

Seeds of Faith

Supporting families

June 2017

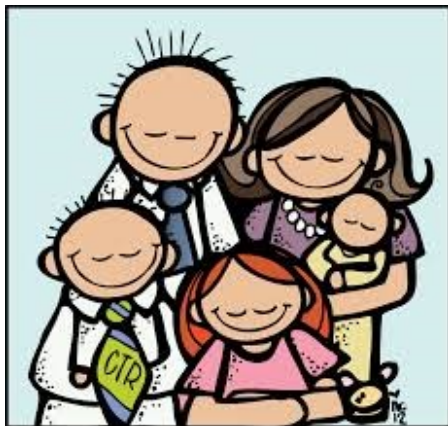
Family Life

From the moment when our child is born we begin to talk and chat to him or her. We are delighted when the baby begins to make sounds, to babble and respond to us. It is wonderful to hear our children talking to us, calling us mammy or daddy, saying "I love you", telling us stories. Communication is absolutely vital in family life. We all know the stresses created when someone won't speak to us. It may be because of a row. It may be that a teenager feels there is no point talking. When communication is restored we feel huge relief. Our relationships are built on good communication—both speaking and listening. The same is true of prayer. Prayer is the communication that builds up our relationship with God. Prayer is a gift—so it's not just up to us to try really hard, we need to be open to God's Holy Spirit. Where does prayer happen? When we are together at Mass that is a really important way to pray together. We are reminded that we are part of a community. We join together in the prayers and responses and music. What are we doing? We are lifting our hearts up to the Lord because it is right to give God thanks and praise—just as it says in the words of the Mass.

Prayer also happens when we say the Rosary together, or pray grace before a meal or ask God to look after someone who is sick or worried or simply away from home. And prayer also happens when we stand looking at something beautiful, like a sunset and our heart rises with happiness. Prayer happens when we light a candle for someone—even if we don't have the words to fully express what is in our heart. When we bless ourselves with Holy Water we pray. When we read something in the paper or watch the news and find ourselves exclaiming "God help us" it is a prayer from the heart. When we know ourselves to be loved, know the goodness of creation, know the blessings and challenges of life and can say thank you it is a wonderful prayer. When we are quiet in God's presence—whether that is in a church or walking on a beach or sitting having a cup of tea that is a powerful prayer of listening. We listen too when we read a piece of scripture and let it settle in our hearts and wonder to ourselves "What is God's Word saying to me here today?"

It is important that we "learn our prayers" so that we can join in and be part of the community. In times of crisis we may often find that the words that come to mind are those of a prayer learned in childhood. It is also really important that we—and our children—can pray to God simply in our own words, that we can chat to God.

God wants us to come as we are—and sometimes that means coming to God saying "I'm tired/cross/depressed/excited/anxious/delighted/confused" Prayer is about letting God be part of the ins and outs of our daily life and knowing he holds us always in the palm of His hand.



Family prayer

If we start each day looking out for blessings we are more likely to find them than if we start the day in a grump. If we get into a habit of naming the blessings we find in the day we will become more tuned in, more aware of all the little things that happen in a day that make us smile, or give thanks, or feel loved.

For the month of June why not get into a habit of asking each person to name something good that has happened in the day. Each person could also write it down and you could use it for your prayer space. Imagine how many blessings you could collect in a month!! Thank God for all the ways your life is blessed.



JUNE GOSPELS

The gospel passages for these Sundays are chosen to help us celebrated the four different feast days that occur: Pentecost, Trinity, The Body and Blood of Christ, Saints Peter and Paul. Probably the best help for children in terms of some preparation or follow-up reflection is to offer them the chance to talk and listen about these feasts, and what they might mean to us as the friends and disciples of Jesus today. If you want to trace a theme that might link them together, you might follow the idea of sending and being sent – what is it like to be trusted and to be sent on behalf of someone else? How does it feel when you know that you have been faithful and have done what you were trusted to do?

04/06 John 20:19-23
Jesus breathes his Spirit on his disciples

11/06 John 3:16-18
God sent his Son to give us life

18/06 John 6:51-58
Jesus is our life-giving food

25/06 Matt 19:13-19
Jesus rejoices at Peter's faith



Sacred Space If your family takes up the idea of writing down your blessings each day you could gather them up and put them in your sacred space each day. Imagine how wonderful it would be by the end of the month to have a whole pile of blessings there reminding you of all the ways God has touched your lives this month!



For the love and laughter of family life—thank you
 For courage in challenging times—thank you.
 For the faith handed down to us—thank you.
 For the support of family, friends
 and community—thank you.
 For moments of quiet prayer—thank you.
 For noise and energy and busy days—thank you.
 God at the heart of our family life—you are welcome.
 Amen



(Prayer taken from Family Spirituality: God among the Pots and Pans)

Our father

You love every one of us as a parent loves a child
Who art in heaven

You are always more than we can imagine
Hallowed by thy name

We respect your name and do not abuse it
Thy kingdom come

How different the world would be if we could all
 love each other and treat each other the way You
 want us to—that's the world we hope for.

**Thy will be done on earth as it is
 in heaven.**

Work through us to transform the world.

Give us this day our daily bread

What we need not just what we want

**And forgive us our trespasses as
 we forgive those who trespass
 against us**

We should expect to be treated as we treat
 others, forgiven the way we forgive others.

**And lead us not into temptation
 but deliver us from evil.**

We know life can be challenging so we need you
 to walk with us and keep us right.

Amen

Stepping stones on the journey of faith

- In prayer we open our hearts and our lives to God.
- Prayer nurtures and builds our relationship with God
- In prayer we place our trust in God and grow in confidence that we can always turn to God.
- The more we pray the more we learn how to pray.
- It was St Augustine who said “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” He was expressing the longing in our hearts for relationship with God.
- Prayer is firstly about praising God, thanking God for all the gifts and goodness in our lives.
- Prayer is also a way for us to place our concerns in God’s hands—whether we are praying for our own needs or the needs of someone else.
- We do not always need formal prayers. We can speak from the heart or simply come before God in silence knowing that the Holy Spirit understands all that is in our hearts even if we feel lost for words.



One parent’s voice

My mother is a great prayer and someone of great faith – I could fill a scrapbook with the trials and difficulties, tragedy and hardship she’s encountered in her life and yet she has incredible faith...and I’ve come to appreciate that it’s in part because she has a grateful heart. We, as a people, have/had a great culture of blessings – both invoking and appreciating. It was there in our everyday language – God bless when someone leaves, thank God for the weather etc.

A few years ago my Mum and I went to Venice for a couple of days and we walked and walked and walked – till we were worn out. As we headed to bed that first night, my Mum said “It’s after days like this I thank God for the roof over my head and the bed to sleep in. I can’t imagine what it must be like for the homeless”. So when she’s tired and worn out, she’s not thinking “poor me”, she’s starting from “here are my blessings”. Ditto when she had major complications after her surgery, when her life was hanging in the balance. She was looking across at a man who’d had a stroke and said “How blessed am I that I can communicate and be understood!”. It seems to me that our prayer takes on a different quality when we work from a place of knowing and seeing something to be grateful for in every day.

When our kids were smaller our family used to do a “name two good things (and two bad)” at the dinner table. It was our way of working through any issues without making a big deal. It was amazing when we set the challenge to identify the good things (blessings) what came up and what constituted that especially for the children – often small, insignificant things but what mattered is that they were important to that person.

Life can be so very busy and noisy. Time out can be hard to get and people can be different in what prayer and faith mean for them. So finding common ground can be a challenge. Just even being quiet is a big challenge! Its not enough to say to a family—just say this prayer or that prayer. Each family has to find what works for them—it might be a formal prayer, it might be taking it in turns to make up a grace before meals—I heard a great one sung to the tune of the superman theme once! It might be gathering up and naming the blessings.

My children have inherited my own family’s commitment to the blessed candle. We light them all the time for all sorts of intentions. Even such a simple thing can have so much depth – often it’s for someone else so we’re thinking outside of ourselves or it’s asking for help, acknowledging that we need it and always it’s a flame of hope, of solidarity, of companionship etc. At Easter we sprinkle the Easter Holy Water in every room in the house and also on my father’s grave. These traditions make us who we are as a family.



What are your traditions?