

A Family That Prays Together...

LENT-FAMILY PRAYER

Parents are “the first and foremost educators of their children”. (The Church Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris consortio*. John Paul II, November 22, 1981.) It is at the gentle hands of parents that children are meant to be introduced to the practice of prayer. In addition, parents who pray with their children come to a deeper understanding of their family. Prayer can bond families together. Here are some suggestions for ways to pray as a family.

- The ritual of bedtime prayers is pretty common in most families, as is the mealtime prayer. In the busy lives of families today, those seem to be especially opportune times to slow down and pray. Parents can give their children simple blessings, as a way to pray together. Not all prayer has to be long or involved. A father can say a simple prayer for his child like, “May Jesus bless you and give you a good day (or night), in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” This quiet, uncomplicated prayer is an excellent way for family members to communicate love through prayer.
- The Morning Offering is an opportunity for families to recite a prayer first thing in the morning as a reminder to offer up to God everything they may encounter throughout the day. Start each morning and end each day with a prayer of thanksgiving.
- The Angelus is a group of prayers traditionally recited at six in the morning, noon and six in the evening. The parish bells may ring at these times to remind the faithful to stop for this prayer. The Angelus is prayed by reciting three sets of Scripture verses and Hail Marys, followed by another short prayer.
- Praying for patience and understanding helps families act in a calm and loving way when a difficulty arises. Pray about conflicts between family members.
- Write a letter or draw a picture telling God what's going on in family life.
- Make a prayer list and keep it in a visible place. 1 Peter 5: 7 says, “Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you.” 1 John 5:14-15 states, “And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.”
- Take family prayer-walks around the neighborhood, quietly praying for each neighbor.
- Take a minute as a family to pray for the person in need when an ambulance, police or fire truck's drives past.
- Pray in the car while driving past a cemetery or Catholic Church. Pray a rosary together when driving somewhere that takes twenty minutes or more or listen to Catholic radio. Play Catholic songs on the radio in the car.
- Discuss the Mass readings for the following Sunday. Read about and discuss the saint's feast days.
- Visit the Adoration chapel as a family.
- For Lent, do a family service project. Eat a simple meal and give the money saved to the poor.
- Light candles in the Advent wreath, sing a song, say a short prayer, and then sing another short song. The children get to blow out the candles.
- Take time to thank and praise God when noticing a beautiful sunset.
- Assign each member of the family a different evening to lead the family prayer. They can create their own prayer, read a poem or recite a familiar prayer. Personalize the family prayer time. If someone in the family has something important happening in his or her day, such as a meeting, test or appointment, each member promise to stop and say a prayer at the time the event is taking place.

In family prayer, it is important to remember that our Heavenly Father loves to talk with children and cares deeply about their problems. We can expect God to respond as we humble ourselves before Him.

Q. Do we currently have a family prayer time?

Q. How can we make our family prayer time even more Spirit filled?

Betty Gravlin, M.T.S.

