

You Are the Church in Your Home

Baptism brings all Christians into union with God. Your family life is sacred because family relationships confirm and deepen this union and allow the Lord to work through you. The profound and the ordinary moments of daily life—mealtimes, workdays, vacations, expressions of love and intimacy, household chores, caring for a sick child or elderly parent, and even conflicts over things like how to celebrate holidays, discipline children, or spend money—all are the threads from which you can weave a pattern of holiness.

A family is our first community and the most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us, and acts in the world. The early Church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home.

You carry out the mission of the church of the home in ordinary ways when:

- You believe in God and that God cares about you. It is God to whom you turn in times of trouble. It is God to whom you give thanks when all goes well.
- You love and never give up believing in the value of another person. Before young ones hear the Word of God preached from the pulpit, they form a picture of God drawn from their earliest experiences of being loved by parents, grandparents, godparents, and other family members.
- You foster intimacy, beginning with the physical and spiritual union of the spouses and extending in appropriate ways to the whole family. To be able to share yourself—good and bad qualities—within a family and to be accepted there is indispensable to forming a close relationship with the Lord.
- You evangelize by professing faith in God, acting in accord with gospel values, and setting an example of Christian living for your children and for others. And your children, by their spontaneous and genuine spirituality, will often surprise you into recognizing God's presence.
- You educate. As the primary teachers of your children, you impart knowledge of the faith and help them to acquire values necessary for Christian living. Your example is the most effective way to teach. Sometimes they listen and learn; sometimes they teach you new ways of believing and understanding. Your wisdom and theirs come from the same Spirit.
- You pray together, thanking God for blessings, reaching for strength, asking for guidance in crisis and doubt. You know as you gather—restless toddlers, searching teenagers, harried adults—that God answers all prayers, but sometimes in surprising ways.
- You serve one another, often sacrificing your own wants, for the other's good. You struggle to take up your cross and carry it with love. Your "deaths" and "risings" become compelling signs of Jesus' own life, death, and resurrection.
- You forgive and seek reconciliation. Over and over, you let go of old hurts and grudges to make peace with one another. And family members come to believe that, no matter what, they are still loved by you and by God.
- You celebrate life—birthdays and weddings, births and deaths, a first day of school and a graduation, rites of passage into adulthood, new jobs, old friends, family reunions, surprise visits, holy days and holidays. You come together when tragedy strikes and in

joyful celebration of the sacraments. As you gather for a meal, you break bread and share stories, becoming more fully the community of love Jesus calls us to be.

- You welcome the stranger, the lonely one, the grieving person into your home. You give drink to the thirsty and food to the hungry. The Gospel assures us that when we do this, they are strangers no more, but Christ.
- You act justly in your community when you treat others with respect, stand against discrimination and racism, and work to overcome hunger, poverty, homelessness, illiteracy.
- You affirm life as a precious gift from God. You oppose whatever destroys life, such as abortion, euthanasia, unjust war, capital punishment, neighborhood and domestic violence, poverty and racism. Within your family, when you shun violent words and actions and look for peaceful ways to resolve conflict, you become a voice for life, forming peacemakers for the next generation.
- You raise up vocations to the priesthood and religious life as you encourage your children to listen for God's call and respond to God's grace. This is especially fostered through family prayer, involvement in parish life, and by the way you speak of priests, sisters, brothers, and permanent deacons.

No domestic church does all this perfectly. But neither does any parish or diocesan church. All members of the Church struggle daily to become more faithful disciples of Christ.

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