
ONE

Sharing in Christ's Mission

Activities can be actions after the meeting or a project to do while the meeting is in progress.

Activity — Sharing Plate

Embellish a paper, plastic, or ceramic plate with markers, glitter, stickers, etc. Use it during a family meal to take turns sharing about your day.

OPENING PRAYER

Have a lighted candle in a container. The candle will be passed from one person to another during the Closing Prayer.

ALL: Lord Jesus, you are the Light of the World. You let your light shine through your warm compassionate love for humankind. In this way you reveal to us the love of God, the God who is love. Help us to manifest your love through the love we express toward one another. We ask this, Lord, in your name. Amen.

Litany

This litany reflects three different moods: thanksgiving, penitence and resolution. Pause between the sections and allow yourself to settle into the mood of the prayer.

LEADER: For calling us to be Christian families,

ALL: We thank you, Lord.

LEADER: For allowing us to know your presence in our presence to one another,

ALL: We thank you, Lord.

LEADER: For inspiring us to reflect your love in our love our families,

ALL: We thank you, Lord.

LEADER: For the signs of your Love we have been for each other,

ALL: We thank you, Lord.

LEADER: For the times when we have failed to show Christ-like love in our families,

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: For the ways in which we have lacked human warmth and sensitivity,

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: For the occasions when we have been reluctant to
serve others' needs,
Homemade Disciples

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: For our lack of forgiveness and compassion,

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Teach us to serve you as we care for those you have entrusted to us.

The participants add further resolutions of their own...

ALL, after each: Lord, hear our prayer.

Scripture Reflection

Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 persons were added.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And, day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

—Acts 2:38-47

—What qualities defined the earliest Christian church after Pentecost?

—What were some of their daily activities?

—What is the “promise” made to those “far away”?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

We give the name *church* to the people whom the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love, and through whose lives his saving presence is made know.

A family is our first community and 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*....

The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the Church, but your daily life is a true expression of the Church.

Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by parishes and other communities within the larger Church. Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments. Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole Church.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, pp. 6-7

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.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 7

There is no more effective or natural atmosphere to nurture one’s raw faith yearning than the joys, sorrows, and regular stuff of household life. It’s all right there: God can be found in the creases and folds of our regular

life experiences. Dad gives a hug to a graduating son; they had not hugged since he was a little boy. Mom apologizes for her angry outburst. The family gathers to go through Grandma’s things after her death; each person shares a different precious memory.

—Leif Kehrwald,

Family Spirituality: The Raw Ingredients of Faith, pp.11-12

The family is almost the most beautiful image of the union uniting Christ and the Church—the union of Christ with the Church makes the Church fruitful and makes the Church increase. It is true of every family, whether black or yellow or white; and it is not merely true of Christian families but of any family.

—Cardinal Joseph Cardijn,

Christian Family Movement spiritual founder

Observe

1. What do the families in your neighborhood look like?
2. Describe a family you know that brings Christ to the world.
3. When and where do the members of your family gather?
4. Identify an object in your home that holds good memories for you as a family. Bring it to the meeting for Show and Tell.
5. On what occasions do you and your family turn to God?

Judge

1. How was God present in the memory you shared above?
2. Is your family like the early Church described in the Acts of the Apostles? In what ways?

3. How might someone's experience of family affect the way he or she approaches God and church?
4. What are the greatest challenges your family faces as it strive to bring Christ to the world?
5. How does your family unite with the larger Church? Why is this important?

Act

1. Make and use the Sharing Plate at home. See Activity above.
2. Think of someone in your family, neighborhood or parish who could benefit from the loving embrace of you and your family. Invite him or her for a visit or to join your CFM group.
3. Set aside time as a family to affirm one another, bless one another and support one another.
4. If the family is the microcosm of the Church, some say that the kitchen is the sanctuary. Do something to beautify your kitchen.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

Light Ceremony

Each person, in turn, takes the lighted candle and hands it to the next person, saying these or similar words:

God bless you, _____ (Name). May Christ continue to shine through you.

RESPONSE: I am grateful for the light you are to me.

After all have received the light of Christ, the leader continues:

LEADER: Lord, we ask your blessing on our group and on our families as we begin this new season of Christian Family Movement. May we draw ever closer to you and be a light to others.

ALL: Amen.

TWO

Holy Family: *Under Construction*

Activity — Home-Making

Use colorful markers to write names of family members and virtue words (love, hope, patience, kindness, etc.) on Popsicle sticks. Use glue to create a structure with the sticks.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

*Loving God, I come to you like a child before a caring parent.
I open my hands to whatever you have for me today.
I [pray] with confidence, for you hold me in your presence.
You listen to my fumbling words, you even hear the movement
of my heart without words.
Renew in me the simple faith of a child, a sense of wonder at
all creation, an attitude of gratitude for all that is, a peace-
ful spirit in times of trouble, a joyful heart in times of
goodness.
Send your spirit to pray in me as I raise my heart and mind to
you.
Amen.*

—Mary Jo Pederson, Thomas Greisen, Ronald Wasikowski;
*More Than Meets the Eye: Finding God in the Creases and
Folds of Family Life*; p. 113

Scripture Reflection

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

—Luke 15:1-7

—What lesson was Jesus trying to teach to the religious leaders?

—With which group do you identify? Why?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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 **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 in

recognizing God's presence.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*, pp. 7-8

Of all the tasks families are called on to perform, surely the most important one is building within each member a basic sense of identity and belonging. Throughout life a person will associate with no other group that can provide this critical function as profoundly as one's family. Every community, from bowling teams to parish committees has conditions for membership. Only the family strives to gather its members in an environment of unconditional love.

—Mary Jo Pederson, Thomas Greisen, Ronald Wasikowski; *More Than Meets the Eye: Finding God in the Creases and Folds of Family Life*, p. 13

When the story of Jesus is truly our story, when we have caught his fire, when his Good News shapes our lives individually, as families and households, and as a Church, his influence will be felt far beyond our Church. Pope Paul VI taught us that evangelization transforms culture, that the Gospel affects and at times upsets the "criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life"* that make up our cultural world.

—United State Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples: National Plan and Strategy for Evangelization in the United States*, No. 57

*Pope Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, No. 19

Evangelization takes place whenever God breaks into human experience with love and concern.... Evangelization takes place quite naturally in a happy family. In this atmosphere, people play, pray and work together. They sense God's abiding love as they reach out to one another and to needy people. The Church offers hope and encouragement to the hurting family.

God is present in families riddled with tensions—where families whose members rarely communicate with one another. Hard times provide opportunities to experience God's compassion. The key to recognizing God's love during bad times depends on whether people view God as a helper or as a punisher.

—Robert J. Hater,

Holy Family: Christian Families in a Changing World, p. 76

Observe

1. What was your image of God when you were growing up? What is your image of God now?
2. Recall a time when you felt the unconditional love of God.
3. Tell of a time a child taught you a valuable lesson.
4. Name a source of inspiration in your life.
5. Ask a married couple or family that has been through trying times what kept them going. How did they see God in the midst of their troubles?

Judge

1. What role did your family play in your faith formation?
2. How do you experience God's presence in the midst of family life?
3. What does your family do to actively bring God's grace and presence into the world each day to "transform culture"?
4. When you experience tough times, whom do you call for help? Why?
5. How can family conflicts and crises bring us closer to God?

Act

1. Build the Popsicle stick houses at home as a family activity. See Activity above.
2. As a family, take time at the evening meal each day for a week to talk about the ways in each one was a source of God's love to others during the day. Pass the Sharing Plate (See Chapter 1 Activity.).
3. Draw a family member's name out of a hat and surprise the person you drew with an act of love this week.
4. Think of three very specific things that you will do this week to bring your family even closer together: perhaps a family game night, a favorite dish to share together, a simple family outing or family prayer time.
5. Learn how your CFM group or your family can support newly-initiated church members or some other welcoming ministry in the parish.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

*Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what
is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.*

—St. Augustine

THREE

Growing Pains:

Dealing with Conflict

Activity — Home-Making

Create a design in the shape of a shield picturing a positive quality of each of the members of your household.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

Prayer of St. Francis

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

Scripture Reflection

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.'

"So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' "

"So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your

father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'

"Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

"Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

—Luke 15:11-32

—With which character in this story do you identify?

—What part do words play in the outcome of the reunion?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- **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.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 8

To live faithfully in a marriage requires humility, trust, compromise, communication, and a sense of humor. It is a give-and-take experience, involving hurt and forgiveness, failure and sacrifice. The very same

thing is true of fidelity in other family relationships.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 17

Some families deliberately use hurtful language in their daily communication. “What did you do all day around here?” can be a red flag to a woman who has spent all day on household tasks that don’t show unless they’re not done. “If only we had enough money” can be a rebuke to a husband who is working as hard as he can to provide for the family. “Got a new zit, David?” “Flunk any tests today, John?” “Don’t pass her the bread. She sure doesn’t need it.” ...It’s a worthwhile activity for a family to pull itself aside, list the phrases members like most and least to hear, and post them. Often, parents aren’t even aware of the reaction of their children to certain routine comments. And vice versa. The healthy family pays attention to the impact of its everyday conversation.

—Dolores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family*, pp. 49, 51

Families that value individuality encourage family members to speak up. Such families deal with conflict by relating to, rather than controlling, one another. When this happens, husband and wife or other family members take responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings, and behavior. They listen and respect different points of view. They are slow to blame or to attack other persons. Even in the midst of serious conflict, they recognize that people make mistakes.

—Robert Hater, *Holy Family*, p. 94

Observe

1. Share about a time in your life when you had been hurt and then decided to let go of a grudge in order to make peace with another.

2. Recall a recent conflict you had with your spouse or another family member. What contributed to resolution of the conflict? What hampered resolution?
3. Share the hot buttons, hurtful words or non-verbal signals that might escalate a discussion into an argument in your family.
4. List words or gestures that help with reconciliation.

Judge

1. In what way is forgiveness a decision?
2. How can saying, “I forgive you,” lead to a change of heart?
3. How can having a sense of humor help diffuse a conflict? When is humor a negative force?
4. What is the difference between lack of conflict and making peace?
5. How does working through a conflict strengthen a relationship?

Act

1. Create your family shield and display it. See Activity above.
2. Call a family meeting to discuss a recent conflict situation. Talk about what could have been said or done differently. Finish up with inviting everyone to make one affirming statement about each person.
3. Resolve to pray daily for a difficult person in your life.
4. Surprise someone in your family with a gesture of appreciation and love.
5. Host an evening of family reconciliation for your parish.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER AND RITUAL

A Litany of Forgiveness

On small pieces of paper, write down any hurts or grudges that you have recalled. Collect them in a fireplace or outdoor grill and burn them. As the flames and smoke rise, let go of your pain and ask God to change your heart.

LEADER: Blessed are you, Lord our God. We come before you to ask your forgiveness for all of our failings both great and small. Generous God, you give us so many gifts in life, yet sometimes we forget to share them. And so we say,

ALL: We are sorry.

LEADER: Faithful God, you are with us in one another, yet we sometimes refuse to recognize you. And so we say,

ALL: We are sorry.

LEADER: God of Gentleness, you ask us to bring peace to our family and to the world, yet sometimes we spread anger and trouble. And so we say,

ALL: We are sorry.

LEADER: Gracious God, you give us a voice with which to

sing, and words to speak, and yet sometimes our words are hurtful or untrue. And so we say,

ALL: We are sorry.

LEADER: Loving God, you sent your only son to show us how to love and serve one another, and yet we sometimes are selfish and unloving. And so we say,

ALL: We are sorry.

LEADER: Merciful God, ...help us to ask forgiveness when we need to. Help us to forgive others who have wronged us. And let us be peacemakers in our school and in our family. We thank you for the gift of your forgiveness and love.

ALL: Amen.

Share a sign of peace.

—RCL Sacraments Online, Resources for Christian Living

FOUR

Educating for Love and Life

Activity — Heart Values Poster

Make a heart-shaped poster showing the “heart values” that you want to pass on in your family.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

Burn incense or light a scented candle.

Dear Jesus,

Help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of yours. Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus.

(Pause here for silent reflection. Bring to mind someone whom you hope will see Christ in you. Continue the prayer aloud.)

Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. The light, Jesus, will be all from you. None of it will be ours. It will be you shining on others through us. Let us thus praise you in the way you love best by shining on those around us. Let us preach

you without preaching—not by words, but by our example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you. Amen.

—Mother Teresa, *Words to Love By*, p. 47

Scripture Reflection

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

—Colossians 3:12-17

—How did these early Christians pass on their faith in both word and deed?

—What does it mean to you to “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*, p. 8

We must see ourselves not only as teachers. We are coaches as well. I love that word, “coach,” to describe our role in cultivating virtues in those we love. To be a coach is to challenge people to behave in a particular way and then to help them practice until they develop the skill and the strength to do it. Describing ourselves as coaches highlights this pattern of challenge and practice. Calling ourselves coaches...reminds us that those we seek to influence still remain in charge of their own lives. It is their life, not mine.

—Timothy E. O’Connell, *Tend Your Own Garden: How to Raise Great Kids*, p. 63

To thrive, love requires attention, communication, and time—to share a story or confide a need, to play a game, to tell a joke, to watch and cheer on—time to be present to another’s failure or success, confusion, despair or moment of decision.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*, p. 25

Preach the gospel at all times and, when necessary, use words.

—St. Francis of Assisi

Since the Creator of all things has established the conjugal partnership as “the beginning and basis of human society,” the family is “the first and vital cell of society.”

The family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: It is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that

they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself.

Thus, far from being closed in on itself, the family is by nature and vocation open to other families and to society, and undertakes its social role.

—Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio (On the Family)*, No. 42

Observe

1. Recall a time in your life when someone in your family taught you an important life lesson.
2. Sometimes the best way to learn something is by teaching it. Share an example of something you learned by teaching.
3. What are the social virtues that we want to teach? See quote from *On the Family*, above.
4. What influences from society compete with what the family tries to teach? Bring titles of popular songs or advertising slogans that teach powerful lessons.

Judge

1. What skills and character traits do you need to be an effective life coach?
2. How can you teach children to think independently and to be responsible?
3. How can you balance the influences of society on our family with what God calls us to?
4. How can you be more intentional about being a role model?

Act

1. Make the Heart Values Poster with your family and hang it prominently in your home. See Activity above.

2. Have a family meeting to identify simple ways you can bring Christ into your home, school, workplace.
3. Write a note of appreciation to someone who taught you a life lesson.
4. Hold a family game night (or sponsor one for the parish), using games that practice positive communication skills.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

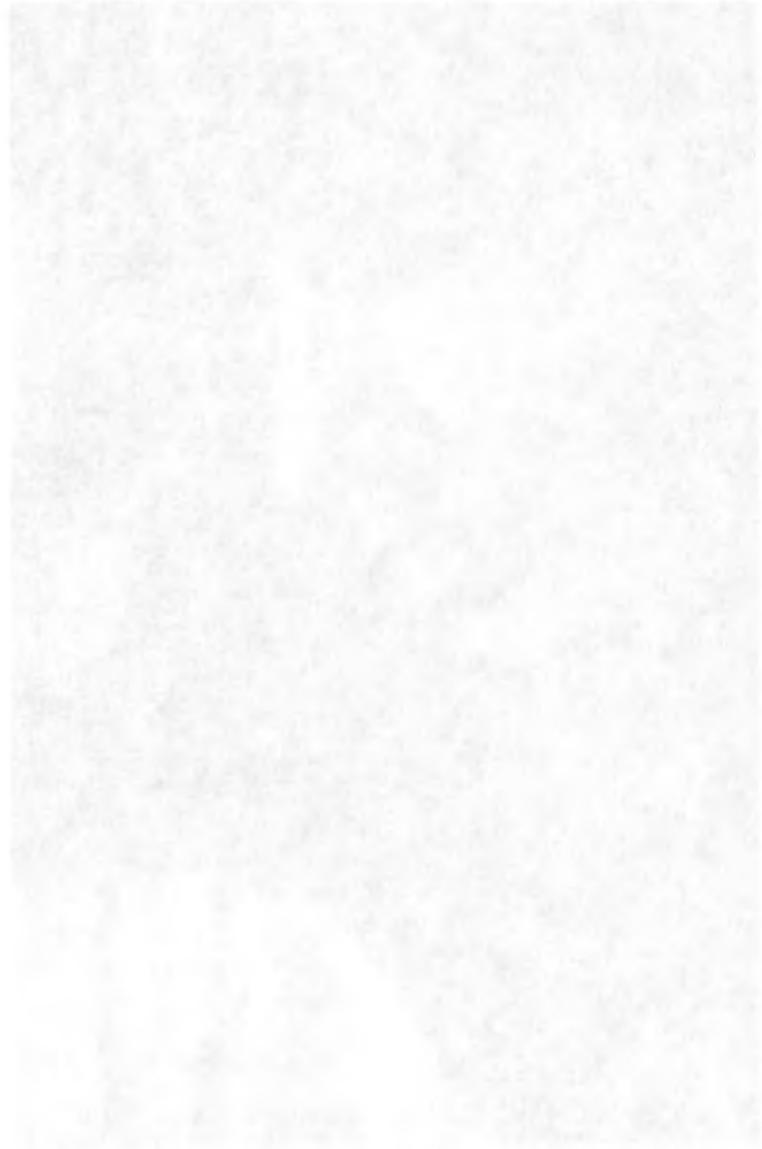
*In good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health,
we belong to each other as we belong to you,
God, ever faithful.
By morning and by night,
may your name be on our lips,
a blessing to all our days:
so may kindness and patience be ever among us,
a hunger for justice,
and songs of thankfulness in all we do.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
"A Blessing for a Household or a Family,"
Catholic Household Prayers and Blessings, p. 209

*May the Lord Jesus,
who lived with his holy family in Nazareth,
dwell also with our family,
keep it from all evil,*

and make all of us one in heart and mind. Amen.

—International Committee on English in the Liturgy,
Book of Blessings, p. 9.



FIVE

Growing in Prayer

Activity — Prayer Candle/Book

Decorate a prayer candle or design a cover for a CFM group prayer book.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

We praise you and thank you, Creator God, for loving us into being, for giving us breath and spirit and life. We thank you for the uniqueness of every person, for individual gifts and talents. We thank you for those who have gone before us, who have tilled the soil and built the cities. We thank you for a future full of hope and a present full of challenge. May we always be a grateful people who recognize that with you we can do great things. Bless our family on this day. Keep us always in your care. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who is with us today and every day. Amen.

—Gary J. Boelhower, *Family Faith and Fun*, p. 127

Scripture Reflection

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh,

but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

—Ephesians 6:10-18

—From what, and for what purpose, does prayer protect and prepare us?

—How can praying make us watchful?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 10

When we teach our children to offer their praise to God, this simple act of faith will overflow into our daily

life as a family. When we offer our hearts in praise to God, our irritable, grumpy hearts are softened, our angry hearts are quieted, and our empty hearts are filled. Then we are able to offer words of encouragement and praise to others. There is an intimate connection between our words of praise to God and our words of praise to one another. These roots intertwine underneath the surface of the family cloister.

—David Robinson,
The Family Cloister: Benedictine Wisdom for the Home, p. 66

Over the years of our married life, our approaches to prayer have certainly changed.... We are both, I believe, people of prayer, but we have yet to find a common style of prayer that is equally fulfilling. Our situation is certainly not going to fit the experience of every married couple. I know of several couples who have found ways to make common prayer the centerpiece of their marriage. ...I am reluctant to grant, however, that the spirituality of a marriage must be measured by the quality and frequency of the shared prayer of the couple.... what is important is that they find ways to affirm and sustain their awareness of God's abiding presence as they live the life of communion.

—Richard Gaillardetz,
A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage, pp. 42-43

The pattern of mutuality within a household is closely allied with the virtue of humility. And humility is forged in prayer: husbands and wives praying with and for each other, parents praying with and for their children. This is the heart of ministry within the church of the home.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 22

Observe

1. What opportunities for prayer does your family life present?
2. Give examples of different types of prayer. Which is your favorite?
3. What experience of prayer did you have in your family of origin?
4. How would your children describe your family's prayer life? What do they understand the function of prayer to be? A chore? A joy? A lifeline?
5. Describe the different times and ways you pray alone, with your spouse and with your family.

Judge

1. When are you aware of God's presence?
2. How did your family's approach to prayer as you were growing up influence your approach to prayer today?
3. What does it mean to you to "walk with the Lord" every day or to ask the Lord to "make your life a prayer" to God?
4. What keeps you and your family from praying together more?
5. Do you agree with Gailliardetz that spirituality need not be measured by the frequency and quality of shared prayer? Explain.

Act

1. Decorate your prayer candle. See Activity above. Light it before meals or whenever your family gathers.

2. Do one thing to increase your personal prayer time. Find a different time or style for praying than is your usual habit and try it.
3. Sponsor a couples' or family prayer night for the parish where the focus of the evening is as much on prayer as it is on teaching and sharing.
4. Hold a "Concert of Prayer" for your group. Select various topics for prayer in advance and commission people in small groups to pray for each topic. See the plan at the end of this chapter.
5. Create a group prayer booklet or bookmarks using the favorite prayers of the members. Give them to friends.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take turns sharing this prayer, with each person reading one line each, pausing in between.

We move so fast, God, and sometimes we see so little in our daily travels.

Slow us down.

Create in us a desire to pursue moments of contemplation.

Help us to see in a deeper way,

to become more aware of what speaks to us of beauty and truth.

*Our inner eye gets misty, clouded over, dulled.
We need to see in a new way to dust off our heart
and perceive what is truly of value and to find a deeper
meaning in our lives.*

*All of our ordinary moments
are means of entering into a more significant relationship
with you, God.*

*In the midst of those very common happenings,
you are ready to speak your word of love to us,
if only we will recognize your presence. ...*

*Life is meant to be celebrated,
enjoyed,
delighted in,
and embraced in all its mystery.*

Guide us to our inner child.

*Draw us to your playground of creation, God of Life,
so that we will live more fully.*

ALL: Amen.

—Joyce Rupp,

“A Prayer to Live More Fully,” *May I Have This Dance*, p. 102

CONCERT OF PRAYER

The “concert” consists of several “songs,” which are actually prayer intentions or topics. Concerts typically focus on four to six “songs” and should end with strong communal prayer including with the Lord’s Prayer and one or more songs of praise.

1. Begin with an appropriate opening song and gathering prayer.
2. Identify several prayer intentions or topics of concern to the group.
3. Divide into groups of no more than eight people each.

4. The leader or “conductor” then announces the first prayer topic, either through conversational description or in the form of an introductory prayer.
5. The groups pray simultaneously for that concern, allowing everyone present to take a turn praying for that need in his or her own words within the circle of each small group.
6. As the conductor senses that the groups are finishing up, he or she draws the large group back verbally or with a song or chorus.
7. The conductor then asks the group to share any insights that came to them from the Lord during the prayer, especially any ideas for possible action.
8. The conductor then leads a concluding prayer for that concern just before introducing the next topic or concern.
9. Continue until all the identified needs are addressed.
10. Close the concert with the Lord’s Prayer and a hymn of praise.

Intimacy:

Sharing Ourselves

Activity — Family Sculpture

Use clay to create a sculpture of your family in which all of the members are connected in some way.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, our God, may your divine name be always holy within our home.

May you, as Holy Father and Divine Mother, lovingly care for all who shall live here.

May your Kingdom come in this home as we love and respect one another.

May we always do your holy will by living in harmony and unity.

May we never suffer from lack of bread, from a lack of all that we need to nourish our family.

May the spirit of pardon and forgiveness reside with us and be always ready to heal our divisions.

May the spirits of mirth and of laughter, hope and faith, playfulness and prayer, compassion and love be perpetual guests in our home.

—Edward Hays, "Blessing Prayer for the Home,"
Prayers for the Domestic Church, p. 23

Scripture Reflection

Come, my beloved,
let us go forth into the fields,
and lodge in the villages;
let us go out early to the vineyards,
and see whether the vines have budded,
whether the grape blossoms have opened
and the pomegranates are in bloom.
There I will give you my love.
The mandrakes give forth fragrance,
and over our doors are all choice fruits,
new as well as old,
which I have laid up for you,
O my beloved.

—Song of Solomon 7:11-13

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You
know when I sit down and when I rise up; you dis-
cern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down and are
acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know
it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand
upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high
that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee
from your presence? ...
For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit
me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being
made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the
earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book
were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How
vast is the sum of them!

—Psalm 139:1-7, 13-17

—Why would the poetry of two lovers in the Song of
Solomon be included in the Bible?

—What are the benefits and drawbacks of being known
so intimately by God? By a friend or lover?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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 indis-
pensable to forming a close relationship with the
Lord.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 10

More than any other virtue, love is one God wants us
to practice. We can only love as humans, embodied with
desires, urges, passions and drives. Without these, love
would be impossible. Without love, we cannot be crea-
tures in God's image. And so we journey through life
seeking relationship and intimacy. Being completely
naked and vulnerable before my best friend and then
fully embraced with genuine love and passion has got to
be like meeting God face to face. It's no wonder the Bible
uses the love of husband and wife to attempt to describe
God's love for all people. It is a love filled with passion,

desire and delight. It is a love that is pure and good. It is a love that delights in body and sensuality.

—Leif Kehrwald, *Marriage and the Spirituality of Intimacy*, pp. 43-44

Just as we encounter dry and dark periods along our spiritual journey, so too with sexual intimacy. Another woman's comments were very honest and touching. "Our lovemaking isn't always great. In fact, we've gone through periods when it has been rather difficult and unsatisfying. This has caused anger and misunderstanding between us because sex is important to us both. We've done a lot of talking and praying about it. Yet, even in the midst of the hard times, we've always approached our lovemaking with a sense of reverence and awe. It's like we both know there's more to sex than what the two of us bring to it."

—Leif Kehrwald, *Marriage and the Spirituality of Intimacy*, p. 48

When researchers look into the difference between men and women on the topic of intimacy, they come up with some interesting findings. Women tend to place a higher emphasis on understanding and acceptance, trust and commitment, caring and support and the sharing of feelings. No surprise here. Men place higher emphasis on maintaining good feelings and harmony between the two. ...Wives indicate more dissatisfaction with the emotional and intellectual aspects of marital intimacy whereas husbands report greater dissatisfaction with the social and recreational components. What this means is that here is a tendency for wives, when dissatisfied, to feel cut off emotionally and intellectually from their husbands. ...Husbands, when dissatisfied, tend to feel that their wives do not want to participate with them as much in social activities or in social networks; they also may feel more cut off from their wives in terms of doing things together recreationally. Also important for hus-

bands is the maintaining of harmony in the relationship.

—Anthony Garascia,
Rekindle the Passion While Raising Your Kids, pp. 26-27

Observe

1. What does the word "intimacy" mean to you?
2. Characterize how attitudes toward sexual intimacy differ for men and women.
3. Share something that your spouse or family did for you that made you feel loved.
4. Tell about a time you took delight in expressing your love for someone in your family.
5. Observe sexual behavior and attitudes toward sexual intimacy portrayed in popular media.

Judge

1. What impact do societal norms that treat sex as merely another recreational activity have on marital intimacy and family life?
2. What makes sexual intimacy holy?
3. What can couples do to improve their satisfaction in marriage, considering the differences in what men and women look for in marriage?
4. How can families foster an environment that encourages the members to share their true selves with each other without fear of rejection?

Act

1. Create the Family Sculpture at home. See Activity above.
2. Bless your home. Gather with your family outside your front door. Go from room to room, asking God to bless its contents and your activities there. You

may wish to use candles, holy water or incense. (For a good prayer ritual, see Edward Hays, *Prayers for the Domestic Church*, pp. 23-25.)

3. Go on a date with your spouse. Take time for your marriage by going out regularly as a couple. Take turns choosing what to do together; be open to new activities.
4. Talk with your spouse about your expectations for marital intimacy and plan ways to improve satisfaction in your sexual relationship.
5. Plan a special activity with each of the other members of your family. Make this a regular practice.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

Father, you are love and life.

Through you son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on Earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all the families in the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass. ...

We ask this of you, who are Life and Truth and Love, with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

—Pope John Paul II

SEVEN

Hospitality:

Welcoming Children and Other Strangers

Activity — Welcome Cards

Make cards welcoming newly baptized children or new parishioners.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

LEADER: Coming together as families, as Church, let us remember that Jesus is always here to welcome us, to care, to accept and to love, to strengthen and to heal. Let us open our hearts and invite Jesus to work through each of us.

ALL: Jesus, help us to be open to one another. Give us generous hearts and willing hands to make your concerns our concerns. Empower us in your Spirit to become believing signs of your kindness and compassion. Never let us be obstacles to your life in each other; instead, let us be an example and a blessing to all we meet.

Offer intercessions for those in need.

LEADER: Father, we thank you for the gift of Jesus and for the

pate in the drama of an unfolding life. The spiritual discipline of family life, I think, is to allow this recreation of the heart to take place. It also involves allowing your love for those with whom you are intimate to become transparent enough that the love of God can be seen through it.

—Wendy Wright, *Sacred Dwelling*, p. 33

Observe

1. Tell of a time you felt really welcomed.
2. Describe a person whom you think has a gift for hospitality. What qualities does he or she exhibit?
3. List ways of showing hospitality beyond providing meals and a warm bed.
4. What does your family do to welcome and affirm children, the traveler, the sick and the needy?

Judge

1. How are children and guests similar?
2. What might cause someone not to welcome a child? A guest?
3. How does exercising hospitality make us more Christ-like?
4. What attitudes and practicalities would make your home one that better welcomes and cares for others?

Act

1. Send congratulations or offer to baby-sit older children, for a person who has recently had a baby, joined the church or moved into the neighborhood. See Activity above.
2. Make the decision to invite people on a regular basis to share dinner with your family. Give each family member the chance to choose who's coming to dinner.

3. Offer respite to someone who is caring for a sick or elderly relative. Care for the caregiver.
4. As a group or as a family, watch and then discuss the video, *Entertaining Angels* (Paulist Pictures, 1998), a movie about Dorothy Day, whose ministry exemplified hospitality.
5. As a group or CFM chapter/federation, help provide a meal to a local homeless shelter.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in heaven, pattern of all parenthood and lover of children, we pray for homes and families across the world. Sustain and comfort them in need and sorrow. In times of bitterness, tension and division, draw near to heal. May parents and children together be learners in the school of Christ, daily increasing in mutual respect and understanding, in tolerance and patience, and in all-prevailing love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

—Timothy Dudley-Smith

EIGHT

Serving as Jesus Did

Activity — Bring an Apron

Bring a favorite apron to the meeting to wear for the Closing Prayer. Have a basin, water, quiet music, and towels ready for use during the Closing Prayer.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

Signing with the Cross

Leader reads as participants complete the actions.

Lord Jesus,

I sign my heart with the sign of the cross, reminding myself of your love for each person. I ask that I may grow in faithfulness as your friend.

I sign my lips with the sign of the cross, that I may speak as you would speak.

I sign my hands with the sign of the cross, asking that you enable me to do your work, and to be your hands in our world, which you love so much.

I sign my eyes with the sign of your cross, that I may really see, Lord, and be aware of all that is around me.

I sign my ears with the sign of your cross, that I may listen and really hear the communication that comes to me in

different ways from you and from the people you place in my life.

I sign my shoulders, Lord, with your cross, knowing that you call me to carry my own cross each day and support others in the burdens and difficulties that they have.

All that I do today I set out to do in the name of the Father (+), and of the Son (+), and of the Holy Spirit (+). Amen.

—Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC, *Praying Each Day*, p. 33

Scripture Reflection

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

—John 13:5-17

—What kinds of service might Jesus require his disciples to offer one another?

—In what ways do you imitate Jesus' actions in your family life?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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 **act justly** in your community when you treat others with respect, stand against discrimination and racism, and work to overcome hunger, poverty, homelessness, illiteracy.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, pp. 8-9

Usually families associate the presence of God with "churchy" moments, such as baptisms, weddings, first communions, funerals, Sunday Eucharist, family rosary, or prayer time together. Certainly these events are very important moments of contact with God. However, family members are also challenged to discover God at work right where they live: in bathrooms, carpools, and laundry. ...Sometimes we get fooled by the magnitude (or lack thereof) of particular tasks. We erroneously believe that the more grandiose the accomplishment, the more value it must have, and the more sacred it could be. Conversely, meager tasks (busywork) can be seen as meaningless, even unholy.

—Mary Jo Pederson, Thomas Greisen, Ronald Wasikowski;
More Than Meets the Eye: Finding God in the Creases and Folds of Family Life; p. 68

When a family regularly serves together, both parents and children feel a positive impact. Involvement alongside the parents is one of the best forms of religious education a child can receive, part of the Church's teaching mission. Children learn from experience that faith is a way of life and that a Christian commitment makes a real difference in the way a person chooses to live.

—Gerald Foley,

Family-Centered Church: A New Parish Model, pp. 139-140

Christian life includes obligations beyond the family circle. For children to learn the true meaning of abundant life in Christ (See John 10:10.), they need to know the joy of contributing to the common good in the home, in the neighborhood, in the Church and in society. Duty is an anchor in what seems an ocean of chaos.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,

Follow the Way of Love, p. 32

Observe

1. Tell of a time when someone in your family made a sacrifice for the benefit of the family.
2. Recall a time when your family members served you. Tell how it felt to be served.
3. Reflect on a time when you felt unable to serve.
4. What opportunities does your church or community provide to serve others?
5. What examples of injustice have you witnessed in your workplace or neighborhood?

Judge

1. What holds you back from serving others?
2. What does it mean to "act justly"? At home? At work? At church?

3. What makes serving together as a family difficult?
4. What can we learn from Jesus' example of humble service?
5. How does being treated with respect and dignity transform a person? What effect does it have on the one who serves?

Act

1. Read a story of justice to your family, such as David and Goliath, Sojourner Truth, Mother Teresa, or Archbishop Oscar Romero. Discuss the importance of standing up for what is right.
2. Decide as a family to do a service for someone.
3. As an individual, family or group, arrange to serve a group in your community.
4. Act to correct one example of injustice you observed.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

Signing with the Cross

Have a basin with warm water and towels. Put on the apron you brought to the meeting. In silence or with only quiet music playing, the leader washes the feet or hands of the person next to him or her saying:

"It is an honor and a privilege to serve you. Now, go and do likewise."

Homemade Disciples

The leader then passes the basin to the person who has been washed and that person repeats the leader's actions and words for the person next to him or her. Continue until all have been washed.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

NINE

More Laborers for the Harvest

Activity — Notes of Encouragement

Write notes of encouragement for your parish clergy, religious or seminary students.

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

Prayer for Vocations

Lord Jesus, give the abundance of your life to Christian families, so that they may be fervent in faith and service to the Church, thus encouraging the birth and development of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Lord Jesus, give the abundance of your life to all people, especially young men and women whom you call to serve you. Enlighten them in their choices; help them in difficulties; sustain them in faith; render them eager and courageous in offering their lives according to your example, so that others may have life.

—Pope John Paul II

Scripture Reflection

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and

every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

—Matthew 9:35-38

—What is the work to be done?

—What qualities will the workers need?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 9

The sisters, brothers and priests, as well as deacons, I talk to often stress how important their family was in helping them shape and nurture their eventual vocation into church ministries. It's not that their parents necessarily talked to them about becoming priests or religious. It was that their parents gave them an over-arching understanding of God's call—that no matter what they did, it was essentially about responding to God's call. Yes, these parents also encouraged the possibility to priestly life and religious life. But it was often in the context of the singular belief of vocation being the larger context. So they may have easily said to them when they were children things like, "Eat your vegetables, Johnny (or Mary), because some day you're going to grow up

and be a doctor...or a teacher...or a priest/religious." They made it clear that God indeed had a plan for them. They listened to their children and reflected back what they saw as the child's God-given gifts and talents.

—Don Paglia, "What if Vocations Were a Family Matter?"
Family Perspectives Journal, Spring 2003, p. 1

The basic vocation of every person, whether married or living a celibate life, is the same: Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you (See Ephesians 5:2.). The Lord issues this call to your family and to every family regardless of its condition or circumstances.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 5

Observe

1. Ask a priest, deacon or person in religious life to share what led them to their decision to serve the Church. How did friends and family nurture the call to service?
2. Identify and describe an ordained or vowed religious who is ministering with joy. What would you say is the source of their joy?
3. Ask several parents how they would feel if their child told them they would like to go to the seminary or convent. Examine your own feelings.
4. What cultural changes have affected attitudes toward ordained ministry and vowed religious life?

Judge

1. What types of gifts and talents do priests, deacons and religious need to have?
2. What is happening in my family life that would encourage members to listen for God's call and respond to His grace?

3. Consider the quotation from page 5 of *Follow the Way of Love*. How does service to the Church in ordained ministry or vowed religious life differ from the service that every Christian owes to God?
4. Don Paglia says that we don't necessarily have to talk directly about vocations to encourage them in our children. In what other ways can we encourage our children to make room in their lives for the possibility of service to the Church?

Act

1. If you have children, talk to them about the service of priests and vowed religious men and women to the Church. If they are old enough, ask them if they have considered this life for themselves.
2. Pray as a family for a person who is training for service to the Church. Periodically send the person a card or note of encouragement.
3. Be more conscious of the example you set. Be an active member of your church community. Be aware of how you speak about those in service to the Church.
4. Reach out to encourage a priest, deacon, sister or brother. Include them in a future family or CFM activity.

Preparation for the Next Meeting

1. Date _____
Time _____
Place _____
2. Look ahead to the Activity and to the Observe questions.

CLOSING PRAYER

A Litany of Being God's Instrument of Goodness

(Each person read a line, going around the room.)

For the talents and the abundance of gifts that are ours,

RESPONSE: God who sings through us, we thank you.

For the faith that stirs and grows in our hearts,

RESPONSE: God who sings through us, we thank you.

For the many people who have been your instruments of goodness in our lives,

RESPONSE: God who sings through us, we thank you.

For the moments when we have known the song of your presence in a special way,

RESPONSE: God who sings through us, we thank you.

For the times when your goodness has made music through us,

RESPONSE: God who sings through us, we thank you.

When fear rises up in us and we do not believe in our ability to be your instrument,

RESPONSE: God of goodness, help us to trust in you.

When the busyness and schedules of our lives press upon us and create questions about your song within us,

RESPONSE: God of goodness, help us to trust in you.

When we doubt your presence in the difficult aspects of our days,

RESPONSE: God of goodness, help us to trust in you.

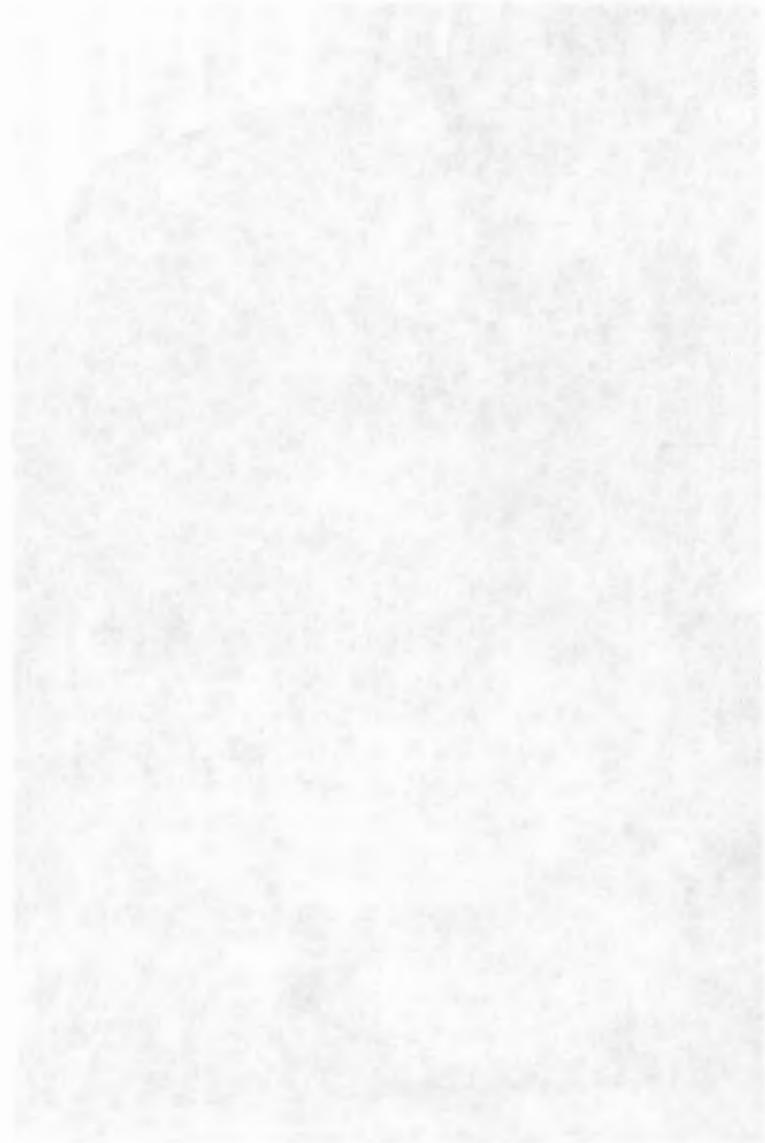
When we lose sight of the truth that we are called to be instruments of goodness,

RESPONSE: God of goodness, help us to trust in you.

When emptiness, loneliness, and other struggles keep us from hearing your melody of love,

RESPONSE: God of goodness, help us to trust in you.

—Joyce Rupp, May I Have This Dance, p. 125



TEN

Let's Celebrate!

Activity — Year-end Celebration

*Plan food, drink, music and decorations for this meeting.
Distribute tasks among the group members.*

Gather and Report on Actions

OPENING PRAYER

Sing this or another familiar song of celebration.

*Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices.
Who, from our mothers' arms, has blessed us on our way,
With countless gifts of love and still is ours today.*

—Traditional hymn

Scripture Reflection

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he

tells you."

Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water."

And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it.

When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

—John 2:1-11

—What part does the wine play in the wedding celebration?

—This was the first miraculous sign that Jesus worked in public. What does this event tell us about the "domestic church," the church of the home?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

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

- 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.

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, pp. 8-9

Family occasions can be very simply, yet significantly, celebrated at home: birth, the naming of a baby, spring cleaning, yard raking, the first date, endings, beginnings, death as well as birthdays, anniversaries, and liturgical seasons. Doing this helps parents and families recognize teachable moments on which they can capitalize. Family rituals need not be couched in traditional praying. The one thing that ritual ought to help us discover is prayer in the ordinary; God can be encountered while praying in the leaves, doing laundry, or appreciating a mountain, a work of art, a jack pine. We learn to find Christ the clown at the circus or in a parade, and most of all to recognize Christ in ourselves and in our neighbors.

—Sandra DeGidio, *Enriching Faith through Family Celebrations*, p. 35

Your family can ask: How have we been blessed as a family? What values and beliefs do we want to hand on to future generations? What strengths and resources do we possess that we could share with others? What traditions and rituals have enriched our lives? Could they benefit other families?

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Follow the Way of Love, p. 20

There is one institution which cannot be replaced by anything else, which lies at the root of the happiness of mankind, of peace, progress and civilization: It is the family, which is the first cell and the first center of life, the first home. The family is an image of God, of the Blessed Trinity.

—Cardinal Joseph Cardijn,
Christian Family Movement spiritual founder

Observe

1. What family celebrations do you have? Who attends?
2. Ask a grandparent, neighbor, or friend to recall memories of family celebrations.
3. Who decides what we celebrate?
4. What don't you celebrate that other people do?

Judge

1. What affect does it have on our family when we do not celebrate?
2. What things in our lives keep us from celebrating family rituals?
3. How do celebrations build family unity?
4. Name two things that could simplify a celebration and minimize stress.

Act

1. Pick an occasion that you have not celebrated in the past and as a family decide to start a new tradition to celebrate.
2. Preserve the memories of your family celebrations by taking the time to put photos into albums.
3. Choose a public celebration you have not regularly participated in and commit to doing so.
4. Have a wine-tasting party, in the spirit of the wedding feast of Cana.

CLOSING PRAYER

Litany of Gratitude

Gather for a litany of gratitude, with each person in turn naming something for which they are thankful.

All respond after each invocation: We thank you, Lord of Life.

Exchange a sign of peace.

Celebration

Conclude the meeting and the year with a party celebrating the Lord's goodness.