

JULY – WITNESSING TO THE FAITH

Because families play an indispensable role in the new evangelization, we want to share our faith with other families and those who are far away from God.

Breaking Open the Theme

Everyone — no matter their role or station in life — is called to holiness. Holiness in the family is a response of love to the graces God lavishes upon them every day through the sacrament of marriage. “A love that fails to grow is at risk. Growth can only occur if we respond to God’s grace through constant acts of love, acts of kindness that become ever more frequent, intense, generous, tender and cheerful. ... The gift of God’s love poured out upon the spouses is also a summons to constant growth in grace.”⁶⁶

As the saints have shown so well throughout history, this constant growth in grace leads inevitably to witness in our daily lives. This witness is the primary way to evangelize in our time. It is through living our lives as Catholic families, devoted to our faith, to each other and to helping those in need, that we best evangelize in a world that so often seems reluctant to hear this good news.

The family must put comfort and convenience aside “to risk sharing in the suffering of others” who are on the margins.⁶⁷ Who are those on the margins? They may be people we never met, the poor, the immigrant and the unborn. They may be people who we know that are lonely and feel isolated. They may be our own family members who are difficult to love because of their personalities. Paradoxically, the margins are not very far from us, but all around us and sometimes even within us. Those who are on the margins are those wounded and far off from God’s love and his Church.⁶⁸ The family must encounter these margins and mend them with its witness to God’s love. To vary slightly a famous phrase of St. John Paul II, we could say, “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors of the domestic church for Christ!”⁶⁹

Meditation

From Pope Benedict XVI’s Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family

The new evangelization depends largely on the Domestic Church (cf. *ibid.* [*Familiaris Consortio*], n. 65). In our time, as in times past, the eclipse of God, the spread of ideologies contrary to the family and the degradation of sexual ethics are connected. And just as the eclipse of God and the crisis of the family are linked, so the new evangelization is inseparable from the Christian family. The family is indeed the way of the Church because it is the “human space” of our encounter with Christ.

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Spouses “not only receive the love of Christ and become a saved community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ’s love to their brethren, thus becoming a saving community.” The family founded on the Sacrament of Marriage is a particular realization of the Church, saved and saving, evangelized and evangelizing community. Just like the Church, it is called to welcome, radiate and show the world the love and presence of Christ. The reception and transmission of divine love are realized in the mutual commitment of the spouses, in generous and responsible procreation, in the care and education of children, work and social relationships, with attention to the needy, in participation in church activities, in commitment to civil society. The Christian Family to the extent it succeeds in living love as communion and service as a reciprocal gift open to all, as a journey of permanent conversion supported by the grace of God, reflects the splendor of Christ in the world and the beauty of the divine Trinity.⁷⁰

1. How can we as a family better communicate Christ’s presence to others in word and action, thereby becoming a “saving community” that shares the love of Christ?
2. Remembering that the “new evangelization” is not new in content but “new in ardor, methods and expression,” what are some ways we as a family can evangelize, and what truths might we express?
3. Why is family such an effective voice for addressing important issues?

Scripture Readings — Psalm 148:1-6, 11-13

A song of praise to the Lord

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
 praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all you his angels;
 give praise, all you his hosts.
Praise him, sun and moon;
 praise him, all shining stars.
Praise him, highest heavens,
 you waters above the heavens.
Let them all praise the LORD’s name;
 for he commanded and they were created,

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Assigned them their station forever,
set an order that will never change.
Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all who govern on earth;
Young men and women too,
old and young alike.
Let them all praise the LORD's name,
for his name alone is exalted,
His majesty above earth and heaven.

Family Project

Invite a family member, friend or acquaintance to Mass, adoration or a faith-forming event with you. Also, write down ideas for small sacrifices and offerings on individual pieces of paper. Place these in a small bowl. Every day, have each member of the family randomly select one piece of paper to offer the sacrifice listed for the intentions of a relative or friend. At the end of the month, each family member might send a note to the person for whom they made the offering, telling him or her about their prayers and sacrifices.