

The Newsletter of Holy Cross Family Ministries, India.

Family Light

EDITORIAL



In this issue of the Family Light we reflect with you on the significance of family prayer. Matthew Kelly, reflecting on daily prayer, quotes a violinist who was considered the best at that time. "If I miss practice one day and perform the next night, I am the only person who can tell. But I can tell. My performance is off. If I missed practice every day for a week and then performed, there would only be a handful of people in any audience who would be able to tell that my performance was off. But if I missed practice for two weeks, or three weeks, almost every person in the audience would be able to tell that I was not performing at my best."

The same is true of family prayer. If we miss our daily prayer, then others can see that we are not at our best. Prayer is important to the family. The family that prays together is at its best and enjoys peace, joy and harmony. The slogan of Father Patrick Peyton proves to be true: "The family that prays together stays together." This issue of Family Light urges the families to grow in commitment to the daily family prayer.

We are privileged to hear the prayer experiences of many. Batholomew and Nirmala share their understanding of prayer and touch upon various aspects of it. They share with us their own experience and give us various tips to strengthen our family prayer. In reading their article one notices how God has been a number one priority in their life. We have to create a daily habit of prayer. Julia Miranda shares how prayer will keep the family closely knit bound with love and affection. Prayer is one of the most powerful weapons and, through it, wonderful things can happen. Karen Mascharinas shares how the family prayer becomes the source of energy to deal with family demands and challenges. It is encouraging to read what Albert and Rosalind have to say: Family prayer time is an excellent opportunity to build one another up. It builds and maintains an open and supportive climate.

Fr. Herve's reflections help us to deepen our understanding of family prayer. He reminds us that it is the work of love. This helps the family in maintaining the bonds of unity and love in the family. He validates the retreat preacher's remark: "A lot of trouble about prayer would disappear, if only we realized that we go to pray not because we love prayer, but because we love God and one another."

In reflecting on the role of the parents in initiating their children to prayer, Fr. M. Amaldoss is asking the parents to create a sacred place. Parents need to be persons of prayer in order to remain God-centered. He also suggests that we have a physical space (family altar) to provide all with a prayerful atmosphere at home. The parents need to initiate children to pray spontaneously in keeping with their age. They can recollect their day and pray in relation to what was happening then.

Parents need not be overwhelmed by their responsibility in initiating their children to prayer. The Spirit enables each one to pray. In fact prayer is the gift of the Spirit. As Pope Francis says: "The Spirit will make us more sensitive to God's things". When a child was asked why she prays, her answer was: "Well, God is my friend, and friends like to know what is going on in each other's lives." Let's have the insight of the child to deepen our family prayer. You may also make use of the book prepared by Fr. Hervé Morissette when you gather on various occasions to pray.

Fr. G.A. Arul Raj, csc
Director.

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That Prays Together
Stays Together"™

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"THE FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER"

(Servant of God Patrick Peyton, CSC)

More than 70 years ago, Servant of God Father Patrick Peyton, CSC, the founder of the Family Rosary Crusade, coined a slogan that inspired millions of Catholics all over the world to pray every day with their families. It is with a renewed vision that we wish to fulfill the invitation addressed to us by Jesus when he says that we "ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18: 1).

If the family members really love one another and are prepared to remain united in the spirit of Christ, even in times of trials and difficulties, they will feel the need of praying in order to strengthen between them the bonds of love and affection and they will be led to experience the comforting presence of the Lord who said: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt 18, 20). They may not always feel it, but the Lord will draw them to himself and to one another, because they are ready to put his command into practice: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13: 34).

Even if the family members stay together in the name of Christ, it does not mean that they will never ask themselves questions about the need of praying together. They may even wonder at times: why should we pray? Jesus reminds us constantly that God is a Father. So, it is normal that we speak to the Father about what is dear to us. Are we not all thirsty for happiness? And we know that God's greatest desire is that all may be fully alive. Unfortunately, we are often unaware of what real happiness means. We think that we will find it by pursuing our selfish interests. Yet happiness can be found only in love, harmony and forgiveness. If the family members are ready to pay the price in order to maintain harmony at home, they will naturally feel the need of God's help to sustain that love.

We can pray, of course, for our own interests, as long as they are not selfish or as long as we can address our requests to God "in the name of Jesus" (Jn 15: 16). Those who pray "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4: 24) will soon realize whether their requests are selfish or not, because prayer is a school of conversion. It teaches us how to seek God's will. And God's will is that the whole family be united and prepared to stay together.

The ideal family prayer is the *Our Father*, a prayer that we can always say "in the name of Jesus", because he is the one who taught it to us. That is why I kept that prayer on the first page. Through that prayer, we don't hesitate to ask God to "forgive us our sins as we forgive

those who have sinned against us" (Mt 6: 12). In other words, we dare to turn to God in prayer, because we were ready first to stay united as a family. A few years ago, a retreat preacher in Bangalore told us that, when his mother was dying of cancer, all her eight children gathered one evening around her. She seemed to have fallen into a coma. The priest celebrated Mass in that room, while the children surrounded their mother lying in bed. At the moment of the *Our Father*, the children held hands and began to pray. Then she opened her eyes and prayed with them. She never said a word after. She died after a few hours.

When we pray together as a family – especially when we pray the rosary together – there is always a risk to end up just reciting *Hail Marys* without putting our heart in what we say. Yet, Jesus reminds us always: "In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do" (Mt 6: 7). He does not want our family prayer to become a kind of routine in which we repeat formulas just for the sake of repeating them. For Jesus, prayer is above all an encounter with God, an encounter in which the family comes into intimate conversation with the Father. If we just "recite" the rosary, we don't really pray. But if the family prays the rosary for the sake of creating an atmosphere of prayer in the house and fostering an encounter with the Lord through the intercession of Mary, the rosary then serves its purpose.

When we go to meet a friend, we are ready to spend time with him/her. It is as if we were saying: "You are so precious to me that I wish to spend some time with you." The same is true of prayer. If the family members are united in the spirit of Jesus, they will feel the need of spending some time with him in prayer. And even if most of them are distracted during that time of prayer, it does not lessen the value of their encounter with the Lord. When a mother prepares a meal in the kitchen, it often happens that she is distracted by other concerns. Yet it is for the family that she is preparing the meal. Her work is a work of love, because "home is where the heart is" (Pliny)

Prayer, too, is a work of love, whatever distractions we may have. So, we need not worry about these distractions, as long as everyone prays with the heart and is keen on maintaining the bonds of unity and love in the family. I remember a retreat preacher telling us: "A lot of trouble about prayer would disappear, if only we realized that we go to pray not because we love prayer, but because we love God and one another."

Hervé Morissette, CSC

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS IN INITIATING THEIR CHILDREN TO PRAYER

The first thing that the parents can do to initiate their children in prayer is the creation of a sacred space. This can be done in two ways. First of all, they show by example that their whole life is surrounded by prayer. They must pray and be seen to pray on important moments of the day: morning and evening, as they start any important journey or work, at moments of joys and sorrows, at times of illness or other needs, at meals, etc. The children must experience that an awareness of God's presence permeates the lives of their parents. The second kind of space is physical. There must be a corner in the house where there are images of Jesus, Mary and a favourite saint with the possibility of placing a flower or an agarbatti or light a candle or an oil lamp. A copy of the Bible could be near. This could be the place where everyone could recollect for a moment as they go about their work or gather together for common family prayer in the evening. A CD player can play some hymns or other soft music as one wakes up in the morning. Now-a-days spiritual discourses and prayer programmes may also be available on TV. This is not to sit and watch, but just to provide a prayerful atmosphere.

The second way of initiating children to prayer is to get them to pray with you. This could be the common family prayer in the evenings. One way of doing this is to take a prayer book and rattle off some prayers or recite the rosary or say a litany. While this can be done occasionally, the children must be initiated to pray more spontaneously in keeping with their age. The gospel of the day could be read and reflected on or it could be a passage from the saints. The parents can also lead the children in praying about what happened during the day: thank God for some good news or happening or benefits experienced, praise God for his/her general providence, ask God for forgiveness if something has gone wrong and place before God our needs.

We could have before our eyes, not only our family, but our friends and relations to start with and then the whole world in fact with its various problems and needs. There are reports of achievements and catastrophes every day in the media. It will be very educative particularly if the parents can ask pardon for some offences, especially if it has to do with other family members, making the petition "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" actual in their lives. As the children grow up they can be helped to meditate on a text from the Bible, especially the New Testament. Passages should be carefully chosen. The main focus should be to train children to pray personally, not simply to recite prayers. For older children, some simple yogic technique like rhythmic breathing with attention, meditative repetition of a bhajan or japa leading to concentration, etc., could be tried. Of

course, the family does this together. This may be possible only during weekends.

We are people of the Church. So the children should be trained to participate in the liturgy of the Church actively and meaningfully. The primary focus should be on the Eucharistic celebration. With the children having to rush to school in the morning, daily Eucharist may not be possible. The Sunday celebration, of course, will be prepared by the Parish team. But some preparation of the readings, at least of the Gospel, can be done the previous evening. The children could be encouraged to participate in the responses and the singing and not just be passively present. Some explanation of the ritual makes possible intelligent participation. The main focus should be the experience of the divine everywhere and always. Prayer should facilitate this experience. The best way of training is by example and by participation.

M. Amaladoss, S.J.

Congratulations to Mrs Gemma Carvalho



On the occasion of the last Family Rosary Rally which took place in the chapel of St. Joseph High School in Bangalore on the 13th of May 2015, Mrs Gemma Carvalho handed over the Direction of the Family Rosary Movement to the Holy Cross Family Ministries. Fr Arul Raj, CSC, thanked Mrs. Carvalho for the 19 years of service that she rendered to the movement by organizing the Family Rosary Rallies in English in Bangalore on the 13th of May and the 13th of October of every year. The Superior of the Southern Province of the Fathers of Holy Cross, Fr. Leo D'Souza, CSC, presented her with a beautiful statue of the Virgin Mary on behalf of the Holy Cross Family Ministries. May the good Lord give her his abundant blessings. We pray that she may enjoy Mary's protection all the days of her life.

THE RELEVANCE OF

In a world that is dominated by the media, entertainment, travel convenience, door delivered food, online stores, smart phones, video chatting, day and night work shifts, stressful work schedules, longer working hours, traffic chaos and commuting snarls, student's special classes and tuitions, health and fitness workouts and gyms, so on and so forth, the first casualty in a Christian home today is Family prayer.

What was a consistent and regular practice in the past in families has become optional or even neglected today, and even staunch Christian homes where family prayer was once conducted every day, have begun to accord second or even third priority to it. Somewhere in between Christian values and things of importance have given way to the unimportant, money, fashion, job status, vanity, etc. and family prayer seems to have lost its appeal and relevance, its benefits do not seem to be understood, its value ignored, and its necessity questioned.

What is family prayer?

Praying formally as a family, where every member together as one, communicates to God in a loving relationship, worships and seeks His face knowing that He hears and loves us and will do the best for us, all this done with a humble and sincere heart can be briefly summarised as "Family prayer." This prayer can include praise, thanksgiving, repentance, intercession and supplication.



Family prayer helps raise our minds and hearts to God, thanks Him for favours received, brings up needs of themselves and others for His Divine assistance, seeks His protection and guidance to face the challenges of life and inspires us when we spend time reading and meditating on the Word of God. It helps us to know Him better and to pattern our lives on His Word.

Family prayer can be a very rewarding experience and goes a long way in building a happy and stable family, a place where love and joy abound, an abode of sharing, caring, understanding, forgiving and receiving. Generally parents are the leaders of family prayer.

The importance of family prayer

The greatest schools on earth are individual homes, and the Catholic Church calls the family as the "Domestic Church." Christian parents are duty bound not only to take care of their own and children's bodily and mental needs, but also of their spiritual needs and be concerned of their eternal salvation. They must pass on the Christian faith and values received from their forefathers and the Church, to the succeeding generations, so that the Catholic Church remains vibrant, active and grow in numbers and influence.

It is in the family that children learn how to pray, since parents are the best teachers that one can have. Example is the best teacher they say. A child not only hears, but also sees what a parent does. When therefore a family prays, it lays the foundation for a healthy and stable family unit. Children build up a strong relationship with God when their prayer life is vigorous and firm, while the other family members deepen theirs. It is a defence against temptation and the powers of evil. Blessings flow from the heavenly throne, peace and unity prevails, prosperity descends and the family is on a strong footing to face the storms of life when problems beset it, as it will be founded on rock (Ref. Matthew 7:24-25) with Christ at its Head.

The benefits of family prayer

Family prayer cements the bond of unity between husband and wife, brother and sister, parent and child and helps each one to overcome the challenges and obstacles that will come their way during the course of life especially in the areas of relationship to one another, sickness, privation, death, or any other tragedy that may befall them. It deepens interpersonal relationships, and encourages family members to become more sensitive to one another's feelings. It teaches mutual love, forgiveness, concern and acceptance of each other. As someone has put it so aptly "it's hard to hold on to grudges and cherish resentments, when we're on our knees together before the Lord." Family prayer creates family cohesiveness. The familiar, saying is so true: families who pray together stay together.

Family prayer also helps in organising and setting priorities, so that God is first in our lives. When God becomes a top priority item every day, we draw near to Him with intimacy and depth. He on His part ensures that our crooked paths become straight, our blindness healed, our strength renewed, our plans succeed and our days watched over. No evil will overtake us and we will rest secure near green pastures and still waters (Ref. Psalm 23).

OF FAMILY PRAYER

Further, it encourages family time, it teaches compassion and sensitivity, we develop a world view and get involved with people and share their concerns, we are schooled in patience and discipline, and our children are better equipped to overcome challenges in adult life, as the foundation to trust is laid while they are still young and in an impressionable age.

The necessity of family prayer

In today's world where the emphasis and focus is on worldly values, consumerism and materialistic outlook, where people are constantly bombarded with things to do, see and experience without regard to their eternal destiny, where no time is given to reflect, ponder and meditate on the divine and sublime, where there is no concern or room for the poor and needy, but only a "rat race" to look to the needs of oneself only, to dominate and the desire to hoard, family prayer can withstand the onslaught of the world and the evil one, help us to refocus and reset our plans and priorities, be an example to others, reverse the tendency in us to be selfish by sharing our goods and working for inclusive growth, and be witnesses of the Gospel.

Types of family prayer

Family prayer can be for the sake of convenience clubbed as

- **Formal prayers** – Family Rosary, Bible reading and meditation, singing of hymns & psalms, special prayers during liturgical seasons, devotion to saints, etc.
- **Event prayers** – Morning and bedtime prayers, grace before and after meals, prayer before undertaking any special activity or work like exams, going on a journey, when someone is leaving home, prayer for one who is sick, blessing someone, celebration of Christian festivals in the neighbourhood, etc.
- **Informal prayers** – Prayers offered to God when you climb into a car and during travel, while waiting for someone to arrive, standing in a queue, when sleep eludes you, when you feel saddened, helpless, angry or elated, when people or events upset you, when you get into trouble or in danger, when you need take a quick decision or need counsel, during shopping, etc.

As can be seen, we can communicate to God our Father at



any time, in any place and in any circumstance. He is ever ready to hear and speak to us in return, intervene, bless and take care of our interests and situation.

How should we pray?

Consistent fervent family prayer should be the hallmark of a good Christian family. Our communication with God should contain the following ingredients for it to be balanced:

- Praise, adoration and thanksgiving
- Repentance and contrition
- Petition, intercession and surrender to the will of God.
- Silence and meditation listening to God speaking back to us.

We can bring up any intention to God for His consideration and blessing. It is to be kept in mind, however, that prayer is not a "briefing" session with God, because our Heavenly Father knows exactly what we need even before we ask Him (Ref. Matthew 6:8). On the contrary it should be characterized as one approaching a loving parent, who knows our plight and what we stand in need of, and has our best interests at heart.

In prayer we do not "force" God to give us what we want by reciting a long list of needs, but rather as a child we tell Him what we think we require. We leave it to His wisdom and counsel to do what is best for us, while at the same time acknowledging that we will take whatever comes from His hands – "not my will but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42.) We must persistently continue to ask, seek and knock (Ref. Matthew 7:7), praying relentlessly (Ref. Luke 18: 1-8) to prove our sincerity and trust in a loving and gentle Father. We should also keep in mind the only condition, other than faith, that we need to meet viz. forgive anyone with whom we have a quarrel with (Ref. Mark 11: 25.) The words of St. Paul will always be our guide – Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks for this is the will of God (Ref. 1 Thess. 5: 16-18).

What we can pray for

Our prayer requests can include the following intentions. However, it is better to prepare a prayer list, or have a prayer box at home where anyone can put a prayer need or request into it, etc. so that we cover everyone's needs and anxiety.

- Pray for your children's and family's immediate needs and interests
- Pray for protection, provision and prosperity

- Pray for love, unity and peace (family, Church, country, world)
- Pray for health, strength and power
- Pray for the Holy Spirit's gifts and graces
- Pray for discernment, decision making and courage
- Pray for the Pope, bishops, priests, Church leaders and the faithful
- Pray for vocations, persecuted Christians and world governments
- Pray for the poor, the sick and the suffering, and all others in need
- Pray for all the living and the dead

Our prayers can be from a booklet or they can be short, spontaneous and conversational ones too, as it does not matter to the One who is listening, for He knows the heart. Keep in mind the level of maturity of the ones around, as everyone needs to understand what is being offered up to the Father and make it their own prayer too. We need to make our children "fall in love" with Jesus, and make them aware of his presence in our everyday lives. Record the blessings received and make generous thanksgiving to the Almighty with a loud and clear voice.



As we take family prayer seriously, we begin to experience eternal life here on earth itself. We will joyfully and peacefully live out our days, till we are called to see Him face to face, and join that heavenly chorus singing unending "Alleluias." Then those in our family who have gone before, and those who follow later, will one day all meet and become one big celestial family offering everlasting family prayers to the Triune God.

In conclusion

Family prayer they say is the life-breath and heartbeat of a truly Christian home, and helps your family thrive. Members learn what it means to be close to God and how to build a relationship with Him. When they see prayers getting answered, and experience God's love and presence in their own lives, it strengthens their faith and deepens their commitment. Put differently, family prayer provides a framework to determine the importance of faith and helps us to pass down our convictions to the next generation.

Let us then not deny our families this great blessing. It is an inheritance and treasure that we have received and which must be passed on. If we have neglected or abandoned the practice of daily family prayer, let us begin all over again with sincerity. Find time for it by setting right priorities at home. Discard anything that interferes with your spiritual life. The father or the mother of the family should take the lead. Though it may be tough at the beginning, persist as things will improve and get better, as it becomes a part of our daily routine. Even in times of discouragement, when we or our children are far away from each other, we will receive grace, blessing and strength because of the faithful prayers of the family back home. Like the Holy Family of Nazareth, may our homes, too, be transformed into holy families for the glory of God.

Bartholomew Abraham & M. Nirmala Rani, Bangalore

FACILITATING OUR FAITH ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

While reading an article on 'Family', I was surprised to know that in the western countries 50 per cent of the families have gone through a process of divorce. The same number applies to Catholics, too. In some cases the situation is worse. The household sizes are declining and the family is become a very small unit of mother, father and child or one parent and child. There are many issues facing families in the modern world. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, is voicing concern about the deteriorating family life. As good Catholics we should join hands with him first by our good example and also through prayer and evangelization.

Who or what is responsible for the family problems? Some blame the media, others blame films, while still others blame lifestyle. Today, it is become a problem of how to motivate the youth to family prayer. Quite a number of homes still gather to say the Family Rosary along with all the members of the family. Of course, with so much of spiritual feeding, reading the liturgical readings of the day slowly and attentively after the rosary and reflecting on the Word of God shouldn't be difficult. This facilitates our faith encounter with God and leads us to the renewal of our Christian life oriented towards action. Everyday family prayer time should be fixed by the parents in consultation with the children so as to make them know they are important members of the family. Prayer will keep the family close knit bound with love and affection.

Prayer is the only way to gain spiritual strength in our lives. It is the conversation between the believer and God and so it brings a positive energy into our minds and bodies. Prayer is one of the most powerful weapons. Through it wonderful things can happen. The family is the living cell of the community. As such, every Catholic home should serve as a good moral example to society. Let us always pray the rosary in a meaningful way witnessing the life of Christ through the loving eyes of his mother.

Julia Miranda

THE NEED FOR A STRUCTURE IN FAMILY PRAYER

Structure is related to function, a principle I learnt in School Biology! In human institutions, too, I believe, a structure needs to evolve and adapt according to need-based functions; yes, need-based. I also believe that, we are all blind until we see that in the human plan, nothing is worth the making if it does **not** build the **whole** man. Jesus says, *"Be holy as my heavenly Father is holy"*. Holiness is wholeness; individually as well as a family, our journey is a continuous movement towards inner harmony, inner wholeness, between thinking, feeling, and acting on the basis of principles and the truth. This is being and becoming spiritual. Again we are exhorted to "build one another up". I think that 'Family Prayer Time' is an excellent opportunity to accomplish this. The total integral growth of every member of the family is a need-based function.

Jesus also says, *"When two or three are gathered in my Name, there I am in their midst"* And Jesus assures us, *"I have come so that you will have life in all its fullness."* Members of the family can realize this assurance as they come together in prayer. For this we need a structure. The structure should be in synch with the principle of how human beings learn, i.e. the Natural Learning Cycle. Such a structure can be recognized in a series of three pocket-book size books, named, *Vision 2000*, *Mission 2000*, and *Action 2000*, written by Fr. Mark Link, S.J. Here is a sample page – it is from Thursday, Week 8, Ordinary time, *Vision 2000*.

[A blind person called out to Jesus with a loud voice.] "Son of David, have mercy on me!" [Jesus healed the person, saying,] "Go Your faith has made you well." (Mark 10: 48, 52).

A nun asked little Mary, "Who made you?" Mary looked puzzled for a few seconds. Then she said, "God made part of me." This time the nun looked puzzled, saying, "Did you say that God made part of you?" "Yes" said Mary. "God made me tiny; but the rest – God and I did that together."

My Christian life is something like that. It is a joint effort between God and me. Without my faith, God can do nothing. With it, we can do anything together. This raises a question: how firmly do I believe that if I put my faith in Jesus, he can do anything through me, in spite of my flaws? "With any of us, it is never a question of faith or no faith; the question always is, "In what or in whom do I put my faith?" (Anonymous)

In each of the books, the structure includes specific steps which can be followed during individual prayer-time as well as during small-group, or family prayer-time. If followed in the true spirit of the structure, letting the Holy Spirit to move us, I am sure it will help every person in the family to change and grow. They are sure to be "salt and light" in their home and outside situations.

Spontaneously, their life will reflect the exhortation of Jesus, "Be my witnesses" and eventually they are sure to "Go and make disciples."

A word of caution to parents. Remember, following the structure is a means to an end and not an end by itself. The end is the total and integrated formation of all individuals including the parents. So, avoid being authoritarian. Instead take the role of an encouraging facilitator. Build and maintain an open and supportive climate. Listen more. Draw out the family members to express themselves openly. Lead them to commit themselves to experiment with the truth in their own situations. Celebrate your family prayer.

Albert & Rosalind, average parents, who have experienced the above.

FAMILY PRAYER

Testimony

The quote "The family that prays together stays together" was constantly repeated in my youth days by my parents and elders. Their conscious effort to keep our family united and blessed was the family prayer time. And now after getting married and starting a family, I'm aware, as a parent, of the responsibility entrusted to me by God in living and helping my family to live a life of holiness.

The family plays a big role in shaping an individual. As the physical, economical, emotional needs are met, it is also a unit that nurtures spiritual needs. Just as the years of constant contact and communication with one's family keep relationships strong, constant contact with God nourishes us and bonds us with Him. Having known the importance of a communion with God, His blessings and graces, it is a challenge for us, parents, to make time every day for God with our children.

Being a stay-at-home mom, my day is packed with household chores and taking care of my children. I've been blessed with three little girls. The eldest one is 6 years, my second girl 4 years old and my little one 2 years old. My ardent desire is that they should be in a close relationship with their Creator. This keeps me constantly thinking of ways to talk about God and introduce them to a Catholic way of life.

Family prayer time is the initiative that we take and, in response, God assures us of His presence when we gather in His name. As I look back to the days when my parents made it a point to come together and pray, the blessings and graces that we received

through this communion was always seen in times of trials. It lifted us up every time we stumbled.

Our daily lives demand a lot of our time and energy. We all know, as working parents, that the job we do needs a lot of time, energy and effort. In a hectic day, all that we look for is some peace and rest when we get back home. I have experienced the days when my husband longed to take some rest after a heavy work. I, too, longed for a nap after a whole day's chores. Even after knowing how important it is to unite our family in prayer, we have struggled. The beauty was that, when we offered this struggle in our personal prayer and asked God to help us, we were faced with a lot of options. We worked out a time for prayer when we both were available and we found that time after putting our girls to bed. Then we spent time praying together and reading the Word of God.

Our family prayer not only helped us get closer to God but also got us closer to each other. Handling daily work, dealing with relationships was a big task, but the graces and strength received through prayer have been lifting us up. Praying for our spouse, our children, our parents was a blessing for them. Offering the people we would be with made us stronger in our relation with them. There have been times that we changed our prayer time based on our availability, but made sure that we did unite in prayer every day. A growing relationship with God does require some sacrifices, but the consequences of those sacrifices are priceless.

My children's spiritual growth has been an important thing to me. As they are small, it has been easy to bring them to have a relationship with God. I cannot expect all my three girls to sit for an entire rosary. So, we make sure that they spend a short, fruitful time in the evening to pray.

Here is something that I do on a daily basis. These are pointers that might help you.

- My husband and I initially started using the phrase 'talking to God' instead of 'praying' and encouraged our children to have such a conversation several times a day.
- We encouraged them to say a good morning prayer, to pray before meals, before studies and before going to bed.
- Stories of saints have always fascinated my little girls and their holy lives have assured them of blessings from God.
- Patron saints and angels have been given to us by God to help us live a life of holiness. Praying to them assures us of their constant intercession.

News Letter Book Post



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- As my two older girls have learnt the Our Father and the Hail Mary, we encourage them to say a decade each, along with the litany of their favourite saints.
- We encourage our children to make spontaneous prayers. It helps them naturally to bond with God.
- It's important for children to understand that our Heavenly Father is holy and pure, and that to have a tiny speck on our soul is unacceptable. We have been following a simple practice of examination of conscience when they tell God the times they have offended Him and ask for the grace to be holy like their favourite saints.
- A practice of praying to their guardian angel before leaving the house and at bed time has made them aware of their angel's presence.
- We make sure that we practice a hymn of their choice to be sung after their prayers.

With our uncertain lives, we have no other person whom we can turn to. It is our loving Father who holds our future. For the blessings that He has showered on us and our dear ones, our response is a life of holiness, which is possible only when we connect to Him. Every day is not the same. We have our own struggles, but it is a responsibility and privilege to raise a family for God.

Karen Mascarenhas