples must enter into the total self-gift of Christ on a daily basis, holding nothing back in their love of each other through prayer and sacrifice for the good of the beloved.

Meditations

From a homily by St. John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life

How is marriage a mystery? The two have become one. This is not an empty symbol. They have not become the image of anything on earth, but of God Himself. ... They come to be made into one body. See the mystery of love! If the two do not become one, they cannot increase; they can increase only by decreasing! How great is the strength of unity!⁵⁰

FEBRUARY – THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

From Pope John Paul II's Familiaris Consortio

The Spirit which the Lord pours forth [in the sacrament of marriage] gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us. Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross. ... Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross; they are for one another and for the children witnesses to the salvation in which the sacrament makes them sharers.⁵¹

1. Do we think of marriage differently when we remember that Christ is present in the sacrament of marriage? How does this change or challenge our personal views of love?
2. What do we think of St. John Chrysostom's principle of Christian married love — that spouses and family "increase" by "decreasing"? How does this principle relate to the words that we hear from John the Baptist: "He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn 3:30)?
3. Have we loved each family member by sacrificing for them as Christ has done for each of us? In what ways do each of us do this? In what ways could we be better at this?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 128

A prayer of the happy home that follows the Lord

Blessed are all who fear the LORD,
and who walk in his ways.
What your hands provide you will enjoy;
you will be blessed and prosper:
Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your home,
Your children like young olive plants
around your table.
Just so will the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.

FEBRUARY – THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

May the LORD bless you from Zion;
may you see Jerusalem's prosperity
all the days of your life,
and live to see your children's children.
Peace upon Israel!

Family Project

Read the below nuptial prayer from the Order of Celebrating Matrimony. Share memories about your wedding day with your family over a nice family meal. At this meal, have each child share one thing they appreciate about their parents' marriage. Then, each spouse should share one reason why they are grateful for their marriage and how each one sees Christ as present in their marriage.

Nuptial Blessing

Holy Father, who formed man in your image, male and female you created them, so that as husband and wife, united in body and heart, they might fulfill their calling in the world; O God, who, to reveal the great design you formed in your love, willed that the love of spouses for each other should foreshadow the covenant you graciously made with your people, so that, by fulfillment of the sacramental sign, the mystical marriage of Christ with his Church might become manifest in the union of husband and wife among your faithful. ... May they also sustain, O Lord, by their deeds the home they are forming and prepare their children to become members of your heavenly household by raising them in the way of the Gospel. ... Through Christ our Lord. Amen.⁵²

MARCH – FAMILY DIFFICULTIES

All families face difficulties. At such critical moments, it is important to learn how to suffer well and to suffer together with Christ. Suffering, if given to the Lord, can bring families closer together and strengthen their love.

Breaking Open the Theme

Catholic families today face many challenges in the very real and normal frustrations of marriage and family life. The world tells families that they can simply walk away from such situations and choose whatever lifestyle or solution makes them feel happy as individuals. However, this escapism is not the Christian way.

As St. John Paul II often reminded people, the Christian way of suffering begins with hope and the firm conviction that “God’s strength is always far more powerful than your difficulties.”⁵³ Relying on God’s strength, families should not be fearful to recognize their struggles together and bring them before the Lord in prayer. Although they may not experience instant relief or be given a solution to fix the problem they are facing, the Lord will help them carry their crosses to the very end, providing comfort and healing along the way.

After taking these first steps, families need to remember that they must constantly undergo conversion and healing. They cannot stop talking about their daily concerns or problems; by doing so they run the risk of weakening their relationships. Open conversation unites family members and may lead them to discover the source of their pain and struggles. In particular, it may bring up issues that the family is struggling to express or even unbury deep concerns. It may be painful to face problems, especially those that have no easy solution, but families must do so with honesty and love.

If families start with these first few steps, their wounds can be transformed into points of intimacy with God. Suffering need not be only negative; through faith it can be transformed into great love. It is this miracle of transforming suffering into joy that is at the heart of Christian salvation.

MARCH – FAMILY DIFFICULTIES

Meditation

From Pope John Paul II's Familiaris Consortio

There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wound its own communion: hence there arise the many and varied forms of division in family life. But, at the same time, every family is called by the God of peace to have the joyous and renewing experience of “reconciliation,” that is, communion reestablished, unity restored. In particular, participation in the sacrament of reconciliation and in the banquet of the one Body of Christ offers to the Christian family the grace and the responsibility of overcoming every division and of moving towards the fullness of communion willed by God, responding in this way to the ardent desire of the Lord: “that they may be one.”⁵⁴

1. What are our family's struggles? How might we work together as a family to heal these areas of hurt or confusion, without fleeing from challenges, shutting anyone out or giving in to despair?
2. What difference does it make to view suffering in light of the cross of Christ? How does this perspective transform the way we approach suffering together as a family?
3. How can we as a family better rely on God's strength in times of difficulty? In what ways can we allow Christ's love to make our suffering fruitful and deepen our love?

MARCH – FAMILY DIFFICULTIES

Scripture Reading — Psalm 34:5-11

A prayer for those who suffer to trust in the Lord

I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him and be radiant,
and your faces may not blush for shame.

This poor one cried out and the LORD heard,
and from all his distress he saved him.

The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and he saves them.
Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the stalwart one who takes refuge in him.

Fear the LORD, you his holy ones;
nothing is lacking to those who fear him.

The rich grow poor and go hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Family Project

Ask each family member to think about one difficulty in the family and to pray for it every day. At the end of the month, share your prayer intentions and experiences.

APRIL – MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

The inner form of Christian familial love is mercy like God the Father who is “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4).

Breaking Open the Theme

Pope St. John Paul II has beautifully said mercy is “love’s second name.”⁵⁵ Sacred Scripture speaks frequently about Christ’s love in terms of mercy. For instance, there are the memorable parables of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32) and the lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7). In fact, Christ’s strongest teaching about the sacredness and life long permanence of the marriage bond (Mt 19:12) is preceded by one of his strongest teachings about forgiveness in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21-35).

During the course of the parable of the unforgiving servant, Christ instructs his disciples to forgive not just seven times, but 77 times — a symbolic number that represents a willingness to forgive without limit. In other words, Christ instructs his disciples to love unconditionally by being merciful. The fact that this teaching occurs right before his teaching about marriage’s indissolubility powerfully suggests that marriage, and the family life that flows from it, is to be held together by unconditional mercy. If the family practices mercy, they will be immensely blessed: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7).

Meditation

From Pope Francis’ Amoris Laetitia

Once we allow ill will to take root in our hearts, it leads to deep resentment. ... The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people’s weaknesses and to excuse them. As Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Yet we keep looking for more and more faults, imagining greater evils, presuming all kinds of bad intentions, and so resentment grows and deepens. ... Something is wrong when we see every problem as equally serious; in this way, we risk being unduly harsh with the failings of others. The just desire to see our rights respected turns into a thirst for vengeance rather than a reasoned defense of our dignity.

When we have been offended or let down, forgiveness is possible and desirable, but no one can say that it is easy. ... All this assumes that we ourselves have had the experience of being forgiven by God, justified by his

APRIL – MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

grace and not by our own merits. We have known a love that is prior to any of our own efforts, a love that constantly opens doors, promotes and encourages. If we accept that God's love is unconditional, that the Father's love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us. Otherwise, our family life will no longer be a place of understanding, support and encouragement, but rather one of constant tension and mutual criticism.⁵⁶

1. Considering that Jesus forgave his persecutors from the cross, what does God's mercy in the Scriptures teach us about how to forgive our family members?
2. Why is it important to be forgiven by God? Why must we trust in his forgiveness in order to forgive others properly?
3. Do any of us find it hard to forgive? What holds us back from forgiving? Is it resentment based on ill will, unduly looking for faults, an excessive concern for our rights, the inability to forgive ourselves or to accept our own limitations? Or is it something else?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 51:3-6, 11-15

A prayer of penance and longing for God's abundant mercy

Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;
in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.
Thoroughly wash away my guilt;
and from my sin cleanse me.
For I know my transgressions;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your eyes
So that you are just in your word,
and without reproach in your judgment.
Turn away your face from my sins;
blot out all my iniquities.
A clean heart create for me, God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit.
Do not drive me from before your face,
nor take from me your holy spirit.

APRIL – MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

Restore to me the gladness of your salvation;
uphold me with a willing spirit.
I will teach the wicked your ways,
that sinners may return to you.

Family Project

As a family, go to church for the sacrament of reconciliation. A week later, take a few moments to discuss how the sacrament has helped each of you to be more holy and to fight against temptation and sin.

MAY – HOPE

Because love is filled with hope when it is communicated, our family wants to promote hope and the life-giving spirit that flows from it to our families.

Breaking Open the Theme

Christian hope is faith in the redemption of Jesus Christ that enables mankind to face the present, even when there are many problems. “The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.”⁵⁷ But how exactly do such hopeful people live differently?

Hopeful people do not get weighed down by pessimism. They choose to counter discouragement by accepting the love of Christ every day through a robust prayer life. They believe “all things are possible” with God (Mt 19:26). They lovingly help their family and friends, realizing that life in its fullness consists in “being for others” even when the other is not affirming or loving in return.⁵⁸

Hope is born through encounters of love that present a life-giving spirit to our families. Families participate in the life-giving spirit of God through raising children, work, mission, generosity, tenderness and other acts of love. A hopeful family helps each person realize that they live “in the world for a purpose — to receive God’s love ourselves and to show God’s love to others. God seeks to heal a broken universe. He asks us to be his witnesses and helpers in that work.”⁵⁹

Meditation

From Pope Benedict XVI's Spe Salvi

Whoever is moved by love begins to perceive what “life” really is. He begins to perceive the meaning of the word of hope that we encountered in the Baptismal Rite: from faith I await “eternal life” — the true life which, whole and unthreatened, in all its fullness, is simply life. Jesus, who said that he had come so that we might have life and have it in its fullness, in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10), has also explained to us what “life” means: “this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life. If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we “live.”⁶⁰

1. How would our family life be different if we did not love at all? How would this affect our sense of hope?
2. In what ways has the Catholic faith and God's love shown us how to love? In what way does the faith shape our hopes?
3. Why is having a relationship with God so important to really "living" and "hoping"?

Scripture Readings — Psalm 139:13-18

A prayer to the all-knowing and ever-present God

You formed my inmost being;
 you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
 wonderful are your works!
 My very self you know.
My bones are not hidden from you,
 When I was being made in secret,
 fashioned in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw me unformed;
 in your book all are written down;
 my days were shaped, before one came to be.
How precious to me are your designs, O God;
 how vast the sum of them!
Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands;
 when I complete them, still you are with me.

Family Project

Ask each person to choose something "impossible" to pray for this month, and choose one person in your family to pray for every day during the month. Also, to celebrate the life-giving spirit of your family, discuss times in your family's life when you grew together in faith or love. Discuss moments of your relationship, courtship, engagement and wedding celebrations that helped you grow as a couple. Share stories of your children's births, and discuss the gift that each of their lives has been to your family. Gather photos or various mementos of these events for a scrapbook or memory box that your family can cherish, or consider compiling them into a slideshow that can be shared with relatives.

JUNE – SELF-GIVING LOVE

The form of marital and family love is given by God himself, who is love. The Christian family, the domestic church, has been entrusted with the irreplaceable vocation of being the first school of human and divine love.

Breaking Open the Theme

The domestic church is meant to be the primary place for education. Education should be concerned with the whole person and include moral, intellectual, spiritual and physical development.⁶¹

As the primary educators of their children, mothers and fathers have many responsibilities. One of the most fundamental practices they must teach is self-giving love.⁶² Self-giving love not only places the good of another ahead of one's personal good, but also sees another's good as one's own good. In its fullness, self-giving love gives totally, without reservation, like Christ gave himself completely on the cross.

By embracing the vocation to the sacrament of marriage with its inherent openness to life,⁶³ a husband and wife are prepared by God to be teachers of this kind of love. The most fundamental lessons of love are taught through ordinary daily life in the rhythm of a home in which God is loved and adored above all things. Through the struggles of daily life, acts of service and kind words, children learn the language of love from their mother and father. Every Christian family, as a domestic church, has been entrusted with the vocation to become a school of authentic love or, as St. John Paul II once put it, "a school of a deeper humanity".⁶⁴

June is traditionally devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated each year as a solemnity on a Friday 19 days after Pentecost. The Sacred Heart devotion reveals the burning love of God in Jesus Christ, a love which is stronger than death and given to us in the sacraments. By teaching children about Jesus Christ through devotions like the Sacred Heart, families personally connect to the source of life and love itself.

Meditation

From an article by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori

Parents have, or should have, a unique relationship with their children. They have been called by God to love their child with the same faithful, self-giving love in which the child was conceived. ... To be sure, the notion of "self-giving love" is not an idealistic or naive concept dreamed up by theologians. It is demanding and sacrificial. Self-giving love has its source in

JUNE – SELF-GIVING LOVE

the Trinity and is revealed most fully by Jesus on the Cross. It requires what Pope Francis calls “an exodus from self” so that we might focus on the needs of others, even when that causes disruption in our lives. ...

Most fundamentally, teaching children the “art of living” involves lessons of faith and character. Parents teach children their first prayers, bring them to Mass on Sunday, and help them develop a basic sense of right and wrong coupled with a sense of responsibility. They also teach gratitude and generosity by helping their children learn to take care of their possessions; to not always expect to have the latest and best of everything; and to grow in the habit of sharing what they have with others. Moreover, parents help their children learn to handle life’s inevitable disappointments, including the invidious comparisons that are part of the highly competitive and materialistic culture in which we live. Such lessons are best learned at home, in an atmosphere of respect and love. ...

As Pope Francis said, “Parents are called ... not only to bring children into the world but also to bring them to God” (*Lumen Fidei*, 43).⁶⁵

1. What do we learn from our family? Have we learned “the art of living”? If so, of what does this “art of living” consist?
2. What is self-giving love?
3. How have we learned about self-giving love from our family?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 119:1-3, 9-12, 33-38, 105-108

A prayer to God, the Lawgiver

Blessed those whose way is blameless,
who walk by the law of the LORD.

Blessed those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with all their heart.

They do no wrong;
they walk in his ways.

How can the young keep his way without fault?
Only by observing your words.

With all my heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.

In my heart I treasure your promise,
that I may not sin against you.

JUNE – SELF-GIVING LOVE

Blessed are you, O LORD;
 teach me your statutes.
LORD, teach me the way of your statutes;
 I shall keep them with care.
Give me understanding to keep your law,
 to observe it with all my heart.
Lead me in the path of your commandments,
 for that is my delight.
Direct my heart toward your testimonies
 and away from gain.
Avert my eyes from what is worthless;
 by your way give me life.
For your servant, fulfill your promise
 made to those who fear you.
Your word is a lamp for my feet,
 a light for my path.
I make a solemn vow
 to observe your righteous judgments.
I am very much afflicted, LORD;
 give me life in accord with your word.
Accept my freely offered praise;
 LORD, teach me your judgments.

Family Project

An important part of love consists in doing things out of love for others, even things that we may find unpleasant. To encourage these little sacrifices, research and make sacrifice beads (also known as “good deed beads”), inspired by a practice that St. Therese of the Child Jesus used to do when she was a child. Sacrifice beads are essentially a way of helping the family look for opportunities to make little offerings of love to God through small acts of self-giving service.

JULY – WITNESSING TO THE FAITH

Because families play an indispensable role in the new evangelization, we want to share our faith with other families and those who are far away from God.

Breaking Open the Theme

Everyone — no matter their role or station in life — is called to holiness. Holiness in the family is a response of love to the graces God lavishes upon them every day through the sacrament of marriage. “A love that fails to grow is at risk. Growth can only occur if we respond to God’s grace through constant acts of love, acts of kindness that become ever more frequent, intense, generous, tender and cheerful. ... The gift of God’s love poured out upon the spouses is also a summons to constant growth in grace.”⁶⁶

As the saints have shown so well throughout history, this constant growth in grace leads inevitably to witness in our daily lives. This witness is the primary way to evangelize in our time. It is through living our lives as Catholic families, devoted to our faith, to each other and to helping those in need, that we best evangelize in a world that so often seems reluctant to hear this good news.

The family must put comfort and convenience aside “to risk sharing in the suffering of others” who are on the margins.⁶⁷ Who are those on the margins? They may be people we never met, the poor, the immigrant and the unborn. They may be people who we know that are lonely and feel isolated. They may be our own family members who are difficult to love because of their personalities. Paradoxically, the margins are not very far from us, but all around us and sometimes even within us. Those who are on the margins are those wounded and far off from God’s love and his Church.⁶⁸ The family must encounter these margins and mend them with its witness to God’s love. To vary slightly a famous phrase of St. John Paul II, we could say, “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors of the domestic church for Christ!”⁶⁹

Meditation

From Pope Benedict XVI’s Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family

The new evangelization depends largely on the Domestic Church (cf. *Ibid. [Familiaris Consortio]*, n. 65). In our time, as in times past, the eclipse of God, the spread of ideologies contrary to the family and the degradation of sexual ethics are connected. And just as the eclipse of God and the crisis

JULY – WITNESSING TO THE FAITH

of the family are linked, so the new evangelization is inseparable from the Christian family. The family is indeed the way of the Church because it is the “human space” of our encounter with Christ. Spouses “not only receive the love of Christ and become a saved community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ’s love to their brethren, thus becoming a saving community.” The family founded on the Sacrament of Marriage is a particular realization of the Church, saved and saving, evangelized and evangelizing community. Just like the Church, it is called to welcome, radiate and show the world the love and presence of Christ. The reception and transmission of divine love are realized in the mutual commitment of the spouses, in generous and responsible procreation, in the care and education of children, work and social relationships, with attention to the needy, in participation in church activities, in commitment to civil society. The Christian Family to the extent it succeeds in living love as communion and service as a reciprocal gift open to all, as a journey of permanent conversion supported by the grace of God, reflects the splendor of Christ in the world and the beauty of the divine Trinity.⁷⁰

1. How can we as a family better communicate Christ’s presence to others in word and action, thereby becoming a “saving community” that shares the love of Christ?
2. Remembering that the “new evangelization” is not new in content but “new in ardor, methods and expression,” what are some ways we as a family can evangelize, and what truths might we express?
3. Why is family such an effective voice for addressing important issues?

Scripture Readings — Psalm 148:1-6, 11-13

A song of praise to the Lord

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
 praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all you his angels;
 give praise, all you his hosts.
Praise him, sun and moon;
 praise him, all shining stars.
Praise him, highest heavens,
 you waters above the heavens.

JULY – WITNESSING TO THE FAITH

Let them all praise the LORD's name;
for he commanded and they were created,
Assigned them their station forever,
set an order that will never change.
Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all who govern on earth;
Young men and women too,
old and young alike.
Let them all praise the LORD's name,
for his name alone is exalted,
His majesty above earth and heaven.

Family Project

Invite a family member, friend or acquaintance to Mass, adoration or a faith-forming event with you. Also, write down ideas for small sacrifices and offerings on individual pieces of paper. Place these in a small bowl. Every day, have each member of the family randomly select one piece of paper to offer the sacrifice listed for the intentions of a relative or friend. At the end of the month, each family member might send a note to the person for whom they made the offering, telling him or her about their prayers and sacrifices.

AUGUST – HOSPITALITY

Scripture speaks frequently about the importance of a family's hospitality because of its life-giving love that nourishes weary souls and heals broken hearts.

Breaking Open the Theme

Hospitality is necessary for a Christian family as a domestic church. It is part of a Christian's mission (Heb 13:2, Rom 12:13, Mt 10:42, Lk 10:29–37, Gn 18:1-10). But what is hospitality? Christ teaches us through the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) that one dimension of hospitality is "to make a neighbor of a stranger."⁷¹ Hospitality, as the word itself and the parable of the Good Samaritan suggest, helps to heal others, like a hospital.

Yet the concept of Christian hospitality goes even deeper. The Rule of St. Benedict states, "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'"⁷² Christian hospitality, then, is not just merely being kind and welcoming toward the stranger or our own family members; it is welcoming all as Christ.

This radical Christian hospitality by families can occur in many simple ways. We can invite people over for a celebration or regular family activities, serve a home-cooked meal, wave hello to neighbors from the porch or even ask others to join for family prayer. The possibilities are endless. The key is that families not just open the door but also open their hearts with love toward others, sharing a love that is warm and life-giving like Christ's.

Meditation

From Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia

Led by the Spirit, the family circle is not only open to life by generating within itself, but also by going forth and spreading life by caring for others and seeking their happiness. This openness finds particular expression in hospitality, which the word of God eloquently encourages: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware" (Heb 13:2). When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is "a symbol, witness and participant in the Church's motherhood." Social love, as a reflection of the Trinity, is what truly unifies the spiritual meaning of the family and its mission to others, for it makes present the kerygma [teachings] in all its communal imperatives. The family lives its spirituality precisely by being at one and the same time a domestic church and a vital cell for transforming the world.⁷³

AUGUST – HOSPITALITY

1. What are some specific ways in which our family practices hospitality within our home? In what ways is hospitality challenging for our family, and in what ways does it help our family grow in grace and happiness?
2. Have we ever thought of hospitality in terms of welcoming the other as Christ? How might this calling of Christian hospitality change our practices of hospitality?
3. What are some ways as a family to grow in hospitality? How might we open our home more to the poor, lonely, brokenhearted and neglected? Is there someone who has a rough family life that could use some time around our family for the support and encouragement that love offers?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 84:9-13

A praise of God's house

LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
listen, God of Jacob.
O God, watch over our shield;
look upon the face of your anointed.
Better one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere.
Better the threshold of the house of my God
than a home in the tents of the wicked.
For a sun and shield is the LORD God,
bestowing all grace and glory.
The LORD withholds no good thing
from those who walk without reproach.
O LORD of hosts,
blessed the man who trusts in you!

Family Project

Invite acquaintances from your parish or neighborhood over for a meal, and spend some time socializing afterward. Invite them to join you for family prayer, too.

SEPTEMBER – CHARITY

We learn of God's love through the Scriptures, the testimony of God himself, where we read that "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). The Scriptures therefore instruct all, including families, to practice charity because Christ is present in every person, especially the poor and needy.

Breaking Open the Theme

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis called on the family to have an "expanding fruitfulness"⁷⁴ that seeks to give life outside of one's own family through charity. Charity is a living out of the family's kingly mission to serve others. Pope Benedict XVI explains that there are three unique elements to fruitful Christian charity that distinguish it from any other form of social assistance: a heartfelt concern for the fullness of another person's humanity, a "heart which sees" and faith.⁷⁵

Pope Benedict XVI reminds Christians that it is not enough to "meet the needs of the moment," such as providing food or shelter. They must also "dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity."⁷⁶ One of the beautiful ways to do this is to allow the other person to give back to the giver, welcoming their gifts of friendship and faith.

To allow this deeper giving and sharing, families need "a formation of the heart" from an "encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others."⁷⁷ This new heart looks upon love of neighbor not as "a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. Gal 5:6)."⁷⁸ It is a "heart that sees" like the Good Samaritan. "This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly."⁷⁹

Finally, Christian charity must not leave God and Christ out of the equation because it is concerned with the *whole man*. As Pope Benedict XVI points out, "Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God."⁸⁰ Families should therefore naturally share their faith; with the help of grace, they will know when they should converse about the faith and when they should silently share the faith through loving actions.

SEPTEMBER – CHARITY

Meditation

From Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia

A married couple who experience the power of love know that this love is called to bind the wounds of the outcast, to foster a culture of encounter and to fight for justice. God has given the family the job of “domesticating” the world and helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters. ... For their part, open and caring families find a place for the poor and build friendships with those less fortunate than themselves. In their efforts to live according to the Gospel, they are mindful of Jesus’ words: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). In a very real way, their lives express what is asked of us all: “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed” (Lk 14:12-14). You will be blessed! Here is the secret to a happy family.

By their witness as well as their words, families speak to others of Jesus. They pass on the faith, they arouse a desire for God and they reflect the beauty of the Gospel and its way of life. ... Their fruitfulness expands and in countless ways makes God’s love present in society.⁸¹

1. How do we live out charity in our family towards others?
2. Why does charity enrich family life and expand its fruitfulness? Do we think people can actually encounter Christ by helping those who are in need? Why or why not?
3. How can our family learn to know God better through love in our own family and love toward those we don’t know?

SEPTEMBER – CHARITY

Scripture Reading — Psalm 86:1-7, 11-12

A prayer for God's protection of the poor

Incline your ear, LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and oppressed.
Preserve my life, for I am devoted;
 save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my God; be gracious to me, LORD;
 to you I call all the day.
Gladden the soul of your servant;
 to you, LORD, I lift up my soul.
LORD , you are good and forgiving,
 most merciful to all who call on you.
LORD , hear my prayer;
 listen to my cry for help.
On the day of my distress I call to you,
 for you will answer me.
Teach me, LORD, your way
 that I may walk in your truth,
 single-hearted and revering your name.
I will praise you with all my heart,
 glorify your name forever, LORD my God.

Family Project

Volunteer as a family with your parish, local Knights of Columbus council or other local Catholic ministry. If there are no nearby Catholic charities, then consider volunteering at a nearby soup kitchen or similar local charity.

OCTOBER – TOGETHER ON MISSION

By understanding its mission, the family can more fully embrace God's plan for the fullness of divine life and love that he wishes to share with the family.

Breaking Open the Theme

When we think of being missionary, we often assume that this means we must travel to a faraway place and share our gifts and our faith. But being on mission is actually part of our everyday existence as baptized sons and daughters of God. Just as Jesus was sent into the world to save humanity, Jesus sends the family into the world with a specific mission. The Christian family, as a domestic church, is entrusted with the mission “to guard, reveal, and to communicate love.”⁸² What makes its task unique is that the family does this mission *together*.

To live out this mission of the family, it is necessary to attend Sunday Mass as a family, to give thanks to God for your mission and to pray as a family for the graces necessary to carry it out. Family prayer is an opportunity to bring the family together to “pause for prayer.”⁸³ Families can learn in a particular way how to pray from the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus. They were a family of prayer. Christ regularly prayed the psalms with his family and Mary knew the Scriptures well (cf. Lk 1:46-55). St. Joseph, as head of the household, would have led them in prayer.

October is traditionally the month of the holy rosary. Through the rosary, and through the Joyful Mysteries in particular, we meditate upon the life of the Holy Family through the eyes of Mary. The rosary is one of the simplest and most powerful prayers that the family can pray together. Both St. John Paul II and Pope Francis have often asked families to pray the rosary.⁸⁴ By coming together in this way for prayer and by turning together to Jesus with Mary, many families have experienced profound moments of peace, joy and reconciliation.⁸⁵

Meditation

From Carl Anderson and Father José Granados' Called to Love

Jesus said to the disciples: “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). The Lord’s words apply in a special way to the family. Light, after all, fulfills its “mission” of bestowing warmth and visibility not by some extra activity added to its nature, but simply by being what it is. Similarly, just as the mission of the sun is nothing other than to shine, the mission of the family is just to be itself.

OCTOBER – TOGETHER ON MISSION

John Paul II was calling the family to this essential mission when he exclaimed: “Family, become what you are!” What happens when the family becomes what it is? Here is John Paul II’s answer:

... the family has the mission to become more and more what it is, that is to say, a community of life and love. ... The family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride. (*Familiaris Consortio*, 17)

... The family, we said, is the hearth from which the light of love spreads out to vivify the structures of society. ... Significantly, the mission of the Church can be described in similar terms. The Church exists, after all, to radiate God’s love into the world. The Church is the sacrament of love that both shows forth and effects man’s union with God and man’s union with man (see *LG* [Lumen Gentium], 1).⁸⁶

1. How do we as a family allow our light to shine before others in the world? How do we think of and care for others outside of our family?
2. What can we do to allow ourselves to be God’s missionaries and to radiate his love into the world?
3. Do we live our family life as missionary disciples? Do we allow Jesus’ word to dwell in our family and to teach us what it means to love? How can we do more to build up one another for the mission of love?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 144:1-3; 9-15

A prayer of thanksgiving for God’s faithfulness

Blessed be the LORD, my rock,
 who trains my hands for battle,
 my fingers for war;
My safeguard and my fortress,
 my stronghold, my deliverer,
My shield, in whom I take refuge,
 who subdues peoples under me.

OCTOBER – TOGETHER ON MISSION

O God, a new song I will sing to you;
on a ten-stringed lyre I will play for you.
You give victory to kings;
you delivered David your servant.
From the menacing sword deliver me;
rescue me from the hands of foreign foes.
Their mouths speak untruth;
their right hands are raised in lying oaths.

May our sons be like plants
well nurtured from their youth,
Our daughters, like carved columns,
shapely as those of the temple.
May our barns be full
with every kind of store.
May our sheep increase by thousands,
by tens of thousands in our fields;
may our oxen be well fattened.
May there be no breach in the walls,
no exile, no outcry in our streets.
Blessed the people so fortunate;
blessed the people whose God is the LORD.

Family Project

Set aside a Sunday afternoon this month to pray the rosary together as a family. Consider having a family brunch before praying, and talk to your children about the rosary and how it is prayed. Pray especially for peace in your family and for the healing of family wounds.

NOVEMBER – THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

By virtue of baptism and the sacramental graces of marriage, the Christian family is built into a communion of saints. Holiness is a gift given to every baptized Christian that becomes a joyful task for the whole of life.

Breaking Open the Theme

Like the Church herself, the domestic church is called to be a communion of saints. Our response to the call to holiness is important if we are to become the family God wants us to be. We may think of saints as people who lived long ago or are far removed from our everyday experiences. But the saints are close at hand, and God wants to make each of us a saint. Each member of the family has the task of helping the others to grow in holiness through faith, hope and love.

There are many examples of canonized saints and beatified blessed who can inspire families today. One example of a modern-day saint is Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, who was born in 1971. At the age of 17, she was diagnosed with a serious and painful illness. Faced with this cross, Chiara prayed and found the courage to accept this as part of God's loving plan for her. During the whole time of her illness, she turned everything into an opportunity to love. As she lay dying at the age of 18, she said to her mother, "Oh Mamma. ... You see I can't run anymore, but how I would like to pass on to them [young people] the torch [of faith], like in the Olympics! Young people have only one life and it's worthwhile to spend it well."⁸⁷

Becoming a saint is like running a race.⁸⁸ The family is the training ground for this race, where the virtues are taught and character is formed. Through the family, God provides what we need to run it well. To become a saint is simply to cooperate with God and allow him to mold us into the person that he had in mind when he created us. It is his plan to bring us fully to life.

NOVEMBER – THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Meditation

From Pope Benedict XVI's General Audience, April 13, 2011

Holiness, the fullness of Christian life, does not consist in carrying out extraordinary enterprises but in being united with Christ, in living his mysteries, in making our own his example, his thoughts, his behavior. The measure of holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, in as much as with the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his. ...

What is the soul of holiness? ... What is the essential? The essential means never leaving a Sunday without an encounter with the Risen Christ in the Eucharist; this is not an additional burden but is light for the whole week. It means never beginning and never ending a day without at least a brief contact with God. And, on the path of our life it means following the “signposts” that God has communicated to us in the Ten Commandments, interpreted with Christ, which are merely the explanation of what love is in specific situations. ...

We might ask ourselves: can we, with our limitations, with our weaknesses, aim so high? During the Liturgical Year, the Church invites us to commemorate a host of saints, the ones, that is, who lived charity to the full, who knew how to love and follow Christ in their daily lives. They tell us that it is possible for everyone to take this road. ...

I would like to ask all to open themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our life, to be, we too, as small pieces in the great mosaic of holiness that God continues to create in history, so that the face of Christ may shine out in the fullness of its splendor. Let us not be afraid to aim high, for God's heights.⁸⁹

1. What is holiness?
2. How can we live holiness in the family? How do we love God in the ordinary circumstances of life?
3. How do the saints help us live out holiness?

NOVEMBER – THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Scripture Reading — Psalm 98:1-6

A prayer to welcome God's rule over the earth

Sing a new song to the LORD,
for he has done marvelous deeds.
His right hand and holy arm
have won the victory.
The LORD has made his victory known;
has revealed his triumph in the sight of the nations,
He has remembered his mercy and faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.
Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth;
break into song; sing praise.
Sing praise to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and melodious song.

Family Project

Select a few saints and learn about their time period and culture and why they are invoked for specific causes or intentions. Include a dish from their culture during one of your meals. Also, consider making a pilgrimage to a sacred place dedicated to a saint.

BASIC CATHOLIC BELIEFS

“Our profession of faith begins with God, for God is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end of everything. The Credo begins with God the Father, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works.”

— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 198

The Nicene Creed

Each Sunday Mass, Catholics recite together a profession of faith called the Nicene Creed or Credo. Credo is a name which comes from the very first words of the prayer in Latin: Credo in unum Deum (I believe in one God). It is called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan or Nicene Creed because it was approved by the bishops at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Ten Commandments

*“The curtness of the Ten Commandments is an evidence, not of the gloom and narrowness of a religion, but, on the contrary, of its liberality and humanity. It is shorter to state the things forbidden than the things permitted: precisely because most things are permitted, and only a few things are forbidden.”*⁹⁰

— G. K. Chesterton

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. You shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife.
10. You shall not covet thy neighbor’s goods.

The Precepts of the Church

The word “precept” comes from the Latin word praeceptum (to warn or to instruct). The precepts can be thought of as basic instructions or statutes given by the Church to illustrate the bare minimum obligations for all Catholics.

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Excerpt from Prayer: A Gift From God by Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus

Prayer is defined as “raising one’s mind and heart to God, or the petition of good things from him in accord with his will” (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 534). In prayer, we turn our whole attention to God, offer him praise and, seeking only his will, ask for what we need. We are obliged to pray, but prayer is also God’s gift to us. It is how we grow in our friendship with Christ, who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, leads us to the Father of mercies.

In a sense, prayer is something natural. Each human being is created in God’s image and, in spite of original sin, every person retains a desire for God. Yet, it is God who seeks our friendship and draws us to himself.

Prayer in the Bible

The Old Testament presents Abraham — “our father in faith” — as a model of prayer because he walked in God’s presence, listened to him and obeyed his will. Like Abraham, Moses frequently interceded before God on behalf of the chosen people. Moses’ strength as a leader, however, came from his uniquely intimate relationship with God. God called Moses from the burning bush and spoke to him in a remarkably direct manner, especially during the encounter on Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex 3:1-15, 19:1-25). Because of his constant, intimate communication with God, Moses is seen as a model of contemplative prayer (*Compendium*, 537).

Those who shepherded the people of Israel helped them see that God dwelled in their midst. Foremost among these leaders is David, the shepherd and king “after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22). Sacred tradition holds that David’s faith was the inspiration for the Psalms, the greatest prayers in the Old Testament. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalms are the Word of God given to us as our own prayer. They sing of God’s goodness in creating the world and his promise of redemption. They were prayed by Jesus and are at the heart of the Church’s prayer (*Compendium*, 540).

The Old Testament also shows us how the prophets prayed. Like Moses, they entered deeply into prayer before the living God. Overshadowed by the spirit of the Lord, they received the Word of the Lord so that they could speak to the people on God’s behalf.

It was in Jesus Christ most of all that God our Father taught us what prayer is and how to pray. Both Son of God and Son of Mary, Jesus lived in

obedience with Mary and Joseph in their home in Nazareth. There, in his human nature, he learned from his mother how to pray. But as the eternal Son of God, his prayer had an even deeper source (*Compendium*, 541; Jn 1:14).

In the New Testament, we frequently find Jesus absorbed in prayer. He fasted and prayed for 40 days and nights before he began his public ministry (Mt 4:2) and prayed before choosing his Apostles (Lk 6:12). He often withdrew from the crowds to pray and taught his disciples the importance of doing so (Mk 6:31). Jesus, who taught us to pray constantly, made his whole life a prayer to his Father in heaven (1 Thes 5:17; *Compendium*, 542).

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”

Jesus’ prayer reached its pinnacle in his passion and death. During the agony in the garden, Jesus suffered intensely as he took upon himself the sins of the world and the anguish of a suffering humanity. In obedience to the Father’s will, he laid down his life to save us. There[on the cross], he experienced for us the full weight of our sinful alienation from his Father and from one another. In this moment of supreme suffering on the Cross, Jesus interceded for us, and the Father heard his prayer and answered it beyond all hope by raising his Son from the dead (*Compendium*, 543).

Jesus gave us the “Our Father” as the perfect pattern of prayer. At the same time, he showed us the interior attitudes we should have when we pray, most especially purity of heart, openness to God’s will, love even for one’s enemies, and an intrepid faith and vigilance against temptation (*Compendium*, 544). The interior dispositions needed for prayer are beautifully summarized in the Beatitudes.

This leads us back to the truth that prayer is God’s gift to us. Our prayer is pleasing to the Father when, in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is united to the prayer of Jesus. In this way, prayer deepens our communion with the Holy Trinity.

Finally, just as Mary taught Jesus to pray, so also she helps us pray. Before she conceived the Son of God in her womb, she prayed in complete openness to the living Word of God. Thus, she was prepared to share fully in the mission of Christ. Each day, the Church repeats Mary’s beautiful prayer of thanksgiving, the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55). Mary prayed with the Apostles at Pentecost and was present at the first eucharistic celebrations (Acts 2:42). Her prayers for us and for all our needs are loving and powerful (*Compendium*, 546-547). She always leads us to Jesus.⁹¹

HOW TO PRAY AS A FAMILY

Excerpt from Lord, Teach Us to Pray by Father Peter John Cameron, O.P.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasizes the importance of family prayer:

“The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the ‘domestic church’ where God’s children learn to pray ‘as the Church’ and to persevere in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church’s living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit” (n. 2685).

In order to understand how to divide individual and family prayer within family life, we might consider three key aspects of family life: relationships, time, and change. The combination of diverse relationships within the family affects the way the members pray both individually and as a family, beginning with the relationship between parents and children. The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar notes that, in the beginning, children cannot distinguish between absolute, divine goodness and the creaturely goodness they encounter in their parents. As a result, children at first cannot differentiate between parental love and God’s love. This difference must be taught tenderly through the witness of the parents’ own humility, prayer, and dependency upon God.

For this reason, *Familiaris Consortio* (FC) stresses the fundamental and irreplaceable role of the concrete, living example of parents in educating their children to pray. “Only by praying together with their children can a father and a mother (exercising their royal priesthood) penetrate the innermost depths of their children’s hearts and leave an impression that the future events in their lives will not be able to efface” (FC, 60).

Moreover, in this regard, parents “must be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to follow Jesus. ... Parents should respect this call and encourage their children to follow it” (CCC, n. 2232).

As a result, the excellence of a family’s prayer life very much flows from each individual member’s relationship with the Lord. For this reason, if possible, parents — and godparents — should provide their children with the religious articles that foster an intimate personal relationship with God, especially a Bible, a crucifix, a rosary, an image of the Blessed Mother, a missal, a collection of devotional prayers, etc. Every member of the family should be encouraged to make time each day to be alone with God in prayer.

At the same time, devotion to the communion of saints should be explained and cultivated, especially by introducing children to the lives of

their own patrons and of the patron saints of the entire family. Litanies and lives of the saints — read privately or as a family — further this interest.

With a missal, each member of the family might be encouraged to meditate privately on the Scripture readings for the coming Sunday, especially the Gospel. That meditation might be guided by the question: What is Jesus saying to me in these readings? After that, a certain time might be set aside each week before Sunday Mass to share these reflections together. Such discussion serves to deepen each person's appreciation of the Scripture and of the active presence of the Lord. At the same time, shared reflection of this sort draws the family more deeply together in God's love and truth, and prepares them to participate more fully in the Liturgy.

In a unique way, the rosary prayed as a family helps to define and strengthen family relationships. For in that prayer we recall the Incarnation of Jesus, particularly as his life is revealed through the mystery of the Holy Family, which the Christian family seeks to image. We meditate on the life of the Son of God by calling on the heavenly Father as well as the Mother of God. Thus, "the rosary should be considered as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite. ... When the family gathering becomes a time of prayer the rosary is a frequent and favored manner of praying. ... Generous imitation of the Blessed Virgin's interior spiritual attitude constitutes a special instrument for nourishing loving communion in the family and for developing conjugal and family spirituality" (FC, 61).

The wonder of time also presents a golden opportunity for family prayer and spiritual growth. A simple morning prayer offered together gives each day a God-centered focus, and provides a habitual reminder to impressionable young people about the real priorities in life. In the same way, night prayers said together form a lasting attitude of hopefulness in which gratitude for the day and longing for the next morning make us mindful of eternal life, for which our earthly sojourn is a preparation. Mealtimes also is a prime occasion for family prayer that reinforces the importance of unfailing thankfulness and constant, humble dependency upon the grace of God.

Liturgical time is also replete with occasions for special family prayer. The rituals and special customs attendant to Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Eastertide bless the family with a sanctified way of accounting the passing of time. A reverent commemoration of the Church's holy days, especially by praying novenas in preparation, enables children to grasp the right way to celebrate holidays.

Family life is filled with constant change that prayer should consecrate. "Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations, wedding anniversaries of the parents, departures, separations

and homecomings, important and far-reaching decisions, the death of those who are dear, etc. — all of these mark God's loving intervention in the family's history. They should be seen as suitable moments for thanksgiving, for petition, for trusting abandonment of the family into the hands of their common Father in heaven" (FC, 59).

In a special way, family prayer should predominate as family members prepare for the sacraments — Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion, First Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony and the Anointing of the Sick. The sacraments signal holy changes that sanctify, drawing all of us closer to God.

Such a program of family prayer approximates the time-tested pattern of prayer observed by many religious communities in the Church. It complements private meditation and liturgical prayer so that the Christian family can "assume and comply fully with all its responsibilities as the primary and fundamental cell of human society" (FC, 62).⁹²

PRAYERS FOR EVERY FAMILY

"In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call."

— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2567

FUNDAMENTAL PRAYERS

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Doxology

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Fatima Prayer

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy. Amen.

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that thou art one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; I believe that thy Divine Son became man, died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches, because thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, relying on thy infinite power, goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of thy grace, and life everlasting through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

Act of Charity

O my God, I love thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because thou art all good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of thee. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offended thee, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that thou art truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love thee above all things and I desire to possess thee within my soul. Since I am unable now to receive thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace thee as being already there, and unite myself wholly to thee; never permit me to be separated from thee. Amen.

Te Deum

O God, we praise thee: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. Everlasting Father, all the earth worships thee.

All the Angels, the heavens and all angelic powers, all the cherubim and seraphim, continuously cry to thee: holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.

The glorious choir of the Apostles, the wonderful company of prophets, the white-robed army of martyrs, praise thee.

The Holy Church throughout the world acknowledges thee: the Father of infinite majesty; thy adorable, true and only Son; and the Holy Spirit, the comforter.

O Christ, thou art the king of glory! Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou took it upon thyself to deliver man, thou didst not disdain the Virgin's womb.

Having overcome the sting of death, thou opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sit at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. We believe that thou will come to be our judge.

We, therefore, beg thee to help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Let them be numbered with thy saints in everlasting glory.

The Divine Praises

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his holy name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most precious blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.

PRAYERS DURING THE DAY

Morning Offering

O my God, I offer thee all my prayers, works, joys and sufferings in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for the intentions for which he pleads and offers himself in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in thanksgiving for thy favors, in reparation for my sins, and in humble supplication for my temporal and eternal welfare, for the wants of our holy Mother the Church, for the conversion of sinners, and for the relief of the poor souls in purgatory. I wish to gain all the indulgences attached to the prayers I shall say and to the good works I shall perform this day. Amen.

The Benedictus (cf. Lk 1:68-79)

A prayer to be said every morning, except on Sundays and holy days when the Te Deum (page 56) is said instead

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
He has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty savior,
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The Magnificat (cf. Lk 1:46-55)

A prayer to be said every evening

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and His children for ever.

Prayer at Night

O my God, I thank you for having preserved me today and for having given me so many blessings and graces. I renew my dedication to you and ask your pardon for all my sins.

Make an examination of conscience quietly, then pray the following.

Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake; watch over us as we sleep, that awake we may keep watch with Christ, and asleep, rest in his peace.

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
your word has been fulfilled;
my own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

a light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel. (cf. Lk 2:29–32).

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Grace Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thanksgiving After Meals

We give thee thanks, almighty God, for all thy gifts, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

DEVOTIONS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Angelus

Catholics traditionally recite the following prayer at dawn, midday and sunset throughout the year, except during the Easter season.

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. (Hail Mary)

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word. (Hail Mary)

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us. (Hail Mary)

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray.

R. Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ, thy son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by his passion and cross, be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Regina Caeli

During the Easter season, the Angelus is replaced with the Regina Caeli.

V. Queen of Heaven; rejoice, alleluia.

R. For he whom thou didst to merit to bear, alleluia.

V. Has risen as he said, alleluia.

R. Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. Because the Lord is truly risen, alleluia.

V. Let us pray.

R. O God, who through the resurrection of thy son, our Lord Jesus Christ, deigned to gladden the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through the Virgin Mary, his mother, we may attain the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee I stand sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

God of power and mercy, you blessed the Americas at Tepeyac with the presence of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. May her prayers help all men and women to accept each other as brothers and sisters. Through your justice present in our hearts, may your peace reign in the world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Holy Rosary

A Scripture-based prayer, the rosary provides an opportunity for Catholics to meditate on significant events that are essential to our Faith. The four sets of mysteries — Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous — guide our thoughts to consider particular events of Christ's life. Through praying the rosary, we bring our needs and prayers to Christ, asking that, through the intercession of his Blessed Mother, they may be granted and our families blessed with peace.

To begin the rosary:

1. While holding the crucifix, make the Sign of the Cross and recite the Apostles' Creed.
2. On the first large bead, recite the Our Father.
3. Recite the Hail Mary on the following three small beads, praying for an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and love.
4. Recite the Doxology.

For each decade:

1. Recite the name of the mystery, and recite the Our Father on the next large bead.
2. On each of the 10 small beads which follow, recite a Hail Mary.
3. Recite the Doxology and the Fatima Prayer (see pages 54-55) on the space before the next large bead.

Concluding prayers to the rosary:

Hail, holy queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, most holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray.

R. O God, whose only-begotten Son by his life, death and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life: grant, we beseech you, that meditating on these mysteries in the most holy rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The mysteries of the rosary, and corresponding Scripture references, are as follows:

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

Recited on Mondays and Saturdays

- The Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38)
- The Visitation (Lk 1:39-45)
- The Nativity (Lk 2:6-12)
- The Presentation (Lk 2:22-38)
- The Finding in the Temple (Lk 2:41-52)

THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

Recited on Thursdays

- The Baptism of the Lord (Mt 3:13-17)
- The Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-12)
- The Proclamation of the Kingdom (Mk 1:14-15)
- The Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8)
- The Institution of the Eucharist (Mk 14:22-26)

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

Recited on Tuesdays and Fridays

- The Agony in the Garden (Lk 22:39-46)
- The Scourging at the Pillar (Mk 15:12-20)
- The Crowning with Thorns (Jn 19:2-5)
- The Carrying of the Cross (Lk 23:26-32)
- The Crucifixion (Jn 19:18-30)

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

Recited on Wednesdays and Sundays

- The Resurrection (Mt 28:1-10)
- The Ascension (Acts 1:6-12)
- The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-41)
- The Assumption (Lk 1:46-52)
- The Coronation of Mary (Rv 12:1-5)

PRAYERS FOR SPECIAL INTENTIONS AND INTERCESSIONS FOR THE FAMILY

Prayer to the Holy Family

Composed by Pope Francis

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendor of true love;
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience
violence, rejection and division;
may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
Graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

A Prayer for Every Family on Earth

Composed by St. John Paul II

Lord, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, you are Love and Life. Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, the fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all the families of the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of Marriage, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.

We ask this of you, who are Life, Truth, and Love with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer to Your Guardian Angel

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom his love commits me here, ever this day/night be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

Prayer to the Holy Angels

O leaders of the heavenly armies, although we are always unworthy, we beseech you that with your prayers you may encircle us with the protection of the wings of your angelic glory. Watch over us as we bow low and earnestly cry out to you: Deliver us from trouble, O princes of the heavenly armies. Amen.

Prayer to St. Joseph

O God, in your wonderful providence you were pleased to choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother. Grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom we venerate on earth as our protector. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to St. Michael, the Archangel

St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Chaplet of Divine Mercy

To begin the chaplet:

1. While holding a rosary, make the Sign of the Cross.
2. On the first small bead, recite the Our Father.
3. On the second small bead recite the Hail Mary.
4. On the third small bead, recite the Apostles' Creed.

For each decade:

1. On the large beads, recite:
Eternal Father, I offer you the body and blood, soul and divinity of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.
2. On each of the ten small beads, recite:
For the sake of your sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Concluding prayer:

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. (Recite three times)

LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Below are solemnities and feasts you should commemorate as a family. Some of these have movable dates and may be transferred to another day dependent upon the calendar year and diocesan norms.

Sundays of Advent – *Last four Sundays before Christmas*
The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – *December 8*
Our Lady of Guadalupe – *December 12*
The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) – *December 25*
The Holy Family – *Sunday within the octave of Christmas*
Mary, the Holy Mother of God – *January 1*
The Epiphany of the Lord – *January 6*
St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary – *March 19*
The Annunciation of the Lord – *March 25*
Ash Wednesday – *40 days before Easter, excluding Sundays*
The Resurrection of the Lord – *Seventh Sunday after Ash Wednesday*
Divine Mercy Sunday – *Second Sunday of Easter*
The Ascension of the Lord – *Forty days after Easter Sunday*
Pentecost – *50 days after Easter Sunday*
The Most Holy Trinity – *Sunday after Pentecost*
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) – *Thursday after Trinity Sunday*
The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus – *19 days after Pentecost*
The Nativity of John the Baptist – *June 24*
Sts. Peter and Paul – *June 29*
The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – *August 15*
St. John Paul II – *October 22*
All Saints – *November 1*
Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe – *Last Sunday before Advent*

MEDITATIONS ON FAMILY LIFE

Ancestral Heritage

For the Christian community the family is far more than a “theme”: it is life, it is the daily fabric of life, it is the journey of generations who pass on the faith together with love and with the basic moral values. It is concrete solidarity, effort, patience, and also a project, hope, a future. All this which the Christian community lives out in the light of faith, hope and charity, should never be kept to oneself but must become, every day, the leaven in the dough of the whole of society for its greater common good.

Hope and a future presuppose memory. The memory of our elderly people sustains us as we journey on. The future of society ... is rooted in the elderly and in the young: the latter, because they have the strength and are of the age to carry history ahead; the former, because they are a living memory. A people that does not take care of its elderly, its children and its youth has no future, because it abuses both memory and promise.

Pope Francis

Message to Participants in the 47th Social Week of Italian Catholics

1. Who is one person in my family whose faith shaped my own faith?
2. What are some ways our family tries to live out belief in God and his Church?
3. Which virtue seems to be particularly strong in our family — faith, hope or charity?
4. Why is memory important to the future?
5. What strengths do the children in our family have?

Family and the Sabbath Rest

In the Gospel we do not find discourses on the family but an event which is worth more than any words: *God wanted to be born and to grow up in a human family*. In this way he consecrated the family as the first and ordinary means of his encounter with humanity.

In his life spent at Nazareth, Jesus honored the Virgin Mary and the righteous Joseph, remaining under their authority throughout the period of his childhood and his adolescence. In this way he shed light on the primary value of the family in the education of the person.

Jesus was introduced by Mary and Joseph into the religious community and frequented the synagogue of Nazareth. With them, he learned to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as the Gospel passage offered for our meditation by today's liturgy tells us.

When he was 12 years old, he stayed behind in the Temple and it took his parents all of three days to find him. With this act he made them understand that he “had to see to his Father’s affairs,” in other words, to the mission that God had entrusted to him.

This Gospel episode reveals the most authentic and profound vocation of the family: that is, to accompany each of its members on the path of the discovery of God and of the plan that he has prepared for him or her.

Mary and Joseph taught Jesus primarily by their example: in his parents he came to know the full beauty of faith, of love for God and for his Law, as well as the demands of justice, which is totally fulfilled in love.

From them he learned that it is necessary first of all to do God’s will, and that the spiritual bond is worth more than the bond of kinship.

The Holy Family of Nazareth is truly the “prototype” of every Christian family which, united in the sacrament of marriage and nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, is called to carry out the wonderful vocation and mission of being the living cell not only of society but also of the Church, a sign and instrument of unity for the entire human race.

Let us now invoke for every family, especially families in difficulty, the protection of Mary Most Holy and of St. Joseph. May they sustain such families so that they can resist the disintegrating forces of a certain contemporary culture which undermines the very foundations of the family institution.

May they help Christian families to be, in every part of the world, living images of God’s love.

Pope Benedict XVI
Angelus Address, Dec. 31, 2006

1. What does it mean to me to see the rest of the family pray or attend Mass with me?
2. Why might God want me to be a part of this particular family, giving me these people to love and care for?
3. What is one thing about Mary or Joseph that I admire?
4. How can I allow others to help me discover God’s plan for me? How can I encourage others to be open to God’s plan for them?

Family Prayer

Prayer needs to become a regular habit in the daily life of each family. Prayer is thanksgiving, praise of God, asking for forgiveness, supplication and invocation. In all of these forms the prayer of the family has much to say to God.

St. John Paul II

Letter to Families, 10

Mary appears therefore as the supreme model of personal participation in the divine mysteries. She guides the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event, by encouraging the faithful to desire an intimate, personal relationship with Christ in order to cooperate with the gift of their own life in the salvation of all.

We could add that for the people of God, Mary represents the model of every expression of their prayer life. In particular, she teaches Christians how to turn to God to ask for his help and support in the various circumstances of life.

Her motherly intercession at the wedding in Cana and her presence in the Upper Room at the Apostles' side as they prayed in expectation of Pentecost suggest that the prayer of petition is an essential form of cooperation in furthering the work of salvation in the world. By following her model, the Church learns to be bold in her asking, to persevere in her intercessions and, above all, to implore the gift of the Holy Spirit.

St. John Paul II

Audience, Sept. 10, 1997, 4-5

1. During my day, what are some times when I could take a minute to "touch base" with God through prayer, perhaps asking his help or simply thanking him for his love and his presence?
2. Just as talking can build a relationship, the different kinds of prayer mentioned are all ways to grow closer to God. What type makes me most aware that God is near and a part of this life he has given me?
3. How is our family touched and shaped by the prayers of all of its members?

Education of Children

The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason too it can and should be called "the domestic church."

All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building, day by day, the communion of persons, making the family “a school of deeper humanity”: this happens where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows.

A fundamental opportunity for building such a communion is constituted by the educational exchange between parents and children in which each gives and receives. By means of love, respect and obedience towards their parents, children offer their specific and irreplaceable contribution to the construction of an authentically human and Christian family. They will be aided in this if parents exercise their unrenounceable authority as a true and proper “ministry,” that is, as a service to the human and Christian well-being of their children, and in particular as a service aimed at helping them acquire a truly responsible freedom, and if parents maintain a living awareness of the “gift” they continually receive from their children.

St. John Paul II
Familiaris Consortio, 21

1. What are some similarities between how we learn to live in the family and how we learn to live in the Church?
2. What are some differences between living shallowly and living in a more deeply human way?
3. Realizing that God has given us our familial relationships, how do we each give and receive from each other?
4. What are some of the “graces and responsibilities” I have to contribute to make our family more Christian and more human?

The Love of Marriage

Analyzing the nature of marriage, both St. Augustine and St. Thomas [Aquinas] always identify it with an “indivisible union of souls,” a “union of hearts,” with “consent.” These elements are found in an exemplary manner in the marriage of Mary and Joseph. At the culmination of the history of salvation, when God reveals his love for humanity through the gift of the Word, it is precisely the marriage of Mary and Joseph that brings to realization in full “freedom” the “spousal gift of self” in receiving and expressing such a love. “In this great undertaking which is the renewal of all things in Christ, marriage — it too purified and renewed — becomes a new reality, a sacrament of the New Covenant. ... The Savior began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested his all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family — that sanctuary of love and cradle of life.”

How much the family of today can learn from this! “The essence and role of the family are in the final analysis specified by love. Hence the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride.” This being the case, it is in the Holy Family, the original “Church in miniature (*Ecclesia domestica*)” that every Christian family must be reflected. “Through God’s mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families.”

St. John Paul II
Familiaris Consortio, 17

God calls you to make definitive choices, and he has a plan for each of you: to discover that plan and to respond to your vocation is to move toward personal fulfillment. God calls each of us to be holy, to live his life, but he has a particular path for each one of us. Some are called to holiness through family life in the sacrament of marriage. Today, there are those who say that marriage is out of fashion. Is it out of fashion? In a culture of relativism and the ephemeral, many preach the importance of “enjoying” the moment. They say that it is not worth making a life-long commitment, making a definitive decision “forever,” because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, that believes you are incapable of true love. I have confidence in you and I pray for you. Have the courage “to swim against the tide.”

Pope Francis
Meeting with volunteers, 28th World Youth Day

1. In what virtue(s) do I need to grow in order to give myself to another as a loving spouse and loving parent? What is one strength I have that would be helpful as a loving spouse and loving parent?
2. Do I share Pope Francis’ confidence in me, that I am capable of true love and responsibility?
3. How does our family complete its “mission” to guard love, reveal love or communicate love?
4. What is an “ephemeral love,” and how is it different from a lasting and life long committed love? How does lasting love affect other members of a family?

Work and Family Life

Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth. The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter. This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. For Jesus, these were hidden years, the years to which Luke refers after recounting the episode that occurred in the Temple: "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them." This "submission" or obedience of Jesus in the house of Nazareth should be understood as a sharing in the work of Joseph. Having learned the work of his presumed father, he was known as "the carpenter's son." If the Family of Nazareth is an example and model for human families, in the order of salvation and holiness, so too, by analogy, is Jesus' work at the side of Joseph the carpenter. ...

What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies; he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things — it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic."

St. John Paul II

Redemptoris Custos, 22-24

- 1 How is work — whether breadwinning employment, chores or care — a "daily expression of love" in our family? Give an example.
2. Why do I work or do things for our family? How can I work more lovingly?
3. What are some "common, simple and human virtues"? What makes them "true and authentic" or false and inauthentic?
4. Are there ways that work is a source of tension for our family? How can I resolve the tension and make my work more a source of joy and love for the rest of the family?
5. Modeling Jesus' working with Joseph, how I can help others in our family with the ways they contribute or let them know that what they do matters?

Loving Our Neighbor

Jesus wanted to belong to a family who experienced these hardships, so that no one would feel excluded from the loving closeness of God. The flight into Egypt caused by Herod's threat shows us that God is present where

man is in danger, where man is suffering, where he is fleeing, where he experiences rejection and abandonment; but God is also present where man dreams, where he hopes to return in freedom to his homeland and plans and chooses life for his family and dignity for himself and his loved ones.

Today our gaze on the Holy Family lets us also be drawn into the simplicity of the life they led in Nazareth. It is an example that does our families great good, helping them increasingly to become communities of love and reconciliation, in which tenderness, mutual help, and mutual forgiveness is experienced.

Pope Francis
Angelus Address, Dec. 29, 2013

1. How is our family rich in companionship?
2. Who is one person or family who lacks the love of a close family? How can we reach out to help share our family with them?
3. Do material things and busy schedules isolate members of our family, perhaps taking people in different directions all the time or excluding a parent, spouse, child or sibling? Is there a way to imitate the Holy Family's "simplicity of life" to ensure that those in our family do not feel alone?
4. Do the elderly in our family feel lonely? What are some ways we could make them feel more included in the family's love?

Family and the Parish

Among the fundamental tasks of the Christian family is its ecclesial task: the family is placed at the service of the building up of the Kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church.

In order to understand better the foundations, the contents and the characteristics of this participation, we must examine the many profound bonds linking the Church and the Christian family and establishing the family as a "Church in miniature" (*Ecclesia domestica*) in such a way that in its own way the family is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church.

It is, above all, the Church as Mother that gives birth to, educates and builds up the Christian family, by putting into effect in its regard the saving mission which she has received from her Lord. By proclaiming the word of God, the Church reveals to the Christian family its true identity, what it is and should be according to the Lord's plan; by celebrating the sacraments, the Church enriches and strengthens the Christian family with the grace of Christ for its sanctification to the glory of the Father; by the continuous proclamation of the new commandment of love, the Church encourages and guides the

Christian family to the service of love, so that it may imitate and relive the same self-giving and sacrificial love that the Lord Jesus has for the entire human race.

St. John Paul II
Familiaris Consortio, 49

1. Pick a sacrament (penance, Eucharist, matrimony, etc.) or program in the parish and discuss how it has enriched our family.
2. How can we take advantage of the graces offered in the Church to make our family holy?
3. How can our family become more involved in the parish, shaping it with our love the way it shapes families with Christ's love?

Family and the Common Good

The civilization of love evokes joy: joy, among other things, for the fact that a man has come into the world (cf. Jn 16:21), and consequently because spouses have become parents. The civilization of love means "rejoicing in the right" (cf. 1 Cor 13:6). But a civilization inspired by a consumerist, anti-birth mentality is not and cannot ever be a civilization of love. If the family is so important for the civilization of love, it is because of the particular *closeness and intensity of the bonds* which come to be between persons and generations within the family.

St. John Paul II
Letter to Families, 13

How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unfailing presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand. From the time of his betrothal to Mary until the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he is there at every moment with loving care. As the spouse of Mary, he is at her side in good times and bad, on the journey to Bethlehem for the census and in the anxious and joyful hours when she gave birth; amid the drama of the flight into Egypt and during the frantic search for their child in the Temple; and later in the day-to-day life of the home of Nazareth, in the workshop where he taught his trade to Jesus.

How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus, and the Church? By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans, and not simply to his own. ... God does not want a house built by men, but faithfulness to his word, to his plan. It is God himself who builds the house, but from living stones sealed by his Spirit. Joseph is a "protector" because he is able to hear God's

voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God's call, readily and willingly, but we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!

Pope Francis

Homily at his Papal Inauguration, March 19, 2013

Mary as the model of charity. In what way is Mary a living example of love for the Church? Let us think of the readiness she showed toward her cousin Elizabeth. In visiting her, the Virgin Mary brought not only material help — she brought this too — but she also brought Jesus, who was already alive in her womb. Bringing Jesus into that house meant bringing joy, the fullness of joy. Elizabeth and Zechariah were rejoicing at a pregnancy that had seemed impossible at their age, but it was the young Mary who brought them the fullness of joy, the joy which comes from Jesus and from the Holy Spirit, and is expressed by gratuitous charity, by sharing with, helping, and understanding others.

Our Lady also wants to bring the great gift of Jesus to us, to us all; and with him she brings us his love, his peace, and his joy. In this, the Church is like Mary: the Church is not a shop, she is not a humanitarian agency, the Church is not an NGO. The Church is sent to bring Christ and his Gospel to all. She does not bring herself — whether small or great, strong or weak, the Church carries Jesus and should be like Mary when she went to visit Elizabeth. What did Mary take to her? Jesus. The Church brings Jesus: this is the center of the Church, to carry Jesus! ... The Church must bring Jesus, the love of Jesus, the charity of Jesus.

Pope Francis

General Audience, Oct. 23, 2013

1. How is the family the root of society? How do families shape society and our communities?
2. In our family, each person is welcomed. How can I show that each person is lovable and a reason for happiness?
3. Where do I see Christ needing protection in my life? How can I protect him outside the home?
4. How can I "bring Jesus" with me in helping others? How do I think Mary would act in my community with its needs?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These Church writings and documents may help your family grow in their faith and provide for a fuller understanding of the family as domestic church.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

A catechism is a text which explains fundamental Christian truths in such a way that they can be easily understood. As a “universal catechism,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is intended to be a point of reference for catechetical materials throughout the world, sharing the faith in a way that meets cultural, social and ecclesial conditions.

Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)

Pope Francis wrote this apostolic exhortation following two meetings of bishops on marriage and the family. He addresses the serious and complex issues that many families face in today’s world, including individualism and selfishness, divorce and remarriage, and the need for greater pastoral care for families. He reflects that marriage — and by extension, family life — is a vital dimension of human existence and that as they grow together in love families can overcome their struggles and build their lives as a domestic church.

Deus Caritas Est (God is Love)

This encyclical, or papal letter, offers St. John Paul’s reflection on different dimensions of love and certain essential facts concerning God’s love for mankind, addressing how we should share this love with our neighbor.

Evangelii Nuntiandi (Evangelization in the Modern World)

Evangelii Nuntiandi outlines the importance of evangelization in our day. In it, Pope Paul VI explains the central role that every Christian (not only priests, members of religious communities or professional church staff) has in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gratissimam Sane (Letter to Families)

A wonderful pastoral document through which families may understand God’s plan for marriage and family life, St. John Paul II’s letter is a special encounter between the Universal Church and each Christian family.

Familiaris Consortio (The Family in the Modern World)

This apostolic exhortation, written by St. John Paul II, explains how the call to holiness is universal and can be realized within the lives of Catholic families through their commitment to marriage and family.

The Knights of Columbus Catholic Information Service (CIS) continues the Order's tradition of evangelization by providing low-cost Catholic publications for the general public, parishes, schools, retreat houses, military installations, correctional facilities, legislatures, the medical community and any other individuals who request them.

The booklets listed below in the Building the Domestic Church Series and the New Evangelization Series present information on the topics of prayer, the sacraments and St. John Paul II's theology of the body, marriage and consecrated life — issues that are vitally important for Catholic families in their efforts to strengthen their own domestic church. These booklets, and many more, are available online at kofc.org/cis.

BUILDING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH SERIES

A Scriptural Rosary for the Family

A simple guide for praying the rosary, a centuries-old prayer through which Catholics may learn of the Gospel and contemplate the Face of Christ. The booklet contains collections of verses from the sacred Scripture, which can guide your family's meditations.

Prayer Time

A wonderful companion for anyone who truly wants to grow in holiness, offering the vocabulary of prayers and devotion common to Catholics through the ages and across the globe. These prayers beautifully express God's merciful love and foster Catholic devotion.

St. Benedict for Busy Parents

Offers the life and work of St. Benedict — whose famous monastic rule established principles for a spiritual life lived in a family-like community — as a framework for busy modern people who wish to learn practical ways of integrating spirituality and ordinary life.

The Gift of Fatherhood

Inspiration on facing the struggles of the vocation to fatherhood, particularly the challenges of daily life at work and at home. Based on a series of talks given by Father Carter Griffin.

NEW EVANGELIZATION SERIES

In the Image of Love: Marriage, the Family and the New Evangelization

Explores how the family is at the heart of the new evangelization in a world that is hungry for true communion, fidelity and forgiveness. Through the sacrament of marriage, God's love dwells in married love, healing it, transforming it and placing it at the center of the Church's mission.

Called to Love: John Paul II's Theology of Human Love

This introduction to St. John Paul II's catechesis on human love, or "theology of the body," guides the reader through the pope's groundbreaking teaching on marriage, the family and sexuality in the context of the human person's vocation to love.

Technology and the New Evangelization: Criteria for Discernment

This booklet helps readers to discern the proper use of technology in their homes and lives. It offers guidelines for critically thinking through the question, "What aspects of communications media are compatible with the message of God's love made flesh in Jesus Christ?"

SOURCES

Introduction

- ¹ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), 71.
- ² Synod of Bishops, *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization: Instrumentum Laboris* (June 24, 2014), 49.
- ³ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (November 22, 1981), 17.
- ⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, revised in accordance with the official Latin text, by Pope John Paul II (1997), 1603.
- ⁵ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (March 19, 2016), 87.
- ⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 69.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 200.
- ⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1643.
- ⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (December 25, 2005), 11.
- ¹⁰ *Instrumentum Laboris*, 103.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, 48.
- ¹² Pope John Paul II, Address to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (January 28, 1979).
- ¹³ *Familiaris Consortio*, 17.
- ¹⁴ Pope Francis, Address to Families at the Mall of Asia Arena (January 16, 2015).

Parts 1 & 2

- ¹ Carl Anderson, *A Civilization of Love*. New York: HarperOne, 2008, 81.
- ² When members of the Church first began gathering to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, they often met in a Christian family's home because they did not yet have true and proper buildings for Christian worship (see 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3-5; Rom 16:23; Col 4:15; Phlm 1:2; and Benedict XVI's *The Apostles: The Origins of the Church and Their Co-workers*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2007, 165.). By gathering together for Mass, "a family's living space could turn into a domestic church, a setting for the Eucharist, the presence of Christ seated at its table" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 15).
- ³ John Chrysostom, *Exp. in the Psalms*, 41:2; quoted in Cardinal Marc Ouellet's *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*. Trans. Philip Milligan and Linda Ciccone. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006, 41.
- ⁴ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), 11.
- ⁵ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 71.
- ⁶ Benedict XVI, Address to Participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family (December 1, 2011).
- ⁷ *Familiaris Consortio*, 17.
- ⁸ *Ibid*.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, 49-50. Note that all Christians by virtue of their baptism are called to participate in Christ's priestly, prophetic and kingly mission. The uniqueness of a domestic church is that the Christian family does this saving work together as a small Christian community founded on the graces of the sacrament of marriage.
- ¹⁰ Please note: All Scripture texts directly quoted by the authors of this booklet are from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., used by permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1601-1603.

¹² *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 and 13; *Amoris Laetitia*, 73, 290, and 319; Pope John Paul II, Letter to families *Gratissimam Sane* (February 2, 1994), 11; and John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. Boston, MA: Pauline & Media, 2006.

¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1601.

¹⁴ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 48.

¹⁵ International Commission on English in the Liturgy. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, Second Edition*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016, 62; see also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1614.

¹⁶ Carl Anderson, *Civilization of Love*, 74.

¹⁷ *Familiaris Consortio*, 55-62.

¹⁸ Rom 8:26, quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2559-2561.

¹⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 323.

²⁰ Ibid, 318.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *Familiaris Consortio*, 58: "The celebration of this sacrament [of reconciliation] acquires a special significance for family life. ... The married couple and the other members of the family are led to an encounter with God, who is 'rich in mercy,' who bestows on them His love which is more powerful than sin, and who reconstructs and brings to perfection the marriage covenant and the family communion."

²³ *Familiaris Consortio*, 51-54.

²⁴ *Amoris Laetitia*, 259.

²⁵ *Letter to Families*, 14.

²⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 289.

²⁷ *Familiaris Consortio*, 63-64, 71; cf. Matt 20:28.

²⁸ Pope Francis, Interview "A Big Heart Open to God," *America* (September 30, 2013).

²⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 321.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Deus Caritas Est*, 20; Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [The Joy of the Gospel] speaks of the necessity to do all things with joy in order to witness authentically to the Gospel, especially charity.

³² Ibid, 28.

³³ *Letter to Families*, 6-17.

³⁴ *Familiaris Consortio*, 49.

³⁵ *A Civilization of Love*, 171-172.

³⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 87.

³⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 6.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 31, art. 3, ad. 3, quoted in Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia*, 126.

⁴⁰ *Amoris Laetitia*, 109-110.

⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2697.

⁴² Ibid, 2700-2719.

⁴³ Jacques Philippe. *Time for God: A Guide to Mental Prayer*. New York: Scepter, 2008, 83.

⁴⁴ *Familiaris Consortio*, 59.

⁴⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2691.

⁴⁶ Fulton J. Sheen, *Three to Get Married*. New York: Scepter, 1996.

⁴⁷ Other reasons to have a marriage in a church can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1631.

⁴⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1639-1640.

⁴⁹ Carl Anderson and José Granados, *Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II's Theology of the Body*. New York: Doubleday, 2009, 88.

⁵⁰ Chrysostom, John. *On Marriage and Family Life*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1996, 75.

⁵¹ *Familiaris Consortio*, 13.

⁵² *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, Second Edition*, 207.

⁵³ *Gratissimam Sane*, 18.

⁵⁴ *Familiaris Consortio*, 21

⁵⁵ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia* (November 30, 1980), 7.

⁵⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 55

⁵⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* (November 30, 2007), 2

⁵⁸ Ibid, 28.

⁵⁹ "Chapter 2: Mission of Love." *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive; a Preparatory Catechesis for the World Meeting of Families*, Philadelphia, 2015. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2014, 25.

⁶⁰ *Spe Salvi*, 27

⁶¹ *Familiaris Consortio*, 49

⁶² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1653.

⁶³ *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 14.

⁶⁵ Archbishop William E. Lori, "Teaching the Art of Living." *Columbia*. Volume 95. Issue 3, 2015, 4-5

⁶⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 134.

⁶⁷ Pope Francis, Homily (February 15, 2015).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Saint John Paul II's original quote is "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ!" This quote can be found in his inauguration homily (October 22, 1978).

⁷⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family (November 12, 2011).

⁷¹ Lloni Collins Pratt and Daniel Homan. *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2011, xix.

⁷² *Rule of St. Benedict*, 53:1 *Amoris Laetitia*, 178-184.

⁷³ *Amoris Laetitia*, 178

⁷⁴ *Deus Caritas Est*, 31.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2013 (October 15, 2012), 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *Deus Caritas Est*, 31.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 183

⁸² *Familiaris Consortio*, 17.

⁸³ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (October 16, 2002), 42.

⁸⁴ Pope Francis, Homily (October 27, 2013): "In the light of God's word, I would like to ask you, dear families: Do you pray together from time to time as a family? Some of you do, I know. But so many people say to me: but how can we? ... After all, prayer seems to be something personal, and besides there is never a good time, a moment of peace... Yes, all that is true enough, but it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God, like the tax collector [from the Gospel]! ... Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it's easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And also praying for one another!"

⁸⁵ *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 41-42: "The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the spirit of God. Many of the problems facing contemporary families, especially in economically developed societies, result from their increasing difficulty in communicating. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television. To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images, images of the mystery of salvation: the image of the Redeemer, the image of his most blessed Mother. ... To pray the Rosary *for children*, and even more, *with children*, training them from their earliest years to experience this daily 'pause for prayer' with the family ... is a spiritual aid which should not be underestimated."

⁸⁶ Carl Anderson and José Granados, *Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II's Theology of the Body*. New York: Doubleday, 2009, 240-242.

⁸⁷ Ann Ball. *Young Faces of Holiness: Modern Saints in Photos and Words*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004.

⁸⁸ cf. Hebrews 12:1-2: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God."

⁸⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience (November 30, 2011).

⁹⁰ G. K. Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*. Vol. 32: *The Illustrated London News, 1917-1919*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986, 18.

⁹¹ Archbishop William Lori, "Prayer: A Gift from God." *Columbia*, May 2011.

⁹² Peter John Cameron, O.P., *The Veritas Series Lord Teach Us to Pray: The What, Why, and How of Prayer*, New Haven: Knights of Columbus Catholic Information Service, 2000.

“Faith seeks understanding”: it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith, and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens “the eyes of your hearts” to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation.

– Catechism of the Catholic Church, 158.

About Catholic Information Service

Since its founding, the Knights of Columbus has been involved in evangelization. In 1948, the Knights started the Catholic Information Service (CIS) to provide low-cost Catholic publications for the general public as well as for parishes, schools, retreat houses, military installations, correctional facilities, legislatures, the medical community, and for individuals who request them. For over 75 years, CIS has printed and distributed millions of booklets, and thousands of people have enrolled in its catechetical courses.

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The primary and essential object of catechesis is...“the mystery of Christ.”... [Catechizing] is therefore to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by Him, for they simultaneously hide and reveal His mystery. *Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.*

Pope St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 5
Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in our Time

About the Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus, a fraternal benefit society founded in 1882 in New Haven, Connecticut, by Blessed Michael McGivney, is the world’s premier lay Catholic organization, with more than 2 million members in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Based on the founding principles of charity, unity and fraternity, the Knights of Columbus is committed to strengthening Catholic families and parishes and to practicing faith in action through service to all in need. To find out more about the Knights of Columbus, visit www.kofc.org.

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