

# Importance of Family Life Rituals

## Objective

"All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" – Leo Tolstoy

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit." – Will Durant

Our habits hold great influence over how we think, act and feel – which just about covers everything we do. We get into habits of thinking, doing and feeling. And because it's the brain's shortcut to behaving and feeling certain ways, it becomes automatic behavior. Our goals for our family are not enough, have we established habits so that our family will thrive now and going forward? Routine and ritual should have the same benefits in our daily life as they do at Mass. If we want our family's bonds and faith to be resilient, then they need to be built on a solid foundation.

**Song Suggestion:** Prayer of St. Francis (Blue 368, Red 721)

## Bible & Catechism Readings

### Pv 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

### Luke 4:16

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

### Catechism 764 – 765

The form Jesus' true family. To those whom he thus gathered around him, he taught a new "way of acting" and a prayer of their own. The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved.

### Saint: Saint Ignatius of Loyola

The founder of the Jesuits was on his way to military fame and fortune when a cannon ball shattered his leg. Because there were no books of romance on hand during his convalescence, Ignatius whiled away the time reading a life of Christ and lives of the saints. His conscience was deeply touched, and a long, painful turning to Christ began. Having seen the Mother of God in a vision, he made a pilgrimage to her shrine at Montserrat near Barcelona. He remained for almost a year at nearby Manresa, sometimes with the Dominicans, sometimes in a pauper's hospice, often in a cave in the hills praying. After a period of great peace of mind, he went through a harrowing trial of scruples. There was no comfort in anything—prayer, fasting, sacraments, penance. At length, his peace of mind returned.

It was during this year of conversion that Ignatius began to write down material that later became his greatest work, the Spiritual Exercises.

In 1534, at the age of 43, he and six others—one of whom was Saint Francis Xavier—vowed to live in poverty and chastity and to go to the Holy Land. If this became impossible, they vowed to offer themselves to the apostolic service of the pope. The latter became the only choice. Four years later

Ignatius made the association permanent. The new Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III, and Ignatius was elected to serve as the first general.

When companions were sent on various missions by the pope, Ignatius remained in Rome, consolidating the new venture, but still finding time to found homes for orphans, catechumens, and penitents. He founded the Roman College, intended to be the model of all other colleges of the Society.

Ignatius was a true mystic. He centered his spiritual life on the essential foundations of Christianity—the Trinity, Christ, the Eucharist. His spirituality is expressed in the Jesuit motto, *Ad majorem Dei gloriam* —“for the greater glory of God.” In his concept, obedience was to be the prominent virtue, to assure the effectiveness and mobility of his men. All activity was to be guided by a true love of the Church and unconditional obedience to the Holy Father, for which reason all professed members took a fourth vow to go wherever the pope should send them for the salvation of souls.

## **Vignette**

Deacon Henry Reyes | March 31, 2017

In my ministerial experience with young marriages and families, I repeatedly come across similar struggles: busyness, stress, marital conflicts, parenting issues and a healthy Catholic guilt over the lack of devotion in the family. The need for God is palpable in the family dynamics and yet very little is being done, mostly from lack of time, but equally from lack of concrete ideas that can lead to tangible results.

I would like to offer one concrete idea that can help families to start to turn the corner in their family’s life of faith which I wholeheartedly believe will have tangible benefits to everyone in the household. My suggestion is devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I had so much growing to do. In many ways, during these painful years of mistakes and wrong decisions, Mary was there, supporting me from afar, praying for me and keeping me from the danger my actions probably deserved. At some point, I decided that I needed to get my life back on track, and so I sought out Jesus. In her humility, she was content to stand in the background while I made some tough changes in my life, leaving behind a life of sin. The more I read, the more I realized that my models in faith, the Holy Saints, all loved Mary. I knew I needed to learn more about her so I studied several books about the Blessed Virgin Mary, the most important of which was “True Devotion to Mary” by St. Louis de Montfort. The result of reading this book was that my wife and I both made our consecration to the Virgin Mary. In many ways, this decision has influenced the rest of my family’s life.

After we started praying more to Mary, we started to pray more as a family. We introduced the rosary. After we enrolled our two oldest children in the Brown Scapular, another awesome Marian devotion, we really made the Blessed Virgin a bigger part of our lives.

That relationship which I told you was from afar and in the background began to move to the foreground. Mary is no longer relegated to the backdrop in the stories of salvation for me, but is highlighted; the Holy Rosary and the Litany of Loreto highlight the role Mary played in the life of Jesus and the history of our faith.

But relationships are not only or even primarily external. Yes, I pray the rosary, yes my family prays the rosary together, yes we wear the brown scapular, but what do you see of my love? You don't see my growing love for the humble and brave Mother of Our Savior. You don't see how much I admire her purity and obedience to the Father, the same Father which I need to obey as an ordained permanent deacon, husband and father.

I have grown spiritually as a result of my deepening life of prayer. The result of my spiritual growth has been a serenity I had never known, it is as if the turbulent waves of my interior sea became small waves and then ripples and then stillness. The world has not become less turbulent, I have become less turbulent and that affects everything in my life. It affects the kindness I show my wife, the patience I show my children and the wisdom with which I discern decisions in my life. You will never regret it, my family and I certainly have not.

### Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

What are your spiritual habits? How is your devotion / daily and weekly Catholic routines faith helping you?

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What are your family habits? Are they intentional?

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What habits are you trying to build? What habits would you like to pass down to your kids and/or grandkids?

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Are our family habits encouraging or discouraging these aims?

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### Additional Resources

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families. The habits were the same, but the messaging was slightly different.

- Habit 1. Be proactive - Become an agent of change in your family.
- Habit 2. Begin with the end in mind - Know the type of family you want to build.
- Habit 3. Put first things first - Make family a priority in a turbulent world.
- Habit 4. Think "win-win" - Move from "me" to "we."

- Habit 5. Seek first to understand . . . then to be understood - Solve family problems through communication.
- Habit 6. Synergize - Build family unity while also celebrating differences.
- Habit 7. Sharpen the saw - Renew the family spirit through traditions.

**Action Plan:**

			 <p><b>PRAY TOGETHER</b> Pray every day. Try the Rosary or simple prayers as Our Father or Hail Mary</p>
 <p><b>ATTEND MASS</b> Go to church every Sunday and all Holy Days of obligation</p>	 <p><b>HAVE AN ONGOING FAMILY CHARITY EFFORT</b> Choose a cause to collaborate with financially or by volunteering</p>	 <p><b>GET SACRED ART IN YOUR HOME</b> Use Catholic paintings or statues to add richness to the family's devotion</p>	
 <p><b>GO TO CONFESSION FREQUENTLY</b> It is important to encourage all members of the family to go to confession regularly</p>	 <p><b>USE CATHOLIC MEDIA</b> It is a good resource to keep all the members of the family close to God and the Church</p>	 <p><b>CELEBRATE!</b> Saints' Day, Church Seasons... Keep the joy of the Gospel in your family!</p> <p> CatholicLink</p>	

**Author:** Scott Stubbins