



BUILDING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

Living the Faith at Home

SEPTEMBER'S THEME: THE HOLY CROSS

Introducing “Building the Domestic Church”!

“Building the Domestic Church” is a weekly newsletter from your Faith Formation staff at Holy Rosary (Sr. Stella Abellon in Children's Ministry, Bridget Bicek in Youth Ministry, Robert King in Adult Evangelization, with help from Deyette Swegle and Sarah Goins). We'll provide resources to live out your Catholic faith at home, especially when many of us are spending more time than normal at home.

We drew our name from an observation of the Second Vatican Council: "The family, is so to speak, the domestic church." (Lumen Gentium 11) When we say "family", we think of all the different forms that households can take: parents with children of varying ages, single adults who live alone or in community together, older adults whose children have formed households of their own, married couples without children, and various other ways people live their lives rooted in a place and in relationships with others.

We can think of the Church living at four interrelated levels: the universal level, in which the Catholic Church is present all around the world, one Church, one Faith expressed in different nations, cultures, and languages; the local or diocesan level, in which a bishop presides over the activities of the Church in a particular geographic place; the parish level, in which a pastor connects a particular community together through shared liturgies and ministries; and the domestic Church, which is the foundation of the rest because it is where the Catholic Faith is lived out in our real-world actions and relationships. The Domestic Church is where we first encounter Christ, receive his love, and share it with our neighbors.

We hope this weekly newsletter will help you to encounter Christ in your own homes, receive his love in your own hearts, and share his love with your family.

How Does it Work?

We recommend taking some time together as a household, although you can benefit from reflecting individually as well. You can take as little as ten minutes, or set aside a full hour, or anything in between.

1. Read the Scriptures together. Take turns reading out loud, if you can
2. Read the reflection on the readings
3. Discuss the reflection and the Scriptures, either as a household or in groups according to your age. You can use the Breakout Questions as starting points for your discussion

Readings for September 13, the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time:

- **Sirach 27:30–28:7** — *The vengeful will suffer vengeance, but forgive and your own sins will be forgiven*
- **Psalms 103** — *The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger and rich in compassion*
- **Romans 14:7-9** — *Both in life and in death, we are the Lord's*
- **Matthew 18:21-35** — *We must forgive others, as God has forgiven us*

The full text of the readings can be found at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091320.cfm>

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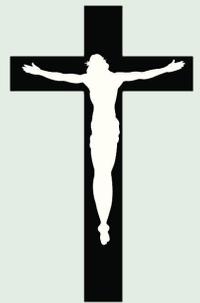
Reflection on the Readings by Fr. Matthew Oakland

Nineteen years ago this week almost 3,000 people died in a set of horrific acts of violence. I can remember September 11, 2001 so clearly—the shock, the disbelief, and yes, the anger. With that anger the sins of others became my own. In some ways it is a natural response to injustice, to sins committed against us, others we know and love, even strangers. But anger, on its own, can't set things right, it can't bring about justice. Instead it continues to tear us apart or tear the other down, even if only mostly in our minds as we hold onto a grudge that slips out occasionally with biting words.

In this week's Gospel, Jesus reminds us not just of the importance of forgiveness, but of its necessity. If we do not forgive our brothers and sisters from the heart, the anger will continue to plague us. Forgiveness doesn't mean that it didn't happen. Forgiveness doesn't mean that it wasn't wrong. Forgiveness is a gift—unearned, undeserved—to the other, to God, and to ourselves. It is mercy which heals our wounds, and restores us to life. Sometimes it is easy to let it pass, other times we hold onto it for much longer, but forgiveness brings about the freedom that Christ desires for us. It is why He commanded us to love one another, even our enemies, because He wants us to live in peace with one another, with Him, and with ourselves. Anger robs us of that peace, and separates us not just from the one who wronged us, but from the Lord, too—as seen on Judgment Day when it will rob us of salvation, as well. The choice is ours—isolated and bound captive by the wounds of the past, or in communion and holding onto the promise of hope with the Lord.

September's Theme: The Holy Cross

Every month, we'll propose a theme that all the households of our parish can live out together. September's theme is the Holy Cross, centered on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on Monday, September 14. This feast celebrates both Christ's victory over sin and death that he accomplished through the cross, and also the recovery of relics of Jesus's cross by St. Helena.



Questions for Parents:

- Are there any ways that your household has developed to tell each other that they are forgiven? Is there a phrase, a gesture, or a gift that you give to show that Christ's mercy has healed the wound?
- What are some times you have forgiven your spouse or your child(ren), despite being deeply hurt? How did you offer that forgiveness? How did it restore life to your relationship?

Questions for Children:

- When is the last time you forgave someone for hurting you? How does it feel after forgiving someone?
- Have you recently asked for forgiveness? Did you ask Jesus for forgiveness? How does it feel to know that Jesus forgives you?

Questions for Adults:

- Think of a time you have received forgiveness. Did their forgiveness heal anything inside you? How did it change your relationship?
- What are the most difficult wrongs or wounds to forgive? Why do they hurt so deeply? How can Jesus help you heal those wounds?

Questions for Teens:

- Reflect on a situation where someone hurt you. Can you name the specific action or words that hurt you? Is there someone you trust that you can talk about that hurt with, or can you write about it in a journal?
- Before talking to others, we should bring our pain to Jesus. How can you offer your wounds to Jesus? Can you ask him to heal you?