

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- The family is the “domestic church.”
- Parents are the first and most important teachers of faith.
- Faith, and the Catholic identity, is something to celebrate with family.

but we can influence our friends by living a life filled with deeper purpose and we can be an example to those who look up to us whether an underclassmen, younger sibling, or someone we don't even know is looking to us as an example.

- *What can you do to make sure we build up our internal characteristics, and those of others, over earthly successes?*



Family Life

Parents naturally want what's best for their children, just as we are called to want what's best for ourselves. Society's messages can lead us to think that fame, power, physical beauty, financial security, perfect health, success, wealth, and influence are what's “best” and most desirable. While each of these things has its perks, we likely see deeper and more lasting value in internal characteristics such as patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, self-respect, compassion, tolerance, integrity, and honesty.

It's our job as family members and mentors to be an example of these deeper, lasting gifts in action. Through our love, care, influence, and example, we help to strengthen the foundation of our family.

This is why the Catholic Church puts so much emphasis on the importance of family life. A happy and stable family provides the kind of atmosphere in which a child learns to relate to others: to care, to share, to love, to forgive. We don't just have this influence in our own family, although that may be where it's the strongest,

Faith and Our Parents

Our family is the place where we first learn about our ourselves and how to have relationships with others. These experiences form the basis of our self-image and begins our faith life.

“Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues.”

CCC 2223

Our parents are our first and most important teachers. We learn how to speak to others, to treat others, to cope with disagreements, to handle struggles, and to forgive all from the actions of our parents. As examples and teachers, our parents are never off duty, and as we grow up we realize more and more that our parents are like us—human and imperfect. Just like us, our parents make mistakes.

- How have your parents influenced your faith? Is there anything about your faith you'd like to share with them?



Faith and Our Family

No one is perfect: not parents, not siblings, not cousins, not you. So family life is never perfect, either. Disagreements, arguments, sacrifice, compromise, and forgiveness are all elements of our family life. We can't just love our family members when things are good. Real love only exists when we forgive, understand, and accept each other despite our imperfections. God loves us unconditionally, under any and all conditions, and this is the kind of love we should strive for in our families.

"As long as a child lives at home with his parents, the child should obey his parents in all that they ask of him when it is for his good or that of the family....Children should also obey the reasonable directions of their teachers and all to whom their parents have entrusted them. But if a child is convinced in conscience that it would be morally wrong to obey a particular order, he must not do so."

CCC 2217

This doesn't mean our parents have to agree with, or even tolerate, our actions when we're behaving poorly or acting dangerously. Just as God sets guidelines and rules to keep us on the right path, our parents have a responsibility to set limits that keep us safe and teach us what's right and what's wrong.

Obedying our parents or guardians is an important element of our faith, so important the Fourth Commandment is to honor our parents. However, honoring our parents and our family doesn't just mean we obey. It means we participate in family life, especially our family faith life. We can become examples to our siblings and help our parents grow in faith.

- Are there times you disagree or argue with your parents or other family members?
- What's at the heart of these disagreements?
- The next time you start to feel anger toward your parents or other family members, how can you respond with love and obedience instead?



Living Faith With Family

Not all families look the same, and no family is ever really "normal," let alone perfect. That's OK. Your family and your family life is unique to you, and there are a lot of ways you can bring your unique perspective on faith into your family.

The first step is making time to spend with your family. You're probably busy with schoolwork, extracurriculars, and maybe even a part-time job. Not to mention the time you want to spend on your own interests or out with friends. However, it's still important to spend quality time with your family, too.

Here are some ways you can work to spend more quality time with your family without sacrificing too much of your independence:

- *Eat dinner with your family as often as you can.* It can be easy to just grab food on your way to or from something else, but when you can, actually sit down and eat with all the members of your family. Put away or silence all the things that might distract you and give your attention to the people around you. Help prepare the meal or with cleaning up afterward, too.
- *Pray with your family.* Whether it's by leading grace before dinner, or asking your mom or dad to say a decade of the rosary with you in the car, you can share small moments of prayer with your family. If your family already has a set time for prayer,

participate and take it seriously. You're an example for younger siblings, and your participation and input can make a big difference in how your parents experience prayer time, too.

- *Pray for your family.* If you can't get your family together for prayer, you can still pray for your family. Offer any special intentions up in prayer for the growth of your family. This can be an especially good strategy when you find your family members difficult to get along with. Instead of jumping into an argument, offer up your frustrations in prayer first.
- *Remember your extended family.* Our family is a lot more than just our parents and siblings. If you have extended family nearby, make time to visit them beyond just traditional holidays. Offer to drive your grandparents to Mass or to do chores around the house. If your extended family is far away, give them a call and keep in touch. Show them you care and let them know they're in your prayers.
- *Say thank you.* Your family does a lot for you. Let them know you notice the little things, like when your dad makes your favorite dinner or your sister helps wash dishes even though it was your turn.
- *Practice forgiveness and admit mistakes.* How do you feel when someone sincerely says, "I'm sorry" to you? How often do you say, "I'm sorry" to your family members? When live with people, they get on your nerves, they see you on your best and worst days and you see them on theirs. It's normal for arguments to come up. But the next time you feel yourself getting upset, take a step back and try to see things from a new perspective. Offer and ask for forgiveness as frequently as you can.

- *What are some other ways you can share and grow your faith with your family?*



Passing on the Faith

You're probably not thinking about starting a family of your own anytime soon. You may not want a family at all right now, or you may feel a stronger call to the religious life. If you do feel called to married life and to starting your own family, it's important to understand how much that decision entails.

In today's world, it's challenging to live and bring up a family within a Christian framework. The values of the consumer society are often at odds with the values of Jesus Christ. Living a Christian family life requires sacrifice, but the rewards of love, security, and a happy home will make it worthwhile.

"The home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibilities. Parents should teach children to avoid the compromising and degrading influences which threaten human societies."

CCC 2224

Should you become a parent, it will become your job to pass on the faith and make it relevant to your own children. The best way to do this is to build a strong faith foundation now, one that shows by example just what your faith means to you.

On your own, write up a plan for how you'd like to see your family share in the experience of faith. Make sure it's something practical and do-able for your family. Share this plan when you get home and carry it out this week. Try to make it a routine your family gets into each week.



Think about your own family.

- What are you grateful for?
- What do you struggle with?
- Is there a place in your family life for a stronger shared faith practice?



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