

Bringing Jesus Home Means Getting Family Life “Rite.” **Dr. Greg Popcak**

Last time, I wrote about the 2019 Symposium on Catholic Family Life & Spirituality that was tasked with renewing Catholic family life. This time, let’s focus on the vision for family spirituality that grew out of that work.

Family life is incredibly important to the life of the Church. Pope Francis said that “the Church is a family of families” (*Amoris Laetitia*, No. 87). The Church can only be as strong, effective, and faithful as the families that make it up.

Unfortunately, research shows that Catholic families don’t look that different from our non-Catholic counterparts. Although many Catholics pray *individually* and have a meaningful, *personal* relationship with their Catholic faith, most Catholics don’t understand how our faith is supposed to make any difference at home. In fact, we tend to think of family life as a distraction from living a holy life. We don’t know how to connect with the grace hiding right below the surface of the things we do all day to run a household and raise our kids.

Respectfully, I would suggest that it’s time for that to change. Whatever else God might be calling our attention to during this pandemic, it’s pretty clear that he has put domestic church life (i.e., Catholic family life) in the spotlight. With this renewed focus on the domestic church, it’s time every Catholic household learned to celebrate, *The Liturgy of Domestic Church Life*.

The “Liturgy” of Family Life

To the degree that we think of it at all, we tend to think of “liturgy” as a passive thing. We go to church. Liturgy happens. We go home. But that’s not the way it’s supposed to be. Liturgy is a verb. It’s a specific act of worship through which God heals the damage that sin does to our relationships.

For instance, in the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, God enables us to be in communion with him and makes communion with others possible. In turn, *The Liturgy of Domestic Church Life*, enables us to bring Jesus home so he can transform our households into little outposts of Christian love that are empowered to consecrate the world to him.

A liturgy is made up of different building blocks called “rites.” There are three rites that make up the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life: *The Rite of Christian Relationships*, the *Rite of Family Rituals*, and the *Rite of Reaching Out*. Respectively, these three rites help us live out the priestly, prophetic, royal missions we received at baptism.

The Rite of Christian Relationship

A priest offers sacrifices that connect heaven and earth and help people have a deeper connection with God. *The Rite of Christian Relationships* invites families to practice the common priesthood of our baptism by encouraging us to make little sacrifices throughout each day that let God's love fill our homes and help us consecrate everything we do to Christ.

Family spirituality doesn't begin with family prayer. It begins with letting your faith be the source of the warmth in your home. The Rite of Christian Relationships encourages families to overcome the sinful and selfish ways we often behave at home and, instead, learn to love each other as generously and as joyfully as Christ loves us.

The Rite of Family Rituals

Second, through the Rite of Family Rituals, families live out the prophetic mission of baptism. A prophet calls people to live in godly ways. When families develop strong rituals for working, playing, talking, and praying together, they teach each other how a Christian person is called to relate to prayer, work, relationships and leisure. Family rituals aren't just a good thing to for families to do. They are a catechism for Christian living.

The Rite of Reaching Out

To reign with Christ is to serve with him (Lumen Gentium, #36). Through the *Rite of Reaching Out*, families exercise our royal mission of baptism by looking for ways to bless others with the gifts we have been given. Those gifts include our witness of service to each other in the home, our hospitality, and our generosity in sharing our time, treasure and talents with others.

In future articles, we'll explore the different parts of the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life. For now, the most important takeaway is that God wants to be an intimate part of your family life. He wants to be present in every interaction and part of everything you do at home. Having encountered Christ in the Eucharist, the next step is to consciously invite Jesus into your home so he can transform your messy family life into a dynamic domestic church—an outpost of love and grace in the world.

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