

Family Light

**Volume 7
Number 3
September 2013**



**The Family
That Prays Together
Stays Together**

Published by

Holy Cross Family Ministries

294, 3rd Cross,
6th Main Road,
Vivekanagar,

Bangalore - 560 047,
Tel: (080) 25714309.

Email: hcfmin@gmail.com

For Private Circulation



In this year of faith, the last three issues of *Family Light* reflected on 'Faith enlightened by the Word of God', 'Faith shown in action' and 'Faith renewed by the Sacraments'. In the present issue we reflect on 'Faith nourished by Prayer'.

In this post-modern world, finding quality time for the family becomes a challenge. In this case how can one find time for prayer? Added to that would be getting adolescent children interested in prayer. Then one may wonder about the relevance of prayer. Father Peyton, founder of our Family Ministries went around the world proclaiming: "the family that prays together stays together." This means that prayer enables the members of a family to place their trust in each other and to grow in faith. Faith nourished by prayer leads us "to Jesus through Mary."

The Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew 6: 9-13, is probably the most recognized example of Bible prayers that can renew our faith. By praying this and other Bible prayers with a sincere heart, we can quickly begin to see our faith restored and our spirits lifted.

Father Hervé Morissette gives us practical tips for family prayer. Parents have a role to play in fostering faith in the children. Family is a significant unit of the Church, needing to play a greater role in the Church. We need to approach God in a filial way. Jesus teaches his disciples to call God 'Abba' - Father - and experience the close union with the Father. Jesus encourages his followers to ask, seek and knock so that they receive, find and have the door opened (Matthew 7: 7).

Sharing on family prayer, George and Maggie and their daughter Deepa help us to view three generational perspectives of family prayer. In their interview we notice how:

- prayer can change the family for better;
- parents' prayer life has a positive influence on their children;
- prayer nourishes the spousal relationship and reconciliation gets easier;
- praying one's experiences can help live better;

What Father Peyton shared becomes the reality in the life of George and Maggie and their daughter. The family that prays together stays together, and grows together in trust, faith, understanding, joy, forgiveness and peace.

Family rituals are essential to grow in faith and communion. Jesus promises his presence to the families when he says: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18: 20)

Recently I asked a boy coming out of the school chapel, 'what did you do and what was your prayer?' His spontaneous and profound response was: "I prayed and I told God that I believe." Prayer surely nourishes one's faith and family prayer nourishes the whole family to grow in faith and communion.

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



HOW TO PRAY TOGETHER EVERY DAY WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Sometimes you may wonder if it is truly necessary for both of you to come together every day to pray with your children. You say, "We are not priests or religious. Daily prayer is for 'holy' people!"

To please God

First, be aware that, in spending a few moments together every day in prayer with your children, you do something which is very pleasing to God. That mere motivation should be enough to convince you about the importance of praying together as a couple. The Father rejoices to hear a prayer coming up from the small cell of the Church that you form.

And the Lord Jesus, who contracted a special alliance with you on your wedding day, is glad to see the praises that he addresses to his Father pass through your hearts. Such praises are in you as well as in him one of the most beautiful fruits of the Spirit. Don't hesitate to do that in your love for the Lord. Pray every day together in order to please him. The rest will be given to you in addition.

Let your prayer be as simple as possible

How to pray together? When to do it? Most families who pray together do it at the end of the day, either on their knees or standing before their home altar.

Don't wait till you have no more worry before starting to pray together. Don't wait either till you feel "on top of the world," otherwise you will always postpone your prayer to another day.

Don't hesitate to approach God as "normal" families who, like everybody else, are often tired or irritable because of the thousand occupations and vexations of the day. And remember that if you are too busy to pray, you are really too busy. Enjoy the wisdom of this poem by Grace L. Naessens:

"I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day;

I had so much to accomplish, I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me and grew heavier with each task;

Why doesn't God help me, I wondered; He answered, "You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak;

I wondered why God didn't show me - He said, "But

you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock;

God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't knock."

I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day;

I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray."

You need not try to formulate an original prayer every time you meet for that purpose. Make use of very simple prayers followed by a few invocations. Their regular repetition, done with all your heart, will give a certain solemnity to your family prayer and will also make it easier.

Some families prefer to pray a few decades of the rosary together. They are happy to pray for all the people they met during the day.

Others, who have taken part in the charismatic renewal, do not hesitate to go and join other families for one or a few hours of adoration during the night, once a month, as Jesus invited his disciples to do during his agony in the garden. In the silence of the night, these families like to intercede for all those who are dear to them, or for those they might have offended during the past weeks.



God will reward you a hundredfold

If you decide to pray together as a family or as a couple, it is your whole family life that will be renewed. For God is more generous than any human being. The more you turn to Him in prayer, the more you will please Him. You may be led to realize that your partner has a rich interior life about which you had no idea. Perhaps you thought that his great reserve would never allow you to see the treasures of inner strength lying in him/her and, one day, you felt the palpitations of his/her heart and the aspirations of his/her soul.

Prayer in common will also help you to reconcile with each other when you are inclined not to do so. Listen to this touching testimony from a husband, quoted by Fr. J. Caffarel in his article *The prayer of spouses*: "My wife and I were about to get separated after a long dispute. The atmosphere in the house was very tense. We could feel that we were about to make a mess of our lives, because of the pride that prevented each one of us to take the first step in reconciliation. However, at one moment, my wife suggested that we kneel down. Then, before God, we could not but rid ourselves of our pride and stop shouting at each other. In the presence of God, we asked each other's forgiveness by praying aloud. That night, we had such a deep sharing in truth. We could never imagine that it would ever be possible!" (1)

When you pray together regularly, you are reminded that everything you do for your children must never make you forget your fundamental state of married spouses. Even if your daily activities are thrilling, you are first of all a married couple who have decided to share their lives together. You are a couple who will not allow their family to split and run away from home.

You know very well that the quality of your family life depends very much on the fervor and the tactfulness of your conjugal love. So, do not hesitate to do everything you can to be truly happy as a married couple. Your prayer in common with your children will contribute much to your happiness.

Allow yourselves to be touched by the testimonies of couples who have decided to pray together at home. For it is evident that, if you pray together regularly, it will be easier for you to find the words and the attitudes needed to motivate your children to follow your example, as in the case of this cute little boy who used to hear his father telephoning. He could wait for his father to pick up the receiver and say, "Hello, hello, R.J. speaking..." One night, the father overheard his little boy saying his prayers while kneeling at his bedside: "Hello, hello, dear God, Johnny speaking... Our Father, who art in heaven..."



Fr. Hervé Morissette, csc

(1) J. Caffarel, *The Prayer of spouses*, In 'Notes on Prayer', no. 179, Oct. 1981.

COMMUNION-BUILDING PROCESSES AND SKILLS (COMPAS)



Communion-building Processes and Skills (COMPAS) was designed with a view to form a core group of committed couples with knowledge and basic skills required

for assisting couples and families in their process of becoming true communities of mature love and enabling care. It is between couples and among members of the family that we look for the most authentic expression of the ideal and miracle of true community. With this in mind, we intend to identify and train a core-group of couples who has both the time on hand and a sense of mission to be of assistance to couples and families in their growth process.

various orders of consciousness that underlie human living and how they affect one's handling of conflicts, and the crucial skill of giving enabling feedback in relationships. The practicum helped the participants to actually attempt to put into practice the principles that they learnt in the workshop.

The workshop generated a high amount of positive energy among the participants and between the participant-couples. The evaluation was overwhelmingly positive and reiterated the need for creating a core-group that is adequately trained and committed. Continued training of the selected couples will be held in the coming months.



The first introductory session of COMPAS for Couples took place on August 3rd and 4th at St. Mark's Road, Bangalore. Eight couples (including a couple from Pune) attended the workshop. The resource person was Fr. M.C. Abraham PhD, a sought-after psychotherapist and trainer. Fr. Abraham walked with the group members in helping them learn the various stages of communion building and its dynamics,

FAMILY PRAYER

We have interviewed for you Mr. Mrs George and Maggie C.L. and their daughter Deepa on Family Prayer.

Int.: I know, from my contacts with you, that you come together for family prayer every day in your home. What motivates you to be faithful to that practice?

George: Actually, it's our parents who motivated us to pray in the family, and we kept up this practice after both of us got married.

Int.: As it happens in every family, I suppose that, when your children reached the age of adolescence, they didn't like to join the family for prayer. Was there any objection on their part, when they were teenagers?

Maggie: When our children reached the age of adolescence, they were very cooperative but, at a later stage, our son was not much interested. He used to tell us: "My friends aren't going to church; they don't have prayer in their families. They lead a very grand life, with a lot of money and friends. They have everything, but they don't pray." So, Vivek was influenced by this mentality. Somehow, we didn't find that attitude in our daughter.

Int.: Can you tell us, you, Deepa, what attracted you to family prayer?

Deepa: I have always seen my parents complementing each other in everything they do. I always wondered how they could be so supportive of each other. I understood it was because they prayed together, and prayer gave them a lot of power. Initially, for me prayer was a kind of routine. O.K. I have to do it. But as I grew up, I started experiencing a lot of blessings from prayer. Of course, still I am not so committed, like my parents. I feel a bit lazy at times. O.K. But when I have to face a problem, I realize that I get a lot of help from prayer.

Int.: So, the three of you felt that prayer brings blessings to your family. Have you experienced any other advantage in praying together?

George: Yes, we experienced a real feeling of unity when we come together to pray.

Int.: I suppose that sometimes you have also experienced difficulties in your prayer? Can you recall some of these obstacles in coming together to pray?

Maggie: Nowadays, the situation is changing. Every day, our son comes late in the evening. We are not able to cope up with the same timings as we had in the past. So, we wait till he comes; otherwise, he will not join us in the family prayer.

George: Sometimes, we wait till 10.30 or 11.00 o'clock. We keep on reminding him to come earlier. Recently, we started having our dinner and we have our prayer after dinner with him. Yet, sometimes, we miss him. We find it difficult to convince him about family prayer, but his business takes a lot of his time.



Int.: Still you give importance to family prayer, even when the children happen to be absent. What are the main reasons for which you find family prayer important?

Maggie: We have experienced in our lives that, without God's help, we cannot do anything. Actually, we are lucky. Only with His strength we are able to do anything. Many times we have come across situations in which He really lifted us up. Sometimes, I felt that I was sinking. Then I could find some kind of help, some kind of power, even when I felt frustrated.

George: There were times when we were very low, but we didn't have a doubt that prayer is not going to help us. Till now that doubt has not come.

Deepa: When I was a small girl, I said to myself: "O.K., I have to do it every day and join the family prayer." But when I went for my X Standard exams, I don't know how much I prayed, so that I might truly concentrate in what I was doing. Then I really understood, for the first time in my life, the power of prayer. Though I am a person who prepares well for exams, I said: "O God, don't leave me. Help me to do well." Now that I am married, there are situations in which I feel a bit low. When I take time to pray the rosary or read a short passage from the Bible, I feel some kind of consolation.

Int.: Sometimes we hear people say: "My work is my prayer. Why should I spend some special time in prayer?" What do you think of this?

George: For me, when I go to my school by scooter, at times I pray spontaneously. I find it is a nice time to speak to God. It is not necessary to go to church to do that.

Int.: But if your son told you: "I don't come for family prayer; my work is a prayer." What would you say?

Maggie: Yes, there is a view: 'work is worship.' But in my experience, I feel that prayer helps me to do my work better. Earlier, I know that the quality of my work was not so good. Now, I realize that the quality of my work has improved thanks to prayer. For example, when I go to the kitchen in the morning to prepare

breakfast, I see the little crucifix which is there and I say, "Jesus, take control of me today." I feel the need of prayer in my work.

Deepa: Personally, I never felt that work can replace my prayer. When I am doing something important, I feel that I need to ask for God's help at least once.

Int.: When you are distracted in your prayer, what do you do to put your mind and heart in it?

Deepa: I sing a hymn in order to get focused.

Maggie: I just repeat, "Praise you, Jesus." I keep repeating this. I may not be able to concentrate on my prayer. So, I just praise Jesus.

George: I recall what my mother said once. She used to go and attend a prayer meeting every Sunday. At the end of the day, when she came back home, she would tell all of us: "For one week I got a tonic." So, when I hear any testimony, it strengthens me.

Int.: How do you understand the saying of Jesus about the need of praying continually (Cf Lk 18: 1)?

Maggie: Personally, when I go to the kitchen in the morning, I offer the whole day to the Lord. I believe that everything I do will be a prayer, if I seek to do His will. Even when I travel by bus, I raise my mind and heart to Jesus.

Int.: When you know that the Lord knows your needs, why do you still ask him to answer them?

Deepa: I really think that it is because of my lack of faith. I am aware that God knows all my needs. I don't have to worry about anything, but I still think that I should remind God again.

George: Only the baby who cries gets milk from his mother. That's why we have to go and ask the Lord to help us.

Maggie: When we ask, we humble ourselves. Our communion with God increases. I feel we should humble ourselves to ask for help.

Int.: What are the most frequent intentions for which you pray?

George: In the beginning of my married life, I used to ask for wisdom. I thought: if I can get wisdom, everything will be granted to me and I will be able to do the right things. And after so many years of married life, I still find that I lack wisdom.

Maggie: Personally, I used to find it difficult to surrender to God's will. In the course of time, though prayer, God gave me the grace to surrender to His will.

Deepa: My parents used to tell us often: "What you are today is because of God's mercy. They told us how important it is to hold on to God. I feel sometimes that I have a very shaky faith. So, I ask the Lord to increase my little faith.

Int.: In the past, families in the Church used to pray more often. Now this practice seems to be disappearing in many places. What do you think about the future of family prayer?

George: I personally think that the priests in our parishes should visit their people more often and pray with them. Thus the families would be motivated to pray together.

Maggie: It seems to me that parishes today are not in a position to motivate people to take part in various pastoral activities. So, I think that we should find activities adapted to their mentalities and needs.

Deepa: In their homilies, priests should also share testimonies about the need of praying together in the family.

The TRY PRAYER competition is a drawing contest conducted every year on a biblical theme with Catholic children from all the Holy Cross schools and parishes in India. This year, the theme was "Your faith has saved you." Here are the names of the happy winners:



Sanjay Reang, Mohapara, Tripura.



Kachang Janatia, Mohapara, Tripura.



J. Jesi Sweetey, Somarasampettai, T.N.



Augustus Russean, Chengalam, Kerala



Elamavan, Prattiur, T.N.



John P.A. Chengalam, Kerala

PASTORAL ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE HOLY CROSS FAMILY MINISTRIES IN INDIA



A motivation camp was conducted with 96 children in St. Louis Parish, Dahisar, Mumbai, from the 30th of April to the 4th of May 2013. The children were taught how to read the Gospel and apply it to their lives.



About 83 children took part in a faith formation program at St. Sebastian church, Somarasampettai, Trichy, T.N. on the 28th of October 2012. Special emphasis was given to the Word of God and devotion to Mary.



A three-day program was conducted in Mawkynew parish, Meghalaya, with the participation of 442 children. The program aimed at enhancing family prayer through the children.