



Building The Domestic Church

The Family Fully Alive

JANUARY

Because the family that prays together stays together, we want to learn to pray as a family.

There is something very powerful about praying together as a family. Jesus reminded us that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them (see Mt 18:20). Most importantly, Jesus also revealed to us that when we pray with our children, their guardian angels always look upon the face of the Father (see Mt 18:10). Thus when a family prays together, an ocean of grace comes into the world.

Prayer needs to become a regular habit in the daily life of our families. Prayer is very rich: thanksgiving, praise of God, asking for forgiveness, praying for the needs of others, invocation. The prayer of the family is the prayer of the child for his/her grandparents, the prayer of the widow for her spouse, the prayer of the father and mother for their children, the prayer of the sister for her siblings, and that of the uncle for his nieces and nephews. Even when children, grandchildren, siblings, parents and grandparents are far away, they can still pray for each other. "In prayer everyone should be present: the living and those who have died, and also those yet to come into the world. Families should pray for all of their members" (St. John Paul II, **Letter to Families**).

FAMILY PROJECT

Praying together as a family is a great way to experience the presence of God in the midst of our everyday lives. While there are many ways to pray, consider using the Bible as the center and focus of your family prayer time. You should begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit, asking for guidance and understanding, and then read a chapter or verse aloud. Discuss those passages that might personally relate to your family situation or spirituality. Then, conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of God's Living Word.

MEDITATIONS

From St. John Paul II's general audience on Sept. 10, 1997.

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. ...

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.

1. During my day, what are some times when I could take a minute to connect 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, different kinds of prayer are different ways through which we grow closer to God. What type makes me most aware that God is near?
3. How is our family touched and shaped by the prayers of all its members?

Scripture Reading of the Month

Psalm 84: 9-13

By our prayers we show a desire to live with God, our Beloved

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!

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FEBRUARY

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

Parents see the fruit of their lives in their children, who become living witnesses to the great hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Men and women who do not have children of their own similarly participate in the life-giving spirit of God, for they, too, generate new life in the world through their work, mission and other acts of spiritual parenthood. Each of us, whatever our state in life, are "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." (***Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive***)

FAMILY PROJECT

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 a memory box that your family can cherish, or consider compiling them into a slideshow that can be shared with relatives.

MEDITATIONS

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, 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."

1. How would our family life be different if we did not love at all?
2. In what ways has the faith and God's love shown me how to love?
3. Why is having a relationship with God so important to really "living"?

Scripture Reading of the Month
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.

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MARCH

Because the joy of all parents is to teach their children the art of living, as parents we want to be the primary educators of our children.

To educate a child is to teach the art of life, the very art of humanity. It does not mean simply providing basic academic skills, but instead means helping a child grow in "wisdom, age and favor before God and man" (Lk 2:52). It is to help each of them become good children, siblings, friends and students until each takes up the vocation of marriage, parenthood, or religious life.

Parents are, therefore, the primary educators of their children. We — as members of society, schools, parishes and other families — are called to collaborate in this great mission.

FAMILY PROJECT

To help your family participate in building up the spirit of your community, consider organizing a pilgrimage to a sacred place. Such journeys help you to appreciate places and objects associated with holiness, ask for heavenly aid, and ultimately come to know God better. Invite extended family members or the families of your children's friends to join you in your pilgrimage to a religious site. During the journey to the destination, consider:

- Praying for the family to grow closer to God through the journey
- Discussing how the destination is important to the faith of each participant
- Exploring how any suffering experienced helps a pilgrim to know God

MEDITATIONS

From St. John Paul II's Familiaris Consortio.

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" ...

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.

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 manner, a way more fully alive?
3. Realizing that God has not only given us our lives, but also particular family relationships, how should we each give and receive from one another? What are some of the "graces and responsibilities" we each have to contribute to making our family more Christian and more human?

Scripture Reading of the Month
Psalms 78: 1-7

A reflection upon sharing the truths of the Lord

Attend, my people, to my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable,
unfold the puzzling events of the past.
What we have heard and know;
things our ancestors have recounted to us.
We do not keep them from our children;
we recount them to the next generation,
The praiseworthy deeds of the LORD and his strength,
the wonders that he performed.
God made a decree in Jacob,
established a law in Israel:
Which he commanded our ancestors,
they were to teach their children;
That the next generation might come to know,
children yet to be born.
In turn they were to recount them to their children,
that they too might put their confidence in God,
And not forget God's deeds,
but keep his commandments.

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APRIL

Because our children may be called to become spouses and parents, we want to help them understand the type of love that is necessary in marriage and family life.

All of us are called to self-giving love. Understanding that we are called to such love in each of our relationships can be difficult, especially for teenagers and young adults. They often define a relationship's worth by the feelings or emotions they experience.

Immature romantic love — such as a teen's first crush — shows love in an emotional stage. It can be fleeting and fickle, but it may also lead to the important element of loving friendship. In this latter stage, each person wants the best for the other and for themselves. The move from "I" to "we" in a romantic relationship becomes an integral step toward the self-surrender and personal commitment required for a successful marriage and start of a family.

Helping others to navigate and come to understand such deep emotions of friendship and love can be one of the greatest challenges and rewards a family can face.

FAMILY PROJECT

Speak with your children about your first date.

- Tell them about what first made you notice each other.
- Describe where you went on your first date.
- Talk about how this initial attraction grew into a deeper friendship and then into authentic love.

Finally, tell your children about your marriage and all of the transitions it involved. Share with them what it was like when you were first married, and when you became parents. Explain how you dealt with hard times and celebrated happier moments. Afterward, look through old photos, tracing your relationship from when you first met to today.

MEDITATIONS

From an address of Pope Francis given on July 28, 2013.

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 ... 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.

1. Do I share Pope Francis' confidence in me, that I am capable of true love and responsibility? Can I recognize the virtues that I need to develop in order to nurture my relationships with my spouse and my family?
2. 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?
3. How does our family complete its "mission" to guard love, reveal love or communicate love?

Scripture Reading of the Month
Psalm 16: 1-2, 8-11

God will make clear the path for his faithful

Keep me safe, O God;
in you I take refuge.
I say to the LORD,
you are my LORD,
you are my only good.
I keep the LORD always before me;
with him at my right hand, I shall never be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices;
my body also dwells secure,
For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
nor let your devout one see the pit.
You will show me the path to life,
abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

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MAY

Because in the beginning of creation God gave the commandment to work, we want to harmonize work and family life.

Through work, parents help fulfill their roles as guardians by providing for their families. Sometimes, job requirements may take parents away from their family. Such obligations, however, offer an opportunity for parents to set an example of commitment and teamwork.

Children can also learn through their own responsibilities. By sharing in chores and other work around the house, they learn how to be a part of a team and the satisfaction that comes with labor well done.

FAMILY PROJECT

Develop teamwork among your family members by working together to complete a project in your home, parish or community.

Create a garden or special location to place a statue of Mary, visit local cemeteries in spring to assist with a cleanup, or schedule a time to pray the rosary together as a family.

MEDITATIONS

From St. John Paul II's Redemptoris Custos.

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" (Lk 2:51). 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.

1. How is work — whether outside employment, work in the home, care of children or even chores — a "daily expression of love" in our family? What makes it "true and authentic" or false and inauthentic?

2. In what ways is work a source of tension for our family? How can I resolve the tension and make my work a source of joy for the rest of the family? How can I work more lovingly?
3. Modeling Jesus' working with Joseph, how I can help others in our family with their responsibilities, or let them know that what they do matters?

Scripture Reading of the Month
Psalm 90: 1-2, 14-17

A prayer for God's intervention

LORD, you have been our refuge
through all generations.
Before the mountains were born,
the earth and the world brought forth,
from eternity to eternity you are God.
Fill us at daybreak with your mercy,
that all our days we may sing for joy.
Make us glad as many days as you humbled us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.
Show your deeds to your servants,
your glory to their children.
May the favor of the LORD our God be ours.
Prosper the work of our hands!
Prosper the work of our hands!

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JUNE

Because families play an important role in the new evangelization, we want to share our faith with other families.

Everyone — no matter their role or station in life — is called to holiness. As the saints have shown so well throughout history, holiness in life 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.

FAMILY PROJECT

Write down ideas for small sacrifices/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.

MEDITATIONS

From an address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Pontifical Council for the Family.

The new evangelization depends largely on the domestic church. ... 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 ... 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.

1. How can our family better communicate Christ's presence to others in word and action, and thereby become a "saving community" that shares the love of Christ?
2. Remembering that the "new evangelization" is an evangelization which is not new in content but "new in ardor, methods and expression," what are some ways our family can "evangelize," and what truths might we express?
3. Why is family such an effective voice for things that matter?

Scripture Reading of the Month

Psalm 148: 1-5, 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.
Let them all praise the LORD's name;
for he commanded and they were created,
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.

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MONTHLY THEMES & MEDITATIONS

JULY

Because God is the Father of orphans and widows, we want to reach out to all those who are lonely and abandoned.

God takes care of us; he is our guardian. The psalmist declares him to be the "Father of orphans and defender of widows" (Ps 68:6), a title significant in the ancient world, when orphans and widows were considered the weakest elements of society. Without parents or a husband to take care of them, they were defenseless.

God does not leave us defenseless. Instead, he cares for us by sending us Jesus Christ, his only Son. Like the Good Samaritan, Jesus was especially close to the sick, hungry, lonely and poor. Through his actions toward those in need, Jesus provides the answer to Cain's question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). No matter how lonely, depressed, ostracized or angered are those in our communities and families, God has entrusted each of them to us. We are truly our "brother's keeper."

FAMILY PROJECT

Like the Good Samaritan, we are called to live out the corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead.

Ask each family member to help create a list of ways that your family might help the poor, the lonely and those in need. Once a month, dedicate time to such a person by making them dinner, assisting them with projects around their home, offering your prayers and support, or simply providing them company.

Even our own family members, relatives, friends and neighbors may be alone, needy or new to your parish or school. Extend an invitation to your home for dinner, and ask each of your family members to help prepare for the meal in some way.

MEDITATIONS

From an address of Pope Francis given on Dec. 29, 2013.

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 ... 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.

1. How is our family rich in companionship? How can we reach out to those we know who lack the love of a close family?
2. Do material things and busy schedules isolate members of our family, perhaps excluding a parent, spouse, child or sibling? Is there a way to ensure that those in our family do not feel alone?
3. Do the elderly in our family feel lonely? What are some ways we could make them feel more included in the family's love?

Scripture Reading of the Month
Isaiah 58: 6-9

The sacrifices and fasting we offer to the Lord lead to many blessings

Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking off every yoke?
Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry,
bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own flesh?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall quickly be healed;
Your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: "Here I am!"

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The Family Fully Alive

AUGUST

Because no one should be isolated, remember that our parish and communities are a larger family in which we must share our love and service.

As faithful Catholics, we have an obligation to be good citizens in our larger communities. Our responsibility to serve others comes from the Lord, who called us to love our neighbor. When we follow this call, our society becomes a better place as a result of our service and concern for our neighbors.

We must show the world that it is love that motivates us to help and protect people in need.

FAMILY PROJECT

Discuss with your family the importance of Christ's words: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). As a family, reach out and invite another family member or someone who may be alone to join your family for Mass, a social event or another activity.

MEDITATIONS

From St. John Paul II's Familiaris Consortio

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. ... 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.

1. How has the parish enriched our family through its activities, various services, and the great gifts of the sacraments?
2. How can our family take advantage of what is offered in the Church, opening ourselves more fully to the graces it provides?

3. How can our family become more involved in the parish, as a way of returning a small amount of love to these parishes that bring us so much grace through the sacraments?

Scripture Reading of the Month

Psalm 8: 2-6, 10

A praise to the Divine Majesty reflected in each human person

O LORD, our LORD,
how awesome is your name through all the earth!,
I will sing of your majesty above the heavens
with the mouths of babes and infants.
You have established a bulwark against your foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.
When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place —
What is man that you are mindful of him,
and a son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him little less than a god,
crowned him with glory and honor.
O LORD, our LORD,
how awesome is your name through all the earth!

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The Family Fully Alive

SEPTEMBER

Because the family is the root of society, we want our family to fulfill its vocation to build the common good.

God is not solitary. He is a communion of persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As men and women we are created in this image. By our very nature, we are intended to belong to a communion, or community, of persons.

Through baptism, God has transformed us into his children and given us entrance into the community of the Church. This community is an exceptional one: It is the family of God. In it, each of us — as the sons and daughters of God — are called to care for each other. When we seek to care for each other by making our individual families reflect the community of persons which is the Trinity, we truly build our family as the domestic church.

FAMILY PROJECT

God calls upon us to be good citizens and to serve our communities. Talk to your family about service members of your community, such as police officers and firefighters, those holding public office, and those in the armed forces or similar services. Work with local groups to send care packages and letters to active duty members of the armed forces serving overseas. Visit elderly veterans and spend time with them talking, reading or playing a game as a way to show appreciation for their past service.

MEDITATIONS

From St. John Paul II's Letter to Families.

The civilization of love evokes joy: joy, among other things, for the fact that a man has come into the world (cf. Jn16:21), 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.

1. How is the family important in society? How do families shape our communities?
2. Does our family "rejoice in the right?" Do we recognize the joy and reasons for happiness in our communities, or do we only dwell upon the negative? What can we do to transform the negativity in our home and communities?
3. How do I think the saints — in particular, the Blessed Mother — would act in my community with its needs? How can we help it become a civilization of love?

Scripture Reading of the Month
Psalm 23: 1-4, 6

A prayer of confidence in the Lord's generosity

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.
Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days.

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OCTOBER

Because God rested on the seventh day, we want to celebrate Sunday together as a family.

Sunday is the day of the Lord in which we remember and give thanks for the work of creation, his gift of the Holy Spirit, and the joy of our faith.

Celebrating the sacredness of this holy day each week together as a family strengthens each of us in our vocation to holiness.

FAMILY PROJECT

Sunday is a special day, a "mini-Easter" during which we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death.

Make the day special by sharing a special meal as a family. You might also consider planning a Sunday trip to visit an adoration chapel to spend time together as a family adoring God, truly present to us in the Eucharist.

MEDITATIONS

From Pope Benedict XVI's Angelus address given on Dec. 31, 2006.

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. ...

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. ...

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.

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. How can I help my friends and family members discover God's plan for them? How might they help me do the same?

Scripture Reading of the Month
Psalm 128: 1-6

Happiness comes to families who follow 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.
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!

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The Family Fully Alive

NOVEMBER

Because the Lord is the God of our ancestors, we want to strengthen the relationships between our family's generations.

Our family defines each and every one of us. Because our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents chose life, we are here today. This month, thank God for the gift of your family.

FAMILY PROJECT

Making a family tree is a great way to celebrate your ancestry and learn about the past events that have shaped each family member to be who he or she is today.

During this month, research your family history, seeing how far back you can trace. Gather copies of old photos and era-related items to accompany your information.

Further connect with your family by corresponding with grandparents or other relatives who do not live nearby. Send them photos, letters, or a "Thinking of You" card signed by the whole family.

Set aside time to regularly visit the graves of deceased relatives and to pray for them.

MEDITATIONS

From Pope Francis' message to participants in the 47th Social Week of Italian Catholics.

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.

1. Who is one person in our family whose faith shaped my own? What strengths does each member of our family have?

2. What are some ways our family tries to live out belief in God and his Church? Which virtue seems to be particularly strong in our family — faith, hope or charity?
3. Why is keeping alive the memory of our history, our family roots, important to shaping the future?

Scripture Reading of the Month

Psalm 105: 1,6, 8-11, 44-45

Praise to God, who is always faithful to his promises

Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;
make known among the peoples his deeds!
You descendants of Abraham his servant,
offspring of Jacob the chosen one!
He remembers forever his covenant,
the word he commanded for a thousand generations,
Which he made with Abraham,
and swore to Isaac,
And ratified in a statute for Jacob,
an everlasting covenant for Israel:
"To you I give the land of Canaan,
your own allotted inheritance."
He gave them the lands of the nations,
they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
That they might keep his statutes
and observe his teachings.
Hallelujah!

Provided by your local Knights of Columbus Council



Building The Domestic Church

The Family Fully Alive

DECEMBER

Because God is the Lord of mercy, we want to begin anew by helping heal our family wounds and promoting forgiveness.

As we conclude the year, we look forward to a new beginning, full of hope and comfort. We do not know what challenges may face us in the upcoming year, but we must seek the strength and love necessary to bear witness to the mercy of God.

Mercy and forgiveness start with those who are close to us, as the wounds made by spouses, children, parents or siblings are usually the most hurtful. The family, therefore, is our first school of forgiveness where we learn that to forgive is something divine, the most perfect gift. When we forgive someone, we help them understand the meaning of God's forgiveness.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PROJECT

Bring the miracle of Christ's birth into your home by displaying a special Nativity scene in a prominent location in your home. Throughout Advent, have family members place a different figure in the manger and meditate on the meaning of this humble place where God became man.

FAMILY PROJECT

Go to confession together as a family. Young children may need guidance in preparing for the sacrament: discuss with them how one might sin in regard to the Commandments and precepts of the Church. Older children might instead independently review *A Guide to Confession* (#2075), or a similar examination of conscience.

Share with your children that although it's normal to feel some shame when preparing for confession, it should not be something to fear. Through reconciliation and penance, a person is released from the burden of sin and gifted with great graces.

MEDITATIONS

From Pope Francis' homily proclaiming the Jubilee dedicated to Divine Mercy.

As the Apostle Paul reminds us, God never ceases to show the richness of his mercy throughout the ages. The transformation of the heart that leads us to confess our sins is "God's gift," it is "his work" (cf. Eph 2:8-10). To be touched with tenderness by his hand and shaped by his grace allows us, therefore, to approach the priest without fear for our sins ...

[and to] find the certainty of forgiveness. The greater the sin, so much the greater must be the love that the Church expresses toward those who convert.

Dear brothers and sisters, I have often thought about how the Church might make clear its mission of being a witness to mercy. It is a journey that begins with a spiritual conversion. For this reason, I have decided to call an extraordinary Jubilee that is to have the mercy of God at its center. ... This Holy Year will begin on this coming Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will end on November 20, 2016, the Sunday dedicated to Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe — and living face of the Father's mercy.

1. When have we felt the mercy of God in our own lives?
2. Have we ever been a "witness to mercy" and extended God's forgiveness to others? Have we been able to look beyond the limitations of justice, and forgive those who have offended or hurt us?
3. Can we, as a family, renew our own "spiritual conversion" by going to confession more frequently?

Scripture Reading of the Month

Psalm 103: 1, 3, 10-12

A prayer to the merciful God

Bless the LORD, my soul;
all my being, bless his holy name!
Who pardons all your sins,
and heals all your ills,
He has not dealt with us as our sins merit,
nor requited us as our wrongs deserve.
For as the heavens tower over the earth,
so his mercy towers over those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our sins from us.

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