

## Pastor's Pen: 2020: The Year of the Family

In the homily for Holy Family this year, I said that as pastor, my primary concern is the salvation of souls. Central to this is the health of our families. By 'family', I mean every household that is in our parish boundaries. I know some families are faithful and strong. I know some families struggle a bit. I know some families are in crisis. Each of these families should find a home in our parishes.

What is the end goal? Those who know me know that first and foremost is getting these families into full union and practice with Christ and the Church.

**Regular and faithful attendance at Mass is central to this.** Why? Because, what is given to us in the Body and of Blood of Christ can bind us in a way that no other thing can. A family rooted in the Eucharist will have the love of God binding them in a most powerful way. I talk much about this. I cannot emphasize it enough. It breaks my heart to see families cheat themselves out of the Eucharist by choosing lesser goods (money, leisure, athletics, rest) as if these things will give them what God can't. It further breaks my heart when children are put in the unwinnable position of being in Catholic education where they are taught the centrality of the Eucharist in the Catholic Faith and yet they are being guided by parents who actively undercut those lessons, reducing Mass to something they do on a weekday on their own...without Mom and Dad. It breaks my heart because I know the odds are that these children will drift away from the faith and will be cheated of a relationship with God that they will need to enter Heaven.

For the last couple years I have written much on this. I have begged, pleaded, and even threatened. However, as St. John Paul II said, "The Catholic Faith can only be proposed, not imposed." While I will continue to preach the necessity of Mass, I will not browbeat. I will say that there are eternal consequences for one's actions. Telling God weekly that there was something much more important than what He offers in the Eucharist has an eternal consequence.

**Praying together as a family is central.** Last weekend, we had a wonderful chance to consecrate our families to the Holy Family. I challenged each family to daily pray this prayer. We should love our spouses, parents, and children enough to take that few minutes to pray together, especially at the beginning of the day before we engage in whatever the day brings. This week, our parishes are offering Holy Water, chalk, and the prayer for blessing your homes for the Epiphany. On the weekend of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Feast of the Presentation, we will be doing Candlemas in which each family will take a blessed candle home. All of this is to build up the Catholic identity of our families. We challenge families this year to make use of the times of Eucharistic Adoration (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays from 9AM to 9PM) at SS. Peter and Paul. We challenge families to pray the before and after meal prayers as normal part of the day. We encourage our families to pray a rosary every day together (especially on one of the many car trips that dot our day). As with any habit, it will feel awkward at first. But the more and more it is engaged in, the more natural and necessary it will become.

There is much we can do to bolster our families. Right now, I want to begin with Mass and prayer. God has got to be part of the equation in the good health of our families. Let us start there.

***Some Families Prayers to begin the sanctification of our families:***

***Prayer before Meals:***

Bless us O Lord, and these your gifts, which we have received from your bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen

***Prayer after Meals:***

We give you thanks, Almighty God, for these your gifts we have received from your bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen

***Consecration to the Holy Family:***

O Lord Jesus Christ, you lived in the home of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth. There you grew in age, wisdom, and grace as you prepared to fulfill your mission as our Redeemer. We entrust our family to you.

O Blessed Mary, you are the Mother of our Savior. At Nazareth you cared for Jesus and nurtured Him in the peace and joy of your home. We entrust our family to you.

O St Joseph, you provided a secure and loving home for Jesus and Mary, and gave the model of fatherhood while showing the dignity of work. We entrust our family to you.

Holy Family, we consecrate ourselves and our family to you. May we be completely united in a love that is lasting, faithful, and open to the gift of new life. Help us grow in virtue, to forgive one another from our hearts, and to live in peace all our days. Keep us strong in faith, preserving in prayer, diligent in our work, and generous to those in need. May our home, O Holy Family, truly become a domestic church where we reflect your example in our daily life. Amen.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, pray for us! *Written by Archbishop Lori*

***A Prayer for Families***

O dear Jesus,

I humbly implore You to grant Your special graces to our family.

May our home be the shrine of peace, purity, love, labor and faith.

I beg You, dear Jesus, to protect and bless all of us, absent and present, Living and dead.

O Mary,

loving Mother of Jesus, and our Mother, pray to Jesus for our family,

for all the families of the world, to guard the cradle of the newborn,  
the schools of the young and their vocations.

Blessed Saint Joseph,

holy guardian of Jesus and Mary, assist us by your prayers in all the necessities of life.

Ask of Jesus that special grace which He granted to you, to watch over our home at the pillow of the sick and the dying, so that with Mary and with you, heaven may find

our family unbroken in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Amen.