

Be a... FAMILY OF PRAYER

In speaking to Vatican employees, Pope Francis advised them to first and foremost, "Take care of your spiritual life, your relationship with God, because this is the backbone of everything we do and everything we are." This holds true for individuals, parents, children and families.

The best way to take care of your spiritual life is regular prayer — both personal and communal.



"Resting in prayer is especially important for families. It is in the family that we first learn how to pray. And don't forget when the family prays together, it remains together. This is important."

Pope Francis, Jan. 17, 2015

While saying prayer before meals and bedtime is important, the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is our best prayer. Here we express all forms of prayer as praise and adore God, ask his assistance, ask the saints to intercede on our behalf, even as we praise and thank God for 'simply' being God. When a family regularly prays together at Mass, all other prayer becomes a regular and natural part of family life.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Lean on the saints to intercede for you and your family. The saints in heaven are members of our family as children of God who have succeeded in lives of love, forgiveness and care. In particular entrust your family to the Holy Family, they know the blessings and challenges of family life.

POPE FRANCIS SHARES HIS OWN RELIANCE ON ST. JOSEPH:

"I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church. Yes! We know that he can do that. So when I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath Saint Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words I tell him: pray for this."

"As Christians, you too are called, like Joseph, to make a home for Jesus. You make a home for him in your hearts, your families, your parishes and your communities."

Pope Francis, Jan. 17, 2015

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BE FAMILIES OF HOLINESS



"In the family we come to know God, to grow into men and women of faith, to see ourselves as members of God's greater family, the Church."

Pope Francis
Jan. 17, 2015



BE LIVING EXAMPLES OF LOVE, FORGIVENESS AND CARE

BE A FAMILY OF LOVE

The primary task of parents is to make present to their children God and his infinite love. Love is not an emotion or a warm feeling it is a lived response that seeks the good of the beloved. Through the witness of their love for one another, a husband and wife model the self-sacrificing love of God for us. "In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish," We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them."

PRACTICAL WAYS TO BE FAMILIES OF LOVE:

- Pope Francis advises us to think of family as a verb—something we do — not something we have. Spend time with your family. Set aside time regularly for "Family Date Night." The focus is on lavishness of time and attention rather than destination or activity.
- Celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday with your parish family. It is our privileged opportunity to experience God's love in a tangible way!
- Take time each day to reflect on the ways God has been present in your life, how were you close to God or how did you stray from him in moments of your day? Commit to do better.

BE A FAMILY OF FORGIVENESS

Living in a family is messy, there are difficulties in managing time, personalities and finances. Pope Francis acknowledges that amid these challenges we sometimes get irritated, he went on to say, "sometimes plates fly!" He added: "We shouldn't be sad about this, it is human nature. The secret is love is stronger than an argument. Don't end your day without making peace. Always make peace." Families who regularly ask forgiveness and offer forgiveness are then able to take that mercy to the world and transform their workplaces, schools and communities.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO BE FAMILIES OF FORGIVENESS:

- Do not gossip, this causes resentment and bitterness. Pope Francis counsels: "Be careful how you speak, purify your tongue of offensive words, vulgarity and worldly decadence." It is an act of mercy to only speak kindly of others. It protects us from judging others.
- Regularly celebrate the sacrament of Penance as a family. Allow God to accept your contrition and heal your heart. As a bonus, this sacrament of forgiveness restores relationship with God, Church and others.
- Let your mercy be seen through simple gestures. Kindness is the beginning of mercy.

BE A FAMILY OF CARE

A natural fruit of lives of love and forgiveness is a transformed heart open and committed to the poor. We have both the right and the duty to serve others. Pope Francis says, "none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice." Parents who make sacrifices for their families model Jesus as they place the needs of others ahead of our own. As such, the family provides a living opportunity to practice care for others that can grow into care for all God's creation.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO BE FAMILIES OF CARE:

- As a family regularly identify who is your neighbor—brothers and sisters who are weaker ... the elderly, the sick, the hungry, the homeless and strangers. This will open your heart and mind to opportunities.
- As a family identify and make a commitment to a social justice activity in your parish community. This strengthens the bonds of your family and that of your parish community.
- Pray for the strength to persevere in your commitment to others and remember, No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force." ~ *The Joy of the Gospel*, 279