“Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humor,” - St. Thomas More. This quote is so simple, yet so profound, and Pope Francis says that he also prays a daily prayer by St. Thomas More for good humor. Why is humor so important for our lives? And why does it seem that God created us with this sense of humor that we are meant to share?

Even the book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a “time to weep” and a “time to laugh” in chapter 3, verse 4. Humor is part of the rhythm of life, the human existence, and oh so important to family life. St. Paul himself tells us to “rejoice always” in his letter to the Thessalonians. And our own Pope Francis admonishes us that “Christianity spreads through the joy of disciples who know that they are loved and saved.”

How then are we, as disciples, and as families, able to retain that joy from God as we encounter challenges in our daily lives? And once we have it, share it with others? I’d like to offer 5 ways to maintain joy in our homes, and if it is burning brightly, it will naturally lead to us sharing God’s love with others. For as Jesus tells us, “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.” - Matthew 5:14 (NABRE)
#1: Date time for mom and dad. I had a friend in ministry who traveled for his role. No matter where he went in the country, or how many days he was gone, every Friday night was always date night for he and his wife. He described this as essential for his family. If mom and dad aren’t doing well in their love for each other, the children will suffer. Make sure mom and dad have date time, even if those are stay-in nights. That time will overflow into greater love and affection for the children.

#2: “Silly time” in the home. Do you have time where your kids get to see the fun side of you? I’ve been letting my boys in more on this side of me, and I find that it’s drawing us closer as father and sons. Part of it involves teaching them when to take things serious, and when to relax, but isn’t that what the verse from Ecclesiastes points us to as well? Let’s make sure our kids don’t see just see us as authority figures, but loving parents as well who want to enjoy, laugh, and play with them.

#3: Vacations. This isn’t just important for fun in the home, but even for our kids to be successful in life. I had a friend who once participated in a leadership training day. They asked all the participants to take a step forward if they had family vacations growing up, and not just to see family. That step represented a step ahead in life, because it was shown statistically that family vacations led to successful children. Let’s take time away with our kids not just for fun, but also for their future.

#4: Prayer that makes sense for your family. We all have families with different ages, temperaments, preferences, and schedules. The key is not all of us praying in the same way, but all of us making time to pray to stay close to God who is the source of all love, joy, and life. What can your family do each day to pray together?

#5: Mass on Sundays. I’m sure you’re not surprised I ended with this, but the Eucharist is “the source and summit” of our faith. Apart from Christ, we can do “nothing” as He tells us in John chapter 15. He is the vine, we are the branches. Make sure your family is at Mass on Sunday to help keep God as the anchor of your life and joy.

What do you and your family do for fun? I’d love to build a list to share with others in the diocese. Can you please email me at jreyes@victoriadiocese.org? I’d love to hear from you! In the meantime, let’s all keep track of the 5 items above and how we’re doing with them. By prioritizing our family, we are following God’s command to love our neighbor, beginning with those in our home. As St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) once said, at the end of her 1984 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, “And so, my prayer for you is that truth will bring prayer in our homes, and from the foot of prayer will be that we believe that in the poor it is Christ. And we will really believe, we will begin to love. And we will love naturally, we will try to do something. First in our own home, next door neighbor in the country we live, in the whole world.” God bless!