Ah, the end of summer. So bittersweet, as we say goodbye to a time of vacations and a slower pace of life with visits to the beach, waterparks and more. Yet, we say hello to new beginnings, new possibilities, and many exciting things coming this fall. Parish festivals, important celebrations, and the holidays are on the horizon. New school years, friendships, and family gatherings all wait in the wings. How do we best prepare for this season and all of its potential, making sure to “get the most” out of fall, and have no regrets in December? In this article, I’d like to offer some practical advice to families based on our Catholic faith, and I hope to put it into practice in my own home as well! If you’ve been reading these, you know I like lists. So, here’s the “top 3” ways to get the most out of fall.

#1: Make God top priority. No surprise here! By making God the anchor of your ship, He will help you make sure you are involved in the right things, not overburdening your family, and experience all that He wants to offer you. As Jesus promises us, “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly,” - John 10:10 (NABRE), and “Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing,” - John 15:7 (NABRE). Jesus wants you to have life to the full now and in the life to come! Stay close to Him, and He will never disappoint. How do we do this? Sunday Mass, regular Confession, daily prayer, and whatever else we can do to follow Him. The closer we are, the better life is—hold nothing back! Put these things on your calendar FIRST, then proceed to step 2...

#2: Prioritize activities and events as a family. Sometimes the new season can be overwhelming, as there is so much we

August marks the beginning of not just a new school year, but also a new “ministry year”, with parishes kicking off many events & programs
want to do. Sometimes we have trouble narrowing it down! Yet, I think back often to a “family needs survey” conducted in our diocese nearly two years ago. One of the top 3 challenges facing families was “overly demanding schedules.” Don’t let this happen in your home. You have complete control of this! By prioritizing events and activities together, you can decide what to say “yes” to, as well as what to say “no” to. Have a family meeting where you decide what’s important to you this coming fall, then adjust accordingly based on schedules, finances, and most importantly, the values of your home. Which activities will help you grow as a disciple of Jesus? Which may hold you back? Taking time to make the right decisions ends up saving us time in the end.

#3: Plug into the right resources. You only know what you know, so take time to examine where you’re getting information from. If only from certain sources, you may not be aware of all that’s available in your area. For example, do you read your parish bulletin every week? Are you reading local papers to see what’s happening in the community? The Catholic Lighthouse is a GREAT resource to know what’s going on around the diocese, especially upcoming parish picnics. If on social media, do you subscribe to the Diocese of Victoria and Family Evangelization Facebook Pages? If not, I encourage you to do so. Oftentimes, the best stuff is happening in our own backyard! And it’s also a little easier on the pocketbook. Which reminds me of another top challenge facing families, which was finances. This is also oftentimes within our control. Prioritize and stay local to save some cash for the future or “rainy days”.

I hope these top 3 help you and your loved ones get the most out of the next 5 months! Let’s do our best to not reach Christmas exhausted, but refreshed and renewed by what we experienced in the fall. Let’s make the most of each day, for as Scripture also tell us, “Man is but a breath, his days are like a passing shadow,” - Psalm 144:4. God Bless! Written by Justin Reyes, Director of Family Evangelization, 361-573-0828 x 2265, jreyes@victoriadiocese.org, www.victoriadiocese.org/family.

### Does your marriage need a boost?
Choosing to L.O.V.E. weekends have helped 200+ couples take their marriage to the next level since the retreat’s founding in 2009. The next weekend is October 8-10 in Victoria at the Spiritual Renewal Center. For more information, and to view an informational video by Bishop Gary Janak, visit www.victoriadiocese.org/choosingtolove. Cost is $275 per couple, meals included.

### Morning of Reflection for Families w/ Bishop Cahill!
Saturday, October 23 at Holy Family Catholic Church in Victoria. Prayer, fun, and games. Register your family for $20 at www.victoriadiocese.org/fiat

### Strength for the Journey
A Grief Ministry for Parents who have lost children
Monthly meetings from 6:30-8pm at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Ganado. Upcoming Dates: 8/10, 9/14, 11/9, 12/14
https://www.victoriadiocese.org/grief-support

### Surviving Divorce
For all who have experienced divorce or separation. Weekly meetings start on Thursday, Sep 9 at 7pm at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. More information and registration at victoriadiocese.org/survivingdivorce

All for the Sacred and Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, all through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, all in union with St. Joseph. Amen.