

Unleash Prayer in Our Families

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“The single most powerful thing Catholic parents can do for their children is teach them to pray” wrote columnist Nancy Flanders in the *Catholic Digest*. “By teaching your children to pray, you give them the opportunity for a close relationship with God and the achievement of the ultimate goal - getting to heaven.”

Unleash the Gospel emphatically encourages family prayer. Families are the heart of the church’s mission. They are the “domestic church,” the first and most important setting where we begin to know Jesus and experience life in the Church. Archbishop Vigneron wrote: “Family life is a daily ‘liturgy’ of prayers, sacrifices, acts of love, service, forbearance, and forgiveness - all nourished and transformed by participation in the sacraments. It is impossible to overestimate the centrality of the family in the passing on of faith from one generation to the next” (p.24). And passing on the faith starts with family prayer: “The first priority is ... participation in the Sunday liturgy and daily prayer” (p.25).

Mothers and fathers teach first by their example. *Unleash the Gospel* charges: “Parents: be the primary witnesses of the faith to your family” (p.33). We should allow our children to see us pray to show them that prayer is a normal and necessary part of life. A great feature of the TV series *Blue Bloods* is that almost every episode ends with the proudly Catholic Regan family praying together.

Unleash the Gospel says: “The role of fathers in particular is essential, since one of the greatest factors influencing a child’s future practice of the faith is the religious involvement of his or her father” (p.25). Mothers, fathers, and grandparents leading their families in prayer is essential to a family’s Christian identity and the Church’s mission: “When unchurched families - including relatives - come to your home, recognize that even a prayer before meals, or simple words of thanksgiving to God offered by each member of the family, can be a powerful witness to the presence of Christ among you” (p.26).

Unleash the Gospel challenges us to “Commit to developing family prayer time. Make time to listen, share, and grow together as a family guided by the Lord in times of joy and trial. Trust and develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Seek out simple ways to pray that fit your family, giving primacy to the family rosary, Scripture reflection, especially the Sunday readings, and devotions. Seek out and initiate opportunities to pray with other families” (p.33).

The benefits of regular family prayer are fuller faith lives and deeper relationships with Jesus Christ for each member, but also a more joyful family life together.