

# Importance of Family Life Rituals

## Objective:

As Catholics, we are called to make our homes a domestic church. Like any church, there is importance in rituals. Rituals help set expectations for the young or uninitiated. Rituals provide structure to lean on when a member is struggling with a dry season, with doubt, or with anxiety and depression. Rituals can even lead a creative or curious member to expand their horizons through tinkering or critical thinking and reflection. Establishing, maintaining, and sometimes adapting rituals are important steps for the thriving of any family life.

**Song Suggestion:** Faith of our Fathers (579)

## 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 2204-2206**

The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church. It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament.

The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. the Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.

The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. the family is a privileged community called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing.

## Saints: Louis and Zélie Martin

Louis and Zélie Martin lived a life of holiness. They may be remembered as the parents of the Little Flower, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, but, as the first husband and wife to be canonized as a couple, they are not token saints. They exhibited holiness in the way they experienced and prioritized family life and pursuing holiness within their family.

Actions they shared as a family:

- Refraining from work on Sunday: As a small business owner, Louis Martin sacrificed the opportunity to build wealth by closing shop on Sunday. This allowed him to be present in his family life and gave him the freedom to attend Solemn High Mass and Sunday Vespers.
- Works of Mercy: As a family, they fed the hungry, provided for the poor, and visited the sick. They went out of their way to help the dying received the Sacraments.
- Daily Mass
- Individual conversations with their children: Zélie would encourage each of her children to make little sacrifices. Louis liked to go on walks with his children, something Thérèse pointed out as being important in her formation. They would take this time to both sternly correct their children's poor behavior, but also showed affectionate love and encouragement for their successes.

### **Vignette:**

Joe has 4 kids, 2 daughters and 2 sons ranging in age from 10 to 20. From the beginning of his family's existence, Joe and his wife have worked to establish rituals that can engage each member, help them grow in faith, and solidify their family in love and virtue. Some have been spectacular failures (the kids still joke about his wife attempts for limericks in 2018 for Poetry Night and his botched American Ninja Warrior course during the first months of COVID).

However, the successes have outnumbered and outshined the failures. Sunday Mass as a family, followed by brunch, has always been a priority. Joe's older daughter has joined him a lector at Mass and continues to do it in college. His older son is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion with his wife and his 10 year old son has just started as an altar server. Their teenage daughter has had trouble engaging at Mass but she attends and Joe has been able to discuss questions with her while teaching her how to make omelets at Sunday brunch.

Some of their other rituals are family-based. They go to a nearby nursing home twice a month to visit Joe's widowed aunt, give Holy Communion to those who can't attend Mass, and chat up those who don't have people to visit them. If one of the kids are on a team, in a play, or in Scouts, they prioritize attending at least one game/performance/campout as a family to support the other members.

Other rituals are one on one: Joe running twice a week with his older son or playing Scrabble with his younger son and his wife playing piano or video games with their daughters. These rituals keep him grounded with his kids and having a pulse on their moods and attitude. Joe and his wife also go on monthly dates, knowing that their relationship sets the tone for the whole family.

### **Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

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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**Action Plan:** Over the next week, make a list of your family rituals with your wife. Ask each other:

Are these rituals regular? Are they intentional? Do they meet a variety of needs: spiritual, interpersonal, intellectual, physical? Do you have rituals with each member, even if they are out of the house?

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