

Strong Catholic Families

Did you know. . .

- ◇ When teens were asked “If you could change anything about your family situation, what would it be?” their response was “To become closer to my parents.” When teens were asked “Why aren’t you close to them? they responded “I don’t know how to do it.”
Source: Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers
- ◇ Two of three teens and three of four parents say they would be willing to give up a weeknight activity if it meant they could have dinner with their family. *Source: CASA, 9/2009*
- ◇ Average family time:
 - Only 34 percent of North American families eat one meal together each day.
 - The average father spends eight minutes per day with his children (includes meals and TV).
 - Parents spend fewer than 3 minutes of non-directive communication with children per day.
 - Only 12 percent of families pray together.
 - The average couple spends only four minutes of uninterrupted time together a day.*Source: “Raising the Bar: Ministry to Youth in the New Millennium,” by Alvin Reid*
- ◇ 5 Keys for Parents to Build Strong Catholic Families & Strong Catholic Youth
 1. Live the faith you want to pass on.
 2. Make faith a top family priority.
 3. “Gatekeep” your kids’ activities & time.
 4. Support one another & build inter-family networks of faith and life support.
 5. At home, during the week, live, model & talk about your faith.

Source: NFCYM

Eating dinner with your family is an important first step in developing Strong Catholic Families and Strong Catholic Youth. If you would like to learn more about the Strong Catholic Families initiative, contact Brigitte Burke at 225-336-8751 or visit www.nfcym.org/family.



Homily For Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

- First Reading: Ezekiel 18: 25 – 28
Turn away from the wickedness...and does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life.
- Reflect on those times we treat our family differently than we treat perfect strangers. Reflect on those times we have been cold or cruel to members of our family, been selfish, or self-centered.
- Second Reading: Philippians 2: 1 – 11
Paul's instruction is for us to think and act differently. We are called to regard others as more important than ourselves and to be aware of others' interests and needs. This exemplifies the attitude of Christ.
- Reflect on those times we considered ourselves more important than others in the family, in the parish, in the community.
- Reflect on those times we are more concerned about ourselves at the expense of another's needs.
- Gospel Reading: Matthew 21: 28 – 32
Consider the parable of the man with two sons. Which one followed the instruction of the father?
- Reflect on those times we said one thing and did the opposite.
- Reflect on those times when we did not have faith in our heavenly Father, refused to do what God was asking of us or failed to change our minds when we finally saw our error.

All the reflections can be applied to both Church family as well as the individual families. Family is very important to the individual; Church family is also very important to individuals. Implications should center around opening themselves to the needs within their own families as well as the needs of the Parish family.

Suggestions for Prayers of the Faithful

For all parish and/or community families struggling to remain connected with each other due to separation from divorce, work, or death, we pray to the Lord.

For all families experiencing hardship due to the economic downturn and for those who have lost jobs or wages, we pray to the Lord.

For all families who have lost loved ones in death, may they find solace and consolation in the Lord, we pray to the Lord.

Faithfulness Around the Table

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962 -1965), the Church “has realized that the basic expression of the Church was not the parish but the Christian Family.” (*Pastoral Letter Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan; Leader’s Guide.*)

This concept requires emphasis during this era of humanity. Before developing this Pastoral, studies were conducted which raised two concerns for the Bishops. The first concern noted that 30 percent of Catholics have not married in the Church in any manner or time. The second point features a growing trend: At present, 41% of young Catholics have married outside the Church. Tangent to this is the fact ~40% of young Catholic adults are choosing cohabitation over marriage.

With these statistics in mind, the building up of family becomes a pressing need for Church and individual parish communities. This is the purpose for this Family Day Packet. It is our hope that parish communities will be able to implement some of these ideas to enhance and strengthen families as well as parishes.

“As good stewards, parents are called to nurture and educate their children. Through the ages the Church has consistently taught that spouses are called to procreation and to education of their children.” Teaching one’s children comes in many forms within the family - one of the strongest is “modeling.” As parents live their lives directed by God through the Church, the children learn God’s ways and are able to integrate those ways into themselves.

In order to model good behavior, or establish a deep relationship with God, parents must spend time with their children. It is necessary to develop times and places where gathering and spending time with one another is both natural and effective. Establishing those times and places is necessary both for the parents and children. This assures all involved how important these times and places are and what goes on during those times.

Parents who set guidelines as to when meals will be and express expectations that the entire family always be present at those meals stresses the importance of those functions to their children. Dining as a family becomes more than just a family eating at the same time; it becomes the means for the family to “form a more intimate community of persons.” (*Familiaris Consortio*)

It is in the ordinary aspects of life whereby parents influence and affect appreciation for values, ideals and visions for their children. Eating around the table daily impacts each person in a different manner. The end result, however, is an intimate bond established for life between each person of the family as individuals and collectively.

The pages of this packet will assist parents in establishing a familial bond with their own families while at the same time, enhancing the ability of the couple to fulfill their duties as spouses and parents. All this sounds technical and “heady,” however, it is actually done around the **tool** that makes things happen: **the dining room table.**

Ideas To Keep In Mind

Our Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks to us of Domestic Church. It defines the Church as “nothing other than ‘the family of God.’” (CCC, #1655) The Church has long been built on those “who had become believers together with all their households.” (CCC, #1655)

It is for this reason, the theme **Faithfulness Around The Table**, is being highlighted. It is important for us as family to recognize that gathering around the table has more value than simply a place to physically nourish ourselves. When gathering around the table for more than simple nourishment, eating and sharing together develops greater bonds between the individuals. It is precisely at these gathering times, parents have opportunities to educate and form their children in aspects of faith, family values, social etiquette and social expectations.

If we understand and perceive the table as a major tool in the forming of a strong, faith-filled family, we will stress the importance of the family joining together regularly. Too often we see “eating together” as a coincidental or “something we do,” however, if we see meal time as the vital time to reconnect with the family as a whole, an opportunity to bond with one another, and a chance to form the family, we would more likely take meal time more seriously.

Families who lock in those times as a priority send the message to the family and to others that being together at certain times of the day is necessary and vital to the family. This also becomes a priority for each individual and the concept of eating as a family is passed on to the next generation. Passing on the elements which consistently enhance the family then becomes a legacy for that family. It is the one thing individuals within the family retain and make a part of their own lives. It becomes **TRADITION**.

What Will You Bring To The TABLE?

As we continue to reflect on FAMILY and TABLE, we can ask one question: What will you bring to the table?

Whether we are talking about the table in our home or the table as the Altar in our Church, we are challenged to bring something.

In both circumstances, we bring ourselves to the table. Our presence and attention are crucial. Our interest in one another, in God the Father, God the Son, and in the Word of God, is all important. It is important to relate to either table in much the same manner, eager to improve our relationship with the other.

Besides bringing ourselves to the table, we also bring our excitements, our disappointments, our frustrations, our pains, our hurts. We bring our good days and our bad ones. We find ourselves asking for forgiveness and, at times, giving forgiveness. We have the opportunity to seek advice from one another, to talk through circumstances and ideas. We have the time to get to know one another in an intimate setting. We become part of one another through this continual process.

Turning our attention to our Church Parish Family, we are challenged to bring the same things to the Table/Altar. We are called to be fully present, mind, heart and soul. We are called to listen to the stories, the Word of God. In those moments of listening, we hear God’s consolation, His forgiveness, His peace.

We are challenged to bring our pains and hurts; we are called to forgive one another as “He forgives us.”

Just as around the table of the home, around the Table/Altar we have the opportunity to seek God’s advice, His guidance, His direction. We have the chance to talk through the circumstances of our lives with Him. In essence, we are able to develop intimacy with our God, through His Word, His Liturgy, His Body and Blood.

The Dining Room Table

Despite the fact that most dining tables are a repository for “stuff” such as purses, keys, mail, etc, it actually has a function: a place to eat as a family. It also provides a time for individual sharing, for unloading the burdens of the day, for asking questions which will render much needed information. It is a time to relax; it is also a time to instruct.

So, this dining together may sound simple and ordinary, however, just because it is simple and ordinary it still is very crucial to family bonding and formation. After all, it is the ordinary that gives us most everything we possess - knowledge and wisdom, hope and joy, trials and sadness.

One of the keys to the dining room table and its power is **discipline**. This means each family must instill within its members the importance of **accessing the table on a daily basis**. It requires assertiveness in maintaining the table so as to always be ready to accommodate the family at mealtime. Using the table as a “drop off” location does nothing to enhance the relationship of the family, but only to gather “stuff.”

Faithfulness around the Table requires each of us to see the opportunities available so long as we use the tool properly. It also inspires us to become very protective of both the space and the time connected with eating together. It requires a dedication on the part of the parents to make certain enough time is allocated so that each person has an opportunity to share their experiences of the day with everyone.

Many times we invite people to join us for meals. Mealtime, then, becomes a special event intended to bring people closer, to share our lives with others. The same holds true for us as families. Mealtime is an event, an opportunity to share our lives, our feelings, and our experiences with each other.

This time frame, mealtime, is also an opportunity to nurture and nourish our bodies and souls with both food and presence of self. So much of our day is taken up with tasks and other people. Our focus is centered on things. Mealtime is a moment when we turn our focus on others, our others, those we love. It is a time to shut out the rest of the world and all other commitments, to center on those most precious to us.

Faithfulness around the Table reminds us that we do what we do daily because of those sitting around the table with us. It is for this reason we should endeavor to know them better and, in a small way, know ourselves better. It is a time to practice our patience, kindness, understanding, to share values and ideals. It is time to reconnect, forge stronger bonds with one another and enhance our solidarity.

Sharing Questions For Around The Table



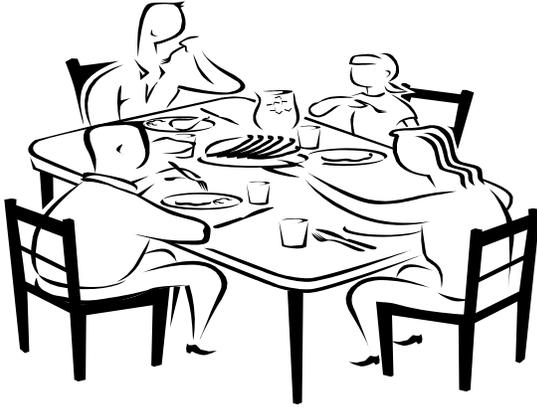
- * Relate to each other a tradition or ritual you have or had in your home when you were a child and which you have continued.
- * What elements of your daily life bring you together as a Family?
- * What things occur within your family which moves you to a deeper faith that may not be presented in Church?
- * What things or actions within your daily life make you aware of God's presence in your life?
- * What things could you do differently to create a stronger family? What are some similarities between Liturgy of Eucharist at Church and Family meals at the table?
- * Besides the TABLE, what other “tools” will work for your family in getting to know each other and God better?

FAITHFULNESS AROUND THE TABLE

What Will You Bring To The Table?

Suggestions

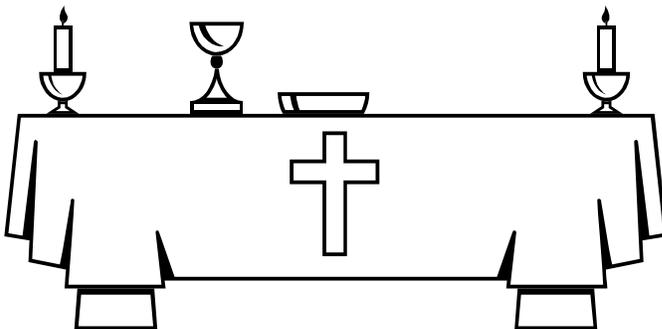
Home Table



*Share good news and/or share bad news.
Explain how either one or both affected you.

*If there is some hurt between you and someone else in the family, ask for forgiveness and give forgiveness.

Church Table/Altar



*Bring your good news, your bad news.
Tell Jesus how this is affecting you.

*If you have hurt someone over the past week, ask God for forgiveness and healing. Resolve to forgive and assist in the healing process of others in your own life.

On FAMILY DAY SUNDAY suggest parishioners write their concerns, their reasons for joy and thankfulness, their hurts, the people they would like to forgive or from whom they ask forgiveness, and any other ideas they would like to bring to Christ at the Table/Altar.

(At the end of Mass, burn those pieces of paper to protect peoples' privacy. No one has to sign or identify who it was that wrote on the paper. Inform parishioners of this before Family Day Sunday)

Courtesy of Family Day 2011, Family Life Apostolate, Archdiocese of New Orleans

Resources for the FAMILY

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse – Family Day website

<http://casafamilyday.org/familyday/>

Conversation Starters

Looking for a way to engage in conversations with your kids? Use these conversation starters for a fun way to get everyone talking.

- What's the best and worst thing that happened today?
- What's the greatest invention of all time?
- If you were in charge of the music for our family vacation, which songs would you pick?
- Which TV family is the most fun to watch?
- If you could have a wild animal from anywhere in the world as a pet, what animal would you choose?

Download a free Family Dinner Kit! Contains:

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|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ◇ <i>Blank Placemat</i> | ◇ <i>Good Deed Flower</i> | ◇ <i>Family Fun Challenge</i> |
| ◇ <i>Activity Mat</i> | ◇ <i>Recipes</i> | ◇ <i>Word Games</i> |
| ◇ <i>Pledge Form</i> | ◇ <i>Daily Menu Planner</i> | ◇ <i>Family Fairy Tales</i> |
| ◇ <i>Family Fun Stories</i> | ◇ <i>Weekly Menu Planner</i> | ◇ <i>Family Coat of Arms</i> |

Word Search

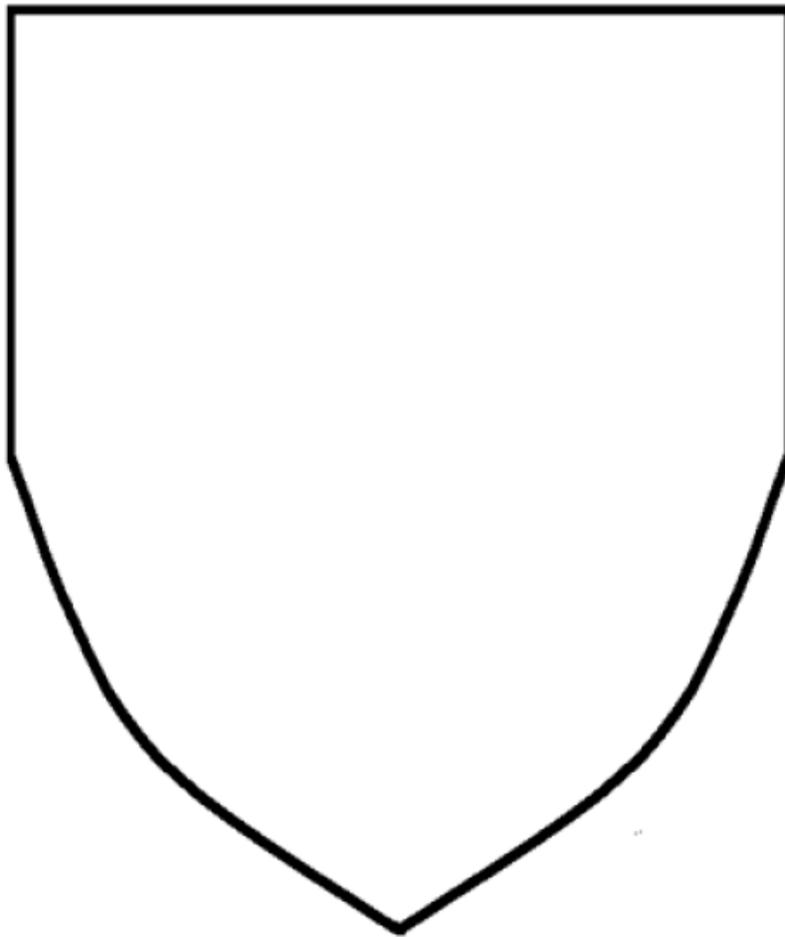
Find the family dinner related words in the word search. The words will be found vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. Make sure you circle each letter separately!

Answers:

Salad
Meat
Veggies
Rice
Dessert

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R M I Z D P V
S R I U E Q E
A B I C S D G
L V D C S Y G
A X Q M E I I
D V X E R T E
R M E A T N S
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FAMILY COAT OF ARMS



A Coat of Arms has long been a symbol of a family's identity and values. Make your own personal family crest based on the values and principles important to you.

- 1) Ask everyone to brainstorm ideas about what each section of the shield will represent. Choose abstract ideas that are important to your family—such as truth, loyalty, love, and patience.
- 2) Choose the top 4 or 5 values and the colors to represent them.
- 3) Draw a small illustration in each section that symbolizes the values you chose. Write the name of the value under the drawing and add color.
- 4) Print out and hang on your fridge, put on your door, or make into a wearable badge!

FAMILY RESOURCES ONLINE

GRACE BEFORE MEALS with Fr. Leo Patalinghug www.gracebeforemeals.com

◇ **Prayers**

◇ **Dinner Dialogue**

◇ **Recipes**

Apple Crisp

serves 4-6 desserts

Ingredients:

6 cups, peeled and thinly sliced baking apples (suggested apples: Northern Spy or Cortland)
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/3 cup flour
1 cup old-fashioned Quaker oats
1/2 cup packed, light brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/3 cup o melted butter or margarine

Instructions:

Mix cinnamon with sliced apples until apples are coated. Mix lemon juice with apples; then place apples in a greased 8-inch square glass baking pan. In a separate bowl, combine the rest of the dry ingredients. Add melted butter and mix until "crumbly." Sprinkle crumb mixture over apples. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes or until topping is golden brown and apples are fork-tender.

Option: Add 1/4 cup coarsely chopped walnut to crumb mixture, and serve apples with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

CATHOLIC PARENTING www.catholicparenting.com

◇ **Coloring Pages**

◇ **Crossword Puzzles**

◇ **Crafts**

JUST FOR KIDS > CRAFTS > ENVELOPE PRAYER BANK

by **Monica McConkey**

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From "[A Treasure Chest of Traditions for Catholic Families](#)"

Select 10 envelopes of the same size. Use a hole punch to make two holes on one edge of each of the envelopes (at precisely the same location). Decorate the envelopes, one for each time of day or type of occasion.

Make cardboard front and back covers, punching holes to match the envelopes. Decorate the covers. Assemble the book of envelopes tying string or ribbon through the holes. Store specially recorded prayers (on note paper) or holy cards (with prayers on them) within the envelopes. Keep in a handy location for easy access!



FAMILY RESOURCES ONLINE

FAITH FIRST www.faithfirst.com/family.html

◇ *Catholic Parenting 101*

◇ *Questions kids ask*

◇ *Games for Kids*

More Fun Games!



Build a Church



Dot-to-Dot



Finish the Sentence



Can you answer all the questions to start a balloon launch?



Can you answer all the questions to start a boat race?

PARENT FURTHER www.parentfurther.com



What's something that your family is saving money for? What are some things that individual family members are saving money for? How much money do you need to save for your individual and family goals?

Sometimes it takes a long time to save money for the things you want to buy. It's important to celebrate your progress as you work towards your goals! Here are some tips to help you along the way:

- Set your goal: the amount of money you need to save for something special or the amount of money you want to put in the bank. Record the amount.
- Do the math to figure out what 75% of that amount is, 50%, 25%, and 10%. Record those amounts.
- Set a rewards system to treat yourself (with a non-money reward) every time you reach a marker that moves you toward your final savings goal. For example, once you reach 10% of money set aside, you might set aside an hour to read a favorite book. When 50% is reached, you might spend an afternoon in the park playing football with friends.

Other Online Resources:

Faith Journeys Foundation www.faithjourneys.org

For Your Marriage (an initiative of the USCCB) www.foryourmarriage.org

Center for Parent/Youth Understanding www.cpyu.org

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops www.usccb.org