



Seeds of Faith

Supporting families

September 2016

Family Life

In our last issue of Seeds of Faith we talked about the sacrament of Holy Orders—when someone is ordained as a priest. We talked about the idea of vocation and how we are all called by God through our baptism to be witnesses to God’s love and God’s message. For most of us we will live out this vocation within family life.



In many ways we don’t really think about our family lives as a way of living out our baptism. Sometimes we live as if life is split up into holy bits and ordinary bits. The holy bits are when we go to Mass or some big occasion happens like a wedding or baptism or funeral. It is almost as if we think God lives in the holy bits of our lives but is absent from the ordinary bits. In

actual fact God is present throughout every part of our lives. Saint Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles in the bible tells us that God is the one in whom we “live and move and have our being”(Acts 17:28). All of life, not just the obviously holy bits can speak to us of God. The Catholic Church recognises this by talking about marriage as a sacrament. So the Church is saying “Look, if you want to get a glimpse of what God is like have a look at people who are married.” That sounds like quite a challenge for people who are married! It doesn’t mean that people who are married always have it easy, or get it right, or even live up to what they have committed to. But it does mean that in marriage when we give ourselves and our future to the person we love we echo God’s love for humanity. When we commit to being faithful we echo God’s complete faithfulness to us. When we love—through thick and thin, highs and lows—we echo the love God has for the world. When a marriage is blessed with children we are sharing in God’s creative action in the world.

God loves perfectly. For us it is much more difficult and sometimes things go wrong. Life can be messy, people can get hurt. Perfect families don’t really exist. As a faith community we look at marriage and see it as the ideal—because it is a commitment to love, faithfulness, stability and hope. Many people who would love the ideal find that life is more complicated than that. It is a bit like being a parent – we want the very best for our children and offer them support to do that but whatever happens in life and whatever choices they make we will love them. So too we need gentleness and compassion with ourselves and others when life is more messy than we hope for. There is a beautiful hymn sung by the monks of Taizé in France— Ubi caritas deus ibi est which means “Wherever there is love, God is present.”. So we are called to be aware of God’s presence and action throughout our lives and the lives of people around us. Even in the middle of chaos and mess and often complicated lives and relationships God is present and active.

If you enjoy Seeds of Faith why not have a look at the blog <https://godfaithandfamilylife.wordpress.com/>

Praying as a family

Why not take some time as a family simply to pray for each other and for all those connected to your family tree!

- Who are the people who have made you who you are?
- How many people in your extended family can you name?
- Who are the people who have had the biggest influence on you?
- What are the best memories you have of family—cousins, grand parents, brother and sisters?
- What are the tough times you have been through as a family and who are the people who have supported you through it?
- Thank God for your family—with all its blessings and challenges.



Gospels for September

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, in Galilee towards the North of Palestine. It was there that he began to show God’s love and care for people in the way he treated those he met, and to tell stories to help them imagine God in a new way, the way Jesus himself knew God his Father. In this middle section of Luke’s gospel we get to travel along with Jesus and his friends as they make their way South towards Jerusalem, where he will give the most important lesson of all about God’s love when he dies for us and is raised to new life by God. As we listen to these Gospels, let us get into the habit of imagining that we are there among the friends of Jesus as they travel with him. Let us see in our mind the situations that turn up and follow with our imagination the stories Jesus tells. Don’t forget to notice how you feel at the different points in the story. It might be fun in the family to compare the way that we see things happening and the different reactions of the other people in the stories, and to share what we think we will remember from each gospel reading.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 04/09 | Luke 14:25-33 | The cost of following Jesus |
| 11/09 | Luke 15:1-32 | The stories of lost sheep, lost coin, lost son |
| 18/09 | Luke 16:1-13 | The story of the wasteful steward |
| 25/09 | Luke 16:19-31 | The story of the rich man and the beggar |



Sacred Space



How about gathering up as many photos as you can of different members of your family and putting them in your sacred space this month.

You could take some time to pray

- thanking God for all the strong relationships and moments of love

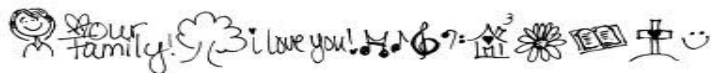
- for strength and healing for those times when relationships struggle
- for forgiveness for the times when we hurt each other
- for God's blessing on us and our families
- For God's protection on our relationships.

Stepping Stones on the Journey of Faith



- ◆ We believe that marriage is a sacrament and so we believe that in marriage God can be present and active.
- ◆ In marriage we glimpse something of who God is. The love between a man and a woman echoes God's love for each one of us.
- ◆ Marriage is not about a legal contract but about a covenant—that is the gift of myself to another person in love. In the bible God speaks about His covenant with humanity. In Jesus God gives Himself to us in a constant and lasting way. Marriage echoes this covenant love.
- ◆ Marriage is challenging, not least because we are committing our future to another person. By saying yes to marriage we are closing other doors—we are committing ourselves to faithfulness to one person rather than seeing life as a series of commitments to different people and possibilities. In this way marriage is a radical choice to make.
- ◆ In marriage and family life we can live out our baptismal responsibility to witness to the love and the message of God. We are called to be signs of God's love, forgiveness, hope and healing in the world. Marriage and family life are vocations.
- ◆ Prayer, communication, forgiveness and love are all needed to deal with the challenges of marriage and family life. God is there to help us on our way but we need to invite God into the centre of our lives and not confine God to "the holy bits".
- ◆ Wherever we find love—God is present.

God of all goodness
Thank you for all the ways
we glimpse you in our relationships;
in the love and care,
fun and laughter.
When life is challenging,
help us to show your presence
in how we offer hope,
healing and forgiveness.
May your love shine through us.
Amen



Kids, why not fill in your own family tree!

Marriage and family life

Would you like to read a bit, think a bit, talk a bit about marriage and family life? Here are a few resources.

[A Daring Promise: A spirituality of Christian marriage](#) by Richard R Gaillardetz and available from Amazon or Veritas, - a very good and readable book.

[Family Spirituality: God among the pots and pans](#) by Bairbre Cahill and available from Redemptorist Publications www.rpbooks.co.uk

[Conversations about God, faith and family life](#)—a five week course for parents based on the book Family Spirituality: God among the pots and pans offering the chance to reflect upon their experience of family life and the many ways God is present and active there. A booklet to accompany the course is available by email from bairbre.cahill@gmail.com



Relationships and marriage can prove challenging and couples often find that having someone else to talk things through with can help. ACCORD is an organisation which provides support and counselling for couples. See www.accord.ie for details.