

# LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF YOUR DOMESTIC CHURCH

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*Prayers, reflections, meditations and family activities*

## **Consecration to the Holy Family**

*Composed by Archbishop William Lori, Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus*

O Lord Jesus,  
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 us a model of fatherhood  
while showing us 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 to grow in virtue,  
to forgive one another from our hearts,  
and to live in peace all our days.  
Keep us strong in faith, persevering in prayer,  
diligent in our work, and generous toward 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!*

To cultivate life as a domestic church, a family must deliberately welcome God into its home. This program has been created to help each family do this. In the pages that follow, you will find monthly themes, reflections, meditations, family projects and Scripture verses designed to help each family place God and the Catholic faith at the center of its life. Through prayer and reflection each family has the opportunity to grow in holiness together.

### **Adapting This Program to Your Family**

The Family Fully Alive program is designed to be flexible to meet the continuously changing needs of your family. This booklet is laid out for the opening of the Church's liturgical year in December, with the season of Advent, but you can start during any month of the year, completing projects and saying prayers at the times and places most suitable for your family. Some suitable times would be after family dinner or shortly before bedtime, making it easier to deal with the challenge of bringing the entire family together.

You may wish to read a month's theme, reflection, meditation and Scripture reading all at one time. Alternatively, you may set aside a regular time each Sunday of the month to go through the "Breaking Open the Theme" reflection, meditation, Scripture passage and family project successively over four weeks. Please note that some family projects require advance time and preparation over the course of the month, so it is always a good idea to read those in advance. You can also choose to utilize the meditations and questions for spiritually engaging conversations with your children during family dinners. Another approach could include inviting over other families on Sunday to offer this prayer together and to build community among families. Whichever method your family chooses, we encourage you to set aside a regular time each Sunday to pray together as a family, using this book as a resource.

### **Suggested Weekly Format**

Designate a space in your home where your family can gather together for prayer. The space should be free from distractions and, if possible, decorated with religious images and sacramentals to help direct the family's thoughts toward God. Open each week with the Our Father, Hail Mary or one of the other prayers included in the appendix of this book. Next, ask a family member to read the theme. Then, proceed with the month's prayer and activities. Then, offer some petitions with each family member, adding personal intentions to the prayer. Conclude together by reciting Archbishop Lori's Consecration to the Holy Family (see page 9). Feel free to add to

this basic structure other devotions, songs and whatever your family finds spiritually enriching for prayer.

### **Role of Children in Prayer**

Children of all ages should be encouraged to have an active role in family prayer. With younger children, parents can read the Scripture passage aloud and then ask them to draw an image inspired by the reading. They can then talk about the image and its meaning. Parents might also read the monthly prayers and projects in advance in order to provide clearer explanations and adjust the materials to their children's level of understanding and involvement.

Older children can read the Scripture passage, reflection or meditation, while parents can direct the conversation that follows afterward, making sure each child understands the meditation questions and has time to answer it. Families with older children may also want to use the traditional practice of *Lectio Divina*, a holy reading of Scripture, by having one person read the verse aloud slowly and with reverence. Then, ask someone else to read the verse a second time. While it is being read, everyone should begin to meditate on its meaning. Next, all family members should be invited to silently choose a sentence or word from the passage that strikes them. Finally, everyone should contemplate these words and ask God how they apply to his or her life.

If there are children of multiple ages, then a family may want to do a combination of prayer methods at the same time, giving young children the freedom to simply listen as attentively as possible and offer their own prayers when appropriate. Also, consider alternating between formal prayer and informal prayer that might be more accessible to younger children, like songs and conversation to God.

### **Additional Faith Resources**

In addition to the monthly themes and prayers, this booklet has additional sections to help build your family's faith and inspire family prayer. There is an appendix of "Prayers for Every Family" (p. 54) and "Liturgical Celebrations Throughout the Year" (p. 66). Discuss with your family the importance of such prayers and liturgical feast days by considering the reasons why we pray and how we should pray as a family. A short exploration of these questions, along with a summary of Catholic beliefs and additional meditations on family life, are found in the back of this book.

## Being a Family of Families

At the heart of this program is the mission to enrich both the domestic church and the parish. Through prayer and activity each week, families build upon the graces received through their participation in the sacramental life of their parishes. In turn, each family's active contribution to parish life is what makes the Church a "family of families."<sup>36</sup> To accomplish this integration further, participate in other programs and activities of the Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative of the Knights of Columbus. Such domestic church activities include:

- Holy Family Prayer Program
- 5th Sunday Rosary Program
- Journey to the Inn: An Advent Celebration
- Father's Day Affirmation of Wedding Vows
- Consecration to the Holy Family

For more information, visit [kofc.org/domesticchurch](http://kofc.org/domesticchurch).

## Getting Started

Sometimes the best way to start a new routine is to take a deep breath and jump right in, realizing that it may take some trial and error to get it right. This advice is especially important for families who are not accustomed to praying together.

The following month-by-month guide opens with December to coincide with the beginning of the Church's liturgical year, which begins with the first Sunday of Advent. Because Advent is a season of new beginnings culminating in the remembrance of the Savior's birth at Christmas, it is an excellent time to begin a new family prayer practice. But you are free to begin the Family Fully Alive program in any month of the year.

However you decide to incorporate the Family Fully Alive program into your family's busy schedule, one thing is certain — it will change your life. The monthly cycle of themes, prayers, reflections, meditations and family projects will help your family focus on the important things in the world. They will help build your domestic church as a place of faith, hope and charity, where each member will grow with grace toward his or her full potential in God.