

# Building Your Christian Home

## *Families and the Mission of Jesus*



## A Reflection for Couples Beginning Marriage

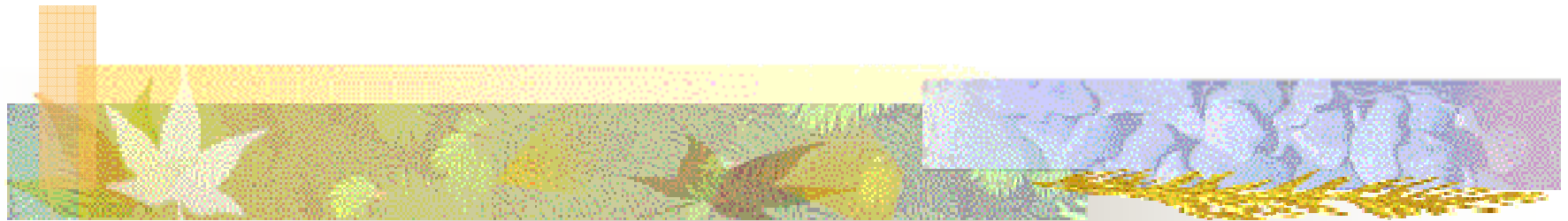
BASED ON *FOLLOW THE WAY OF LOVE*

U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' PASTORAL MESSAGE TO FAMILIES

Archdiocese of Baltimore  
Marriage and Family Enrichment

“A family is our first community and most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world.”

*- Follow the Way of Love, U.S. Catholic Bishops*

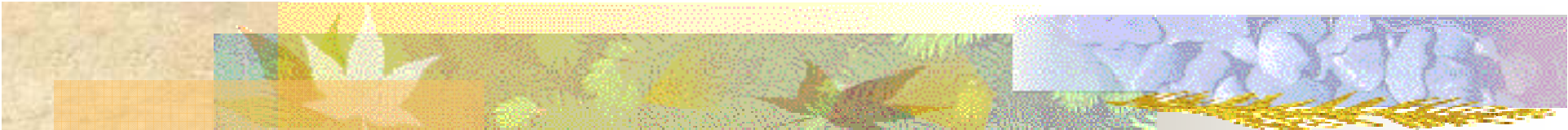


Your Family: “Domestic Church”



Where two or three are gathered  
in my name, there I am. Mt. 18:20

- We give the name *Church* to the people whom the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love, and through whose lives his saving presence is made known.
- As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of the church.



"There is one institution which cannot be replaced by anything else, which lies at the root of the happiness of mankind, of peace, progress and civilization:

It is the family which is the first cell and the first center of life, the first home.

The family is an image of God, of the Blessed Trinity."

-- Cardinal Joseph Cardijn,  
founder of the Christian Family Movement



# Wisdom of Early Church

- “If we regulate our households (properly)...we will also see fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church. Therefore, it is possible for us to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives.”

■ St. John Chrysostom, 4th Century



## Families: all shapes and sizes

- “A family is not holy because it is perfect, but because it begins again each day to follow the way of love.”
  - U.S. Catholic Bishops




# Finding a way to pray together

- Explore devotions and customs that are meaningful to you.
- Couples from differing churches or religions can discover ways to access God's grace in their homes.
- Each partner should continue to learn about his or her own faith tradition and customs and incorporate the best of them into their family faith practices.



# Holiness: Family Style

- “Everything important happens at home.”
  - “We come to church to ritualize and celebrate it, to remind ourselves of the sacredness of every meal, every act of forgiveness, every prayer for healing, all the ordinary actions of our lives.”
    - Kathleen Chesto, Family Life Minister



You carry out the mission of the church of the home in ordinary ways when:

- You **believe** in God and that God cares about you.
- You **love** and never give up believing in the value of another person.



# You foster intimacy

- Between husband and wife
- Extending to the whole family



## You evangelize by

- professing faith in God
- acting in accord with Gospel values
- setting an example



# You educate

- You impart knowledge of the faith
  - by sharing stories
  - by your example
  - by connecting your story to the Story of Salvation
- Young and old help each other acquire values necessary for Christian living.
- Your wisdom and theirs come from the same Spirit.



# You pray together

- thanking God for blessings
- reaching for strength
- asking for guidance in crisis and doubt



# You serve one another

- often sacrificing your own wants for the other's good.
- You struggle to take up your cross and carry it with love.



# You celebrate

- birthdays
- weddings
- births and deaths
- a first day of school
- a graduation
- rites of passage into adulthood
- new jobs
- family reunions
- surprise visits
- holy days and holidays
- You come together when tragedy strikes and in joyful celebration of the sacraments.



**You forgive.**

**You seek reconciliation.**

**You welcome the stranger.**

**You give drink to the thirsty.**

**You give food to the hungry.**



# You act justly in your community

- when you treat others with respect
- stand against discrimination and racism
- and work to overcome hunger, poverty, homelessness, illiteracy.



# You affirm life as a precious gift from God.

- In society, when you shun
  - abortion
  - euthanasia
  - unjust war
  - neighborhood and domestic violence
  - poverty and racism
- In your home
  - when you shun violent words and actions
  - and look for peaceful ways to resolve conflict



# You foster vocations

- To priesthood
- To religious life
- To church leadership
  - lay and ordained
- To discipleship in every walk and work of life!



# Share your family stories about

- believing
- educating
- welcoming strangers
- serving one another
- celebrating joys
- enduring sorrows
- praying together
- feeding the hungry
- healing and forgiving
- encouraging vocations



## United with the larger Church

- Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments.
- Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole church.



## In the community of faith...

- Newly married couples are encouraged to join and participate in their local parish.
- Connect with other couples as companions on the journey.
- Inquire at your parish about meeting other couples and learning more about your vocation to Christian Marriage.



## For reflection and discussion:

- Share a story about a positive experience of church.
- Share your hopes for future church practice.
- How will your family spend Sundays and holidays?