

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:** abortion, euthanasia, unjust war, capital punishment, neighborhood and domestic violence, poverty and racism. Within your family, you shun violent words and actions and look for peaceful ways to resolve conflict, 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.

- What kind of family do we want to be?
- What kind of things do we want to accomplish?
- What kind of spirit do we want in our home?
- What role does Christ play in our family?
- What are our family's highest priorities?

Jesus promised to be where two or three are gathered in his name.

We give the name *church* to the people who the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love. Christian families are a domestic church. *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.*



Faith Happens in Families First

Long before your children were old enough for school or formal religion, they were already beginning to grow in faith. They had already been living and growing in the midst of a community of faith—their family.



Faith-filled moments permeate all of family life.

It is true: faith happens in families first. Parents are blessed with the love and grace to foster their children's spiritual growth. You are uniquely able to teach your children because you are persons of faith and you are parents.



“The future of humanity passes by way of the family” Pope John Paul

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 basic vocation of every baptized person is the same: **“follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you”** The Lord issues this call to your family and to every family regardless of its condition or circumstances. **What you do in your family to create a community of love, to help each other grow, and to serve those in need is critical, not only of your own sanctification but for the strength of society.**



Mission of the Family

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.

Do you share with your kids how God loves and cares for them? Do you help them take their fears, worries, sadness to God?

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.

Do your children see that love is an action, a choice we make? Even when it is hard to love? (patience, kindness, enduring)

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.

Do you and family members take time to be “present” in each other’s lives; supporting, helping, and listening to one another?

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.

Do you talk about Jesus, his stories, his teachings? Do you share how you have tried to follow his way of life? Do you share how he is present and working in your life?

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.

Do your children see you growing in your faith? Are you sharing your understanding and love of God with them?

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—that God answers all prayers, and sometimes in surprising ways.

Beyond the family meal and attending Mass, does your family pray together? Spontaneous prayer as needed? Bedtime ritual prayer? Gathering once weekly for an extended prayer time?

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.

Do you foster “others-centered” lives or “self-serving” lives in your home? How do you help your child find ways to contribute to others? How do you foster a “spirit of service” in your home? Is the phrase, “Is there anything I can do to help?” asked frequently in your home?



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.

Do family members understand and embrace Christ's frequent call to forgive? Do your children know how Jesus lived forgiveness? Do your children understand the power of the mercy and forgiveness of God? Do you help your children seek reconciliation with one another – restoring peace in the home?

You celebrate life—birthdays and weddings, births and deaths, a first day of school and a graduation, rites of passage into adulthood, 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 share stories, becoming more fully the community of love Jesus calls us to be.

Does your family come together for meals? Do you have traditions to celebrate birthdays and special days?