

Familia Fidelis



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“The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church. It is a community of faith, hope, and charity....”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2204)

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For Mom and Dad— Four Simple Steps for Praying With Your Spouse

1. Reconcile and Rejoice First, set time aside weekly for just the two of you. Come together in a comfortable place or hold hands on a walk. Make the Sign of the Cross and take a moment to focus on being present to each other and to God, as is done at the start of the Mass. As you begin, take time to reconcile. Talk about how you might have hurt each other during the week. Then apologize and offer forgiveness. This will allow you to approach God with open hearts and to be united as you pray. Once you have reconciled, rejoice by offering a short prayer of thanksgiving to God.

2. Discover God Together Step Two is modeled on the Liturgy of the Word. After reconciling and rejoicing, spend time discovering God together. There are a number of ways to do this. For example, you could read the Bible and talk about the passage. If you don't know where to begin in the Bible then a good option is to read the Gospel passage that will

be proclaimed at the next Sunday Mass. You can find Sunday readings at the USCCB's Daily Readings. An additional option is to read the Psalms, which have been called the “book of prayer.” The Psalms express sorrow and joy, fear and hope, longing for God, and praise. By scanning the titles of each Psalm you and your spouse will easily find one that you can relate to. Pray it slowly aloud and then discuss how it stirs your emotions or what it leads you to think about. Another way to approach God together can simply involve talking about what is on your hearts and minds. What are you thankful for this week? What challenges are creeping up in your life? What do you need from each other and from God? Answer these questions honestly and then offer prayers of petition to God. Remember to give thanks as you see God faithfully answering your prayers.

3. Share Your Love Step Three relates to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After discovering God

together, you can deepen your prayer and intimacy by sharing your love with each other. Sharing your love in the context of prayer may include a kiss, resting in each other's arms, caring for an ill spouse, giving words of affirmation, or any other meaningful way you communicate your love. Again, have a thankful heart as your intimacy is deepened in the presence of God.

4. Serve Each Other As your time together draws to a close, remember to go in peace and to serve the Lord in each other. Prayer and intimacy never ends! Let your service and intimacy live on throughout every day, as you go about cooking, cleaning, listening, working, and so on. The fruit that will come from your prayer routine will bless your marriage, deepen your love for God and each other, and allow you to reflect the love relationship between Christ and his beloved spouse, the Church.”

-ForYourMarriage.org

For Teens— What's So Special About Mary?

[The following is an excerpt from *Did Adam and Eve Have Belly Buttons?* By Matthew Pinto]

Question: “Can you describe the role Mary plays in the Catholic faith?”

Answer: Mary said “yes” to God when the angel Gabriel announced to her the divine plan that she would be the Mother of

the Savior (Lk. 1:38). She was the human instrument God chose to bring about salvation. It was from her that Christ took His human nature. She is our human link to Him.

Adam and Eve's “no” to God was enough to cast all mankind into darkness and death until the coming of the Savior (Gn. 3:1-19). This is why the Church

acknowledges that Mary's “yes” cooperated with God's grace in the salvation of mankind.

Mary must be special. Out of all the billions of women in history, she was the one chosen to bear God in her womb (Lk. 1:43). She would be the one to nurse, play with, and teach the infant Jesus, who is God. This was a big task, the greatest responsibility and



“[Mary] was the human instrument God chose to bring about salvation.”

“We really enjoy that the book builds up a sense of anticipation for Christmas”

St. Philip is the patron of separated spouses, the falsely accused, and victims of betrayal.



For Teens...Continued

honor ever given to a human being.

Mary is also an intercessor for us. The first record of her intercession is at the wedding feast of Cana where she asked her Son to assist when the wine ran out (Jn. 2:3-11). Jesus responded by performing His first recorded miracle. Mary continues to intercede for us each time we invoke her in prayer.

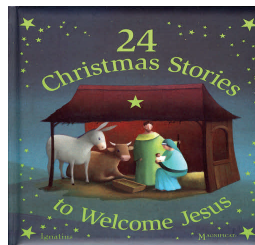
Question: “How long before Mass should we abstain from eating?”

Answer: The Church requires that we abstain from eating for one hour before receiving the Eucharist. Technically, you could eat something before a long Mass and still receive the Eucharist, as long as communion time was an hour after you ate.

The point of the Eucharistic fast is to prepare us to receive Jesus with greater yearning.

Fasting before Mass is the appropriate way to prepare ourselves for receiving Jesus. It just doesn't seem right to have a chocolate doughnut or a cheeseburger in our stomachs just a few minutes before we receive the Creator of the Universe.

For Children—Stories to Welcome Jesus



We recently received this book as an early Christmas gift from my godmother, so it is new to us but we are enthusiastic about it.

24 Christmas Stories to

Welcome Jesus is published collaboratively by Ignatius Press and Magnificat, the same team that created the board book Bible I recommended previously (March 2011 issue). For each day leading up to Christmas (beginning with Dec. 1) there is a short story (2-3 pages) that has to do with preparing for Jesus' arrival at Christmas.

The stories are richly illustrated by a variety of artists

and appeal to a broad age range. The stories could easily be read in only a few minutes each day when your family lights its Advent wreath or engages in its usual bedtime routine.

We really enjoy that the book builds up a sense of anticipation for Christmas, since we often feel tempted to act like Christmas has already arrived, thus overlooking the beautiful season of Advent.

Friends for Families—St. Philip Howard

St. Philip Howard (1557-1595) was a husband, father, noble, and martyr. Baptized Catholic, Philip paid little to no attention to the actual practice of his faith. His primary concern was the advancement of his political career. Oftentimes, as a result of his political ambition, he neglected his faithful wife, Anne. A change took place in Philip's faith life when, in 1581, he was present at a theological dispute between Anglican

theologians and the Jesuit priest, St. Edmund Campion. Campion's arguments made a profound impact on Philip. Over the course of the next three years Philip wrestled with his doubts concerning the authority of the Anglican church. His reflections led him to the conviction that only the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ. He repented of having been so callous in his dealings with his wife and chil-

dren and, when Anne openly converted a few years later, he too professed himself a believing Catholic. The noticeable change in Philip led to him losing the queen's favor and being imprisoned in the Tower of London. There he refused to renounce his faith, even though he was promised his freedom should he do so. He died in the Tower in 1595 and was canonized a saint by Pope Paul VI in 1970.