

## MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The pastoral letter *Unleash the Gospel* holds up a vision of families who “actively seek the spiritual and social renewal of their neighborhoods, schools and places of work” by displaying “a strikingly counter-cultural way of living” (p.32). What would counter-cultural families look like? What is the image of a Catholic family today who can bring renewal to society?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus faces a cultural challenge. Hypocrites try to ensnare Him with trick questions. Who will He honor: Caesar or God? The culture of Rome or the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus responds cleverly and faithfully: “*Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God*” (Matt 22:21). The coin the Pharisee held up was struck bearing Caesar’s image. We instead are created bearing God’s image: Rational beings, with the freedom to do the Father’s will ... or not, and made for community and sacrificial love of neighbor. Even just *believing* this runs counter to today’s secular culture! But “spiritual and social renewal” demands action, too.



*Unleash the Gospel* charges families to take action to re-claim our identity in relationship to God, not to secular culture, to be the primary witnesses of the Faith to children and society.

We can promote counter-cultural living by attending Mass as a family and creating time to reclaim the sacred nature of regular shared family meals. Having regular family prayer time is profoundly counter-cultural and helps counter the influences of materialism, moral relativism and other challenges of our time. Making reconciliation a lived reality in our homes, not only in receiving the Sacrament but in mutual sacrifice, mercy, forgiveness and love, which put us in stark opposition to popularized inclinations to disrespect, vengeance and personal attacks among people who disagree.

Daily family prayer; Homes filled with forgiveness; Sacred times shared with loved ones; Keeping the great commandments by loving God and our neighbor. These actions *are* living in the image of God, in imitation of Christ, and repaying to God what belongs to God. These actions can renew us spiritually and as a society.