

RULE OF LIFE FOR THE FAMILY

“CREATE A CLOISTER
IN YOUR HOME”

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RULE OF LIFE FOR FAMILIES

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:2; RSV Catholic Ed.)

JUSTIFICATION

Why is a *Rule of Life* necessary for the family? Frankly, every individual and group needs some kind of “rule of life” in order to achieve goals and live in harmony. We are in need of structure and discipline. St. Thomas Aquinas speaks of virtue as a habit of life aimed at the Good. Virtues are often formed through good habits of life.

A *Rule of Life* for the family seems more necessary and urgent in the modern world than perhaps ever before, because of the chaos and demands introduced into individual lives and family life in recent years by various factors, including an explosion in technology, making available mountains of information, entertainment on demand, pornography, endless text messaging, etc. Additionally, more often than not both parents are working, further complicating the family schedule. In addition, there has been a proliferation of extra activities and sports (with extended time requirements) available to children further stretching families who choose to engage these. Families can easily become distracted by the passing things of the world and its constant opportunities for “busyness” and forget their purpose and goals. The world becomes so alluring they may live as though God does not exist.

The family is the “first cell” and the nucleus of society. It is the first place where we learn to live in community. It is the “domestic church.” We will either live family life well and grow toward holiness, or pay the consequences, as individuals, families, parishes and a society. When people look at the Christian family they should be able to see a reflection of God Himself in the unity and fruitfulness of His Trinitarian life. The love of God ought to be evident. Similarly, when people look at a Christian marriage, they ought to see a reflection of the love of God for His people. They should see the love of Christ for His Church and the love of the Church for Christ. Importantly, in his *Letter to Families* in 1994, Pope John Paul II asked families to create a “civilization of love” in their homes.

Never before has the family been under such aggressive attacks. These attacks come overtly, such as recognizing alternative forms of “marriage” and unions, pornography, immodesty, sexual references on television and other media, explicit sex education of children in schools, condom and contraception distribution to children in schools and public health clinics, etc.

The attacks are also more subtle, or at least less recognizable, such as attacks on God (using His name in vain is prevalent in the culture), increased distractions and “busyness” through obsession with sports and other activities, unrestrained use of

technology, all of which serves to scatter and disintegrate the family. Oftentimes, parents, rather than helping their children grow into adult life and responsibility, immerse themselves into their child's world, preoccupied with their children's activities.

Family members often take pride in this busy, chaotic life, thinking it somehow makes them important and accomplished parents or their children advanced. Many parents have mistakenly equated having a lot to do, including overly busy children, with being better parents.

This constant activity also serves an important purpose in what has become a vicious cycle. Because parents have such a weak Faith-life, they need to fill the empty "space" in their lives. Thus, busy-ness keeps them from having to think about the fact that their lives lack meaning (at least temporarily). An overemphasis on entertainment, comfort and other pleasures also serves to dull the pain of failing to live one's life in the way it was meant to be lived (loving God and loving neighbor). Likewise, being busy and preoccupied with trivialities prevents parents from setting aside time to pray and learn about their Faith (except perhaps Mass on Sundays and maybe a prayer before meals). Thus, the cycle continues. The devil knows what he is doing!

Whether overt or subtle, the results of the attacks on the family have been deleterious: broken homes, chaotic family life, undisciplined children, and families that know little about their faith and pray little. There is also a kind of sadness, a sense of loss. Sometimes, this sadness is seen in youth who, seeking escapes from reality, turn to computer and video games, hours on-line, text messaging, blogs, pornography and any number of other distractions from real life. Many of these escapes can have serious consequences.

The best defense is a good offense! Saturate your family with goodness and virtue through prayer, the reading of Sacred Scripture, good Catholic teaching, wholesome entertainment, including movies and music, sacred images in the home, service, etc. This is how to make your home a "little church." This is how to create a "little Nazareth" in your home.

ORDERLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS!

God is orderly. To see evidence of this, just look at nature to see the orderly progression of seasons. Look at how the birds know when to make their nests and lay their eggs. Trees and flowers know when to bud. Plants know when to drop their seeds in order to reproduce. The human body, too, operates in an orderly and predictable way. This is *natural law* and it reflects the *Divine Law*. Is it not true that when our lives are disordered we feel frustrated? This is because we are not operating according to our nature and according to God's plan for our life.

A Rule of Life for the Family is a way to introduce proper *order* into family life in various ways. The main goal of this *Rule* is spiritual, but it will also be helpful in other areas: mutual respect, discipline, conflict prevention and resolution, etc. What follows deals almost exclusively with the spiritual ordering of family life, and is applicable to couples without children as well as families with many children. The *Rule* is intentionally

simple with concrete examples, to allow anyone to implement its elements. At the end of the *Rule* are appendices with an example of daily life, prayers, bibliography of reading materials and resources for good, wholesome family life. This *Rule* is obviously incomplete and imperfect, but is at least a start.

BELIEFS

An essential first step to this *Rule of Life* is to make a commitment to order our beliefs according to God's Law. What does this mean? We are not required to be perfect right now. We are not even required to believe perfectly right now. Many decent people struggle with faith and prayer. Nonetheless, we should be prepared to submit our minds and hearts to the Law of Jesus Christ. Thus, *humility* and the willingness to obey are the first necessary virtues needed to embark on this spiritual journey.

Humility means we can see ourselves for who we are in God's sight. Humility is seeing reality properly. We must admit we do not know it all (God is the Creator and we are His creatures). We have a lot to learn and an opinion is not necessarily truth. Be prepared to change (to be converted).

Ultimately, to submit to the Law of God is identical to submitting to the faith and moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Importantly, though, this submission is not an act of grudging acceptance, but of love, which is why assent to the Church's teachings is necessarily preceded by conversion of heart, humility and prayer. We should pray with great urgency for faith and for a heart eager to submit to the Truth.

Let us make the home a safe and wholesome place to live; safe from the chaos and filth of the culture and a place of refuge in which to retreat. Would the Holy Family of Nazareth want to live in *your* home?

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!

RULE I: PRAYER

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances...

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, RSV Catholic Ed.)

The Christian Family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the "domestic church" where God's children learn to pray "as the church" and to persevere in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church's living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2685)

Create a cloister in your home...

Prayer is both communication with God (talking and listening) *and* a relationship, a relationship with the goal of becoming united with Him (God's will and our will should be the same). This is a communion. Prayer should lead to intimate friendship with God. Prayer is a relationship that takes time, consistency and persistence. After all, God's ways are *so much not* our ways! Good, consistent habits of life are key ingredients to attaining the holy life. Families and individuals need structure and discipline. (Remember, God is orderly). The spiritual life, like so many other areas of life, requires the development of good habits. Children need to develop good habits, including prayer, early in life. Teach them *how* to pray!

- A. **Attend Sunday Mass together as a family** – Mass is the perfect prayer because it is entering into Christ's sacrifice of Himself on Calvary. You are *there*!
 - 1. Pray on the way to Mass (*Hail Mary's* or other prayers). Turn off the radio and stop talking! Silence is essential for the spiritual life. Eliminate distractions during the hour leading up to Mass.
 - 2. Say a prayer of thanksgiving together after Mass (i.e., quietly in the Church and/or in the car). Why not have copies of a prayer "posted" in the car (tape it to the dash and back of the seats)?
- B. **Try to attend one daily Mass each week** whenever possible. Make a sacrifice of love for God.
- C. **Pray every day.** Have set times and set prayers, leaving room for spontaneity (i.e., petitions: asking for what we need, praying for people in our lives, other prayers that seem timely and quiet time). Start small if needed (i.e. five or ten minutes) and build on this as good habits are established.
 - 1. In the **morning**, one of the first actions of the day for the family (all together whenever possible) should be a morning offering (see attached) and a blessing (see attached) before breakfast (both of these take less than one minute). Pray other individual prayers or simply talk to God, even on the drive to work.

2. In the **evening**, at a set time, the family should pray together. (*Turn the television, computer, video games and telephones OFF*. This is basic courtesy, but also necessary for good interaction with one another.). Ideally, pray the *Rosary* (see attached). If you are not accustomed to the *Rosary*, pray one mystery, including the *Creed*, etc.). Pray the *Divine Mercy Chaplet* (see attached). Read a passage from *Sacred Scripture* or a Bible storybook. Use other devotions. Use a calendar if needed to specify different prayers for different days. Pick one or more prayers as a start and add on as the habit of consistent prayer is formed. (A *Rosary* takes about 19 minutes, the *Divine Mercy Chaplet* about 7 minutes. Therefore, "We do not have time" is sounding very lame about now!).
 3. At **Bedtime**, at a set time, as a family, give thanks for the day. Ask forgiveness for any sins committed (keep the sins private!). Ask forgiveness from any family member you may have hurt that day. Make the sign of the Cross on each other's foreheads with Holy Water. Say the *Guardian Angel Prayer* (attached). These prayers take only a few minutes, but form firm, lifelong habits that are an essential backbone to the spiritual life of individuals and families.
 4. Married Couples: At a set time, pray some without the children (perhaps when they are in bed). For example, read more Scripture together, ask the Holy Family to strengthen your family. Maintain a regular devotion together, such as a regular Novena to the Holy family. Ask forgiveness for any way you may have hurt one another.
 5. **Total Time** (for an entire day!): Not to be reductionist about prayer, but let us dispense of excuses, particularly the time excuse. We spend time with those we love, so to love God is to spend some time with Him. Let's look at some minimum standards.
 - a. Morning prayers: one minute. Evening prayers: 30 minutes (if family prays five mysteries of the Rosary; 18 minutes if only one mystery prayed). Bedtime prayers: five minutes (depending on size of family). Married couple prayers: 3 minutes. **Total time/day**: 39 minutes (27 minutes with shortened *Rosary*). So much for the "no time" excuse!
- D. **Regular Confession**: Try going to confession once/month. Perhaps schedule confession once/liturgical season, for example, go during Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and twice in ordinary time. It might be best for the entire family to go on the same day.
- E. **Pray** before and after every meal (see attached).
- F. **Sacramentals** are important elements on the road to holiness and the fight against evil. Have holy water available in the home and bless the children with it at bedtime, making the sign of the Cross on their foreheads. Every family member should wear a Crucifix or a four-way Cross, perhaps with medals of a favorite saint (or Confirmation saint), along with a Brown Scapular. Have a priest bless your home (or bless it yourselves with Holy Water, which can be obtained at nearly any Catholic Church).

- G. **Holy Images:** Every Catholic home should have at least one Crucifix, but preferably one in every room, especially the main room of the house and every bedroom. It is a reminder of what Our Lord has done for us and it reminds us who we are called to be. In addition, there should be images of saints (especially our Blessed Mother and the Holy family) adorning the walls of the house. Every family should also consider setting up a prayer area or shrine in the home, consisting of a table or altar with a crucifix, a devotional candle, a statue or two, a bible, etc. (There are many variations). The family could then gather at the shrine for prayers. Visitors to your home ought to know what is important to you. If someone walks into a family home and finds a huge television and all the accessories, but little that honors our Lord, then the conclusion is clear as to what matters to you.
- H. **Family Consecration:** Families should seriously consider consecrating their families to the Holy Family (see attached).
- I. **Liturgy of the Hours:** Encouraged by the Church for *everyone*! A good way to incorporate this into daily life (along with daily Mass readings and a "saint of the day") is through ordering the monthly periodical, *Magnificat* (see appendix).
- J. **Eucharistic Adoration:** Adoration of our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament (this is when the host is placed in a monstrance and placed on the altar for prayer) is a most excellent form of worshipping our Eucharistic Lord outside of Mass. As individuals, as a married couple and as a family, we ought to take advantage of adoration when it is available. During adoration, you can read Sacred Scripture, pray the Rosary or other prayers and, very importantly, sit quietly with our Lord. If you are not accustomed to praying in this way, start small, with only ten minutes and work your way to 30-60 minutes at a time.

RULE II: FAMILY LIFE TOGETHER

*And he [Jesus] went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them;
and his mother kept all these things in her heart.*

(Luke 2:51, RSV; Catholic Ed.)

*The Christian Family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2205)

We forge strong bonds with one another as we spend time together – time praying, talking, eating and having fun. This time ought to be without distractions, and much of it should be time *interacting* together, not just passive time (staring at a television).

- A. **The family meal:** Eat together regularly. Most evenings should be a family meal. As a rule of life, at least one meal every day should be shared as an entire family. This *rule* will be a test of your commitment.
 - 1. Eliminate distractions: Turn off your cell phones, take the home phone off the hook, turn off the television, music, etc. Let this be strictly uninterrupted family time. Does this scare you? This is a necessary element of family life if you want solid relationships in your family.
 - 2. Share in the responsibilities of preparation and cleanup. Keep it simple! Did you know a good family meal can be prepared in 20 minutes?
 - 3. Talk about your day and what is going on in each of your lives. Try taking a greater interest in what others are saying rather than in just what you want to say.
- B. **Family interaction:** Have a regularly scheduled family night of games (board games, etc.). Perhaps rotate having a different member of the family being in charge of game night. Make this a night where you interact (not a movie).
 - 1. Have a regularly scheduled (once or twice/month) movie night (good, clean fun, not trash. (There are plenty of good movies about the saints, for example.).
- C. **Turn off the television!** *Strictly limit* television viewing and turn off the trash (immodesty, sexual content and innuendo, etc.). It is frankly nothing short of shocking what parents allow their children to watch on television and in movies! Frankly, if the children should not watch it, neither should the parents. There ought *never*, I repeat, *NEVER* to be a television or computer (with internet connection) in your child's room!
- D. **Recreation and leisure** are integral parts of the human experience. We need rest from our work and other pursuits. We *need* to honor God. (This is why God commanded we rest and keep the *Sabbath* holy.

2. Do not perform any unnecessary work (including chores around the house), shopping or eating out on Sundays. Why no shopping or eating out on Sundays? One reason: other people have to work when you shop and eat out, which is leading others away from keeping the *Sabbath* Godly and taking a day of rest.
3. Sundays should be a day of prayer, rest, family time and friends.

- E. **Protect your family from morally corrupt entertainment.** The family today is under attack from the *inside*, being corrupted within their own homes by television programming, movies and the internet. People have voluntarily invited the Devil into their homes. Thus, sex, violence, immoral lifestyles, foul language (including the widespread use of the Lord's name being used in vain), pornography (and so-called "soft porn," as is found in "Soap Operas"), immodesty, etc., have all been invited in to corrupt the family. All the while parents choose to remain in a state of denial. Why? Perhaps they do not want to sacrifice their own desire for entertainment. They do not want to have to give up most television programming themselves.

It is time to wake up! Perhaps, too, parents are afraid of not being liked by their children if they say no. Here is a news flash: your children will love and respect you all the more. Children want boundaries; they want to be protected. Has it already been said that there should never be a television or computer in your child's bedroom? Monitor their internet use, including chat rooms (or prohibit it). Parents should hold all passwords, not the children.

- F. **Choose entertainment that is *clean* fun.** Watch movies about saints (see attached references) or secular movies with wholesome themes, no foul language, no sexual innuendo, etc. Read together (see attached list of Faith-filled storybooks). Put blocks/guards on the television or get rid of cable/satellite television altogether.
- G. **Place limits on recreation and entertainment.** There can be too much leisure, which is unhealthy. We are not on this earth to engage in endless leisure, but to grow in holiness and spread the Word of God and belief in Jesus Christ. We are here to get to heaven and to bring our family and as many others as possible with us. Therefore, why would we be watching television or wasting time on the internet night after night? Should we not be praying and learning our faith and serving the Lord?
- H. **The Family Vacation:** Try combining a pilgrimage to a beautiful shrine with your family vacation (see attached guide for ideas). Mass and prayer obligations still apply on vacation. Try to keep to your prayer routine.

RULE III: EDUCATION/TEACHING THE FAITH

By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1652)

The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.

(Guadium et Spes, 52, par. 1; Second Vatican Council Documents)

A. **Family Catechesis:** Without exception, parents have an absolute obligation to teach the Faith to their children (meaning they have to learn it themselves).

1. Set a time aside every day (even if you begin with only 15 minutes each day) and teach your children the faith. Learn as a family. Read them Bible stories, use children's catechism lessons, use saint coloring books, review their Religious Education lessons with them, teach them prayers (see bibliography of resources). In today's world of modern technology and the internet there is no excuse for saying, "I do not have the resources." You must do this or your children will be spiritually handicapped in today's troubled world! Parents not only must answer to God for their own lives, but also to a certain degree, for their children's lives as well.
2. Parents: Learn the faith! If you have cable/satellite, watch *EWTN*, listen to Catholic radio, read good books about the faith, subscribe to a faithful Catholic publication (see attached), reference the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Make a commitment!

B. **Other education:** Parents need to be involved in their children's education, whether they are in public or private school. Find out what they are learning, look at their textbooks, and be engaged in an area where they spend much of their childhood: school. You need to be a watchdog when it comes to what your children are learning in public and private schools. Many schools are teaching explicit sex education (and even to very young children), giving out condoms, teaching about the gay lifestyle and "gay marriage and parenting" and telling children that belief in God and Jesus Christ is nonsense. These problems will probably only get worse. Children need to be protected from this abuse of their innocence, at least in "debriefing" them at home and teaching them proper morals.

1. Set a time every day to review their schoolwork and talk about what happened in school that day. Look at their textbooks. Talk to their teachers.
2. As a result of your involvement, your children will share with you much more about their life in school than they might otherwise, including struggles, questions, etc.

3. Look up Catholic home-schoolers (they are online) to explore an alternative to traditional education.

RULE IV: SACRIFICE/FASTING

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...

(John 3:16; RSV, Catholic Ed.)

Ultimately, love means to sacrifice oneself for the sake of the other. A life without sacrifice is a life without love

(Pope Benedict XVI).

A. **Before Mass:** The law of the Church requires us to fast from food and drink one-hour before Holy Communion, but why not fast from all unnecessary things of the world (except water and medicine) at least one hour before Mass (unless children are too young to receive communion, or someone is elderly or has a medical condition preventing fasting). This is necessary preparation for receiving the King of kings and Lord of lords in Holy Communion.

1. In addition to fasting from food, fast from television, radio, cellular phones, computer, newspapers, email and all other distractions at least one hour before Mass.
2. Fast from all unnecessary conversation at least one hour before Mass.
 - Why? We are preparing ourselves to stand at the foot of the Cross with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! We are about to receive the very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Savior. We ought to be well-disposed and attentive to this great gift!
 - This profound reality needs to be taught to children in a credible way. If we teach our children such a profound teaching as the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, and then carry on business as usual before and immediately after Mass, how can we expect them to believe or to be reverent? Do we really believe it?

B. **Friday Fast/Sacrifice:** Abstain from meat and eat simply, such as having no desserts and/or coffee, etc., or pick another sacrifice each family member will perform that day (a Friday sacrifice of *some kind* is required by the law of the Church).

- The idea is to offer a sacrifice along with our Lord's Sacrifice on Calvary for the salvation of the world. As a family and as individuals we can offer our sacrifices for a particular intention. For example, "Lord Jesus, I offer my fast today for the conversion of my brother who is an unbeliever." Or, "Lord, I offer today's sacrifice for my dear friend who has cancer."

How many sacrifices and prayers are needed for the conversion of such a troubled world? How about this one: "Lord, I offer this fast from food today for the millions of people who will go hungry today." What a great family fast and prayer, especially if you then give the amount of money you saved from not eating a particular food, like meat, to help the hungry. Your family

can make a difference by uniting your sacrifices with that of our Lord's on the Cross. Turn your sacrifices into a beautiful prayer.

Practicing sacrifices also moves your family away from the self-indulgent, instant gratification culture toward a self-giving spirit. This creates a Christ-like atmosphere in the home. For example, people who are accustomed to sacrifice tend to be more attentive to the needs of others (they are not overly preoccupied with satisfying their own needs).

1. Some people are able to endure a bread and water fast throughout the day, but this is difficult for many people and unreasonable for smaller children. Perhaps adults and teenagers could try a bread, water and fruit fast as a start or another modification. You could end the day with a simple rice and beans or meatless pasta supper. Maybe you start even smaller and drink instant coffee instead of brewed coffee, abstain from snacks, from meat or some other variation. Again, start small if needed and develop your spiritual practice as a family over time.
2. Instead of a food sacrifice (or in addition to it), you may fast/offer sacrifice in a different way. For instance, try fasting from television all day Friday. Maybe you can do without the computer (except for work) or the cellular telephone, or air conditioning at home and in the car, etc.
3. As a family (especially those with children still at home), share your experience at the end of the day (the evening meal, for instance). Perhaps discuss difficulties along with strategies for improving the fast/sacrifice the following Friday.

RULE V: THE MORAL LIFE OF THE FAMILY

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
(Colossians 3:12-14; RSV Catholic Ed.)

- A. **Parental example** is the single most important factor in having solid morals within the family unit and in raising children who respect the moral law. A child believes and follows examples more often than words. We all know of the awkward situation where a young child publicly blurts out a foul word or phrase he frequently hears at home! Everyone knows, of course, where he got it.
1. Parents, therefore, should do frequent examinations of conscience and go to frequent confession (at least once/month). Make a good confession: be thorough and be prepared. State your sins without excuses.
 2. Spouses ought to work diligently to perfect their marriage and each other, not by pointing out each other's faults, but by identifying one's own faults and asking your spouse for forgiveness. This also means accepting criticism when it comes your way as a means of reaching perfection. Together, study what the Church teaches about marriage and married love (e.g., Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*, and other Church documents).
 3. Parents need to set the example in prayer, Mass attendance, keeping the *Sabbath* holy, not using the Lord's name in vain, not swearing, not gossiping, dressing modestly, not criticizing the Church and Her priests (especially in front of the children), etc.
 4. *Being obedient to the teachings of the Church is essential.* What laws of the Church are you breaking and how can you possibly think this disobedience will not affect your children? Do you want obedient children? Then be obedient children of God and His Church! If you decide as a parent to "pick and choose" what you will obey, then do you not think your children will learn to do the same toward authority, yours and God's? The most obvious example of this for spouses of child-bearing age is God's law on procreation (i.e., contraception). Have you rejected this moral law? Have you even studied it? If we knowingly and freely reject God's law, we cannot rightly expect God to bless us, period.
- B. **Discipline and Rules:** The aforementioned brings us to rules and discipline. As parents, you have the awesome responsibility of forming the next generation of Christians and citizens. A faithful and successful life requires discipline and the ability to follow rules (people who do not follow rules live chaotic lives, at best, and criminal lives, at worst). Love requires discipline. Someone will eventually discipline your children if you do not: a boss, the police, a judge, God.

1. The first rule of the family, particularly the children, should be respect for elders, beginning with their parents. Disrespect and disobedience from your children need to be corrected swiftly. You are your children's *parents*; you are not called to be their friends. In fact, a loving *parent* is more desirable and provides more security to a child than a friend. In the end, they will love and respect you more for this philosophy of parenting than a lax, tepid approach that leaves a child without the security of boundaries and a disciplined life.
2. House Rules: There should be clear and well-defined house rules (including chores) that are evaluated periodically. Deviations ought to be corrected promptly. Furthermore, parents must set a good example. For example:
 - a. Respect for parents and each other (such as not "talking back," obedience, not interrupting [especially adults], no hitting, rules for modest dress, not addressing adults by their first names, etc.);
 - b. Gratitude for what you have (no complaining);
 - c. Rules of prayer and prayer times;
 - d. Bedtime rules;
 - e. Technology rules (limits), including television, computer, cellular phones, etc;
 - f. Household chores;
 - g. Et cetera

C. **Living a simple life** is of paramount importance for the Christian family. Not only does Christ teach Gospel frugality and simplicity, but the Church has promoted this virtue from its earliest saintly examples, such as seen in the *Acts of the Apostles* (see appendix for bibliographical references). We need to stop using material things as a drug to soothe a sense of meaninglessness and instead, find authentic meaning in God. Your family's intimacy with God will grow as you become more detached from material things. God will not compete with another "love."

1. Differentiate between what you *need* from what you *want*. Identify *necessities* as opposed to *comforts and extras*. Eliminate a number of these extras as a means of striving to live a simple life. (Underlying the living of the simple life is a strong faith-life that seeks God above all else.) A longing for holiness supports the simple life. An authentic prayer life leads to a desire to detach oneself from all that is not God.
2. *Detachment*: Strive as a family to be detached from material things. The inability to let go of a material object, even if only temporarily (such as during Lent) reveals an inordinate attachment to it. Remedy this by talking with God about it and bringing the matter to confession! Remedy it in your children by teaching them to do without extras, even giving them to the poor.

Concrete examples of the simple life:

1. Do you really need all of the entertainment and technology your family currently possesses? How many cell phones do you really need? How many cable/satellite stations must you have?
2. How about all of those little "delicacies" you enjoy (like candy and other foods, soft drinks, etc.)? Is meat necessary every day? Does everyone in the family need to eat only what they like? Perhaps teaching your children to be grateful for what they are served, even if it is not their favorite, will make them better Christians and more compassionate to those who have little or nothing. Do not worry that your children will starve; they will eat what they are served when they are hungry enough!
3. Do you really need your heat set at a perfectly (or near) comfortable level? Why not reduce the heat setting to below 70 degrees? (Many people in the world have no heat).
4. Do you really need your air conditioner set so low? Why not set it at 79 degrees (or have none at all)?
5. Do you really need a bigger house? Do you need new furniture and appliances? Can you live just fine with things that do not exactly suit you, but still serve their purpose? (You should visit a little hut in Haiti and see how those families live, if you think this is harsh).
6. Do you really need a long shower (or two a day)? Do you even need a shower every day? Say *No!* to wasteful teenagers!
7. How much money do you spend on cosmetics/beauty products, hair styling, etc.? Can you cut it back? (You will age and die whether you use them or not!) Do we not respect age? Do we worship youthfulness? (The sin of vanity, I suspect, is confessed very little).
8. Why not give some of the money you save from living a frugal life to the poor, who often enjoy none of the comforts just mentioned?

...I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God. (St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, 3:14-19)

A Word to Parents with Grown Children

Perhaps your children are already grown and no longer living at home. Whether you are married or alone you still have a Christian duty toward your family. You have a duty, out of love, to pray for the living and deceased members of your family, especially those living members who are not practicing and faithful Catholics. You should offer sacrifices (i.e., fasting, deprivations) for members of your family (living and deceased), including asking your priest to offer Masses for them. Moreover, you never stop being a parent to your living children; therefore, you still have a responsibility to help guide them, without being overbearing.

Finally, be reconciled. Unforgiveness hurts fester within the individual and tear at the fabric of family life. They also darken one's soul, making growth in the spiritual life difficult, if not impossible. If you have not asked forgiveness of a family member (or have not forgiven them), do it! If you have not already gone to confession to confess the mistakes you made when you were a younger parent (and perhaps still make), do it without delay! The Lord is waiting for you with open arms to forgive and heal you. Finally, ask God to help you to trust in His mercy so you will forgive yourself.

A Word to Grown Children

Children, even when grown, are still bound by the Fourth Commandment to "honor thy father and mother." What does this mean? First, it means praying for your parents. Also, it means respectfully listening to what they have to say to you, even when it is a correction, or a story you may have heard many times before. Praying for patience and understanding may be your prayer. It means caring for them, calling and visiting them, to the best of your ability, when they are elderly, sick or otherwise in need.

Children also have an obligation to forgive their parents for the mistakes they have made in the past, not continually "holding it over their heads." Forgive your parents as you want God to forgive you. Moreover, adult children have no business blaming every bad aspect of their existence on the mistakes their parents made in child-rearing. Take responsibility for your own life. Take responsibility for your own mistakes. Learn to forgive or you will be forever doomed to a life of bitterness and misery. Learn to forgive and you will grow to know the fulness of God's love and peace.

APPENDIX A: PRAYERS FOR THE FAMILY AND INDIVIDUALS

(You are encouraged to obtain a book of Catholic prayers for a more complete listing)

[Note: Try posting these prayers in strategic places throughout the house. For example, the Morning Offering could be posted to the bathroom mirror, the prayers for meals in the center of the kitchen table, the Guardian Angel prayer at the bedside, a Rosary could be hung from the bedposts, etc.]

MORNING OFFERING

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in thanksgiving for your favors, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all my relatives and friends, and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father. Amen.

[Note: Two additional prayers good for the morning (or other times) follow: Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary]

CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Merciful Jesus, I consecrate myself today and always to Your Most Sacred Heart. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus I implore, that I may ever love you more and more. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus I trust in you! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus I believe in your love for me. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like Your Heart. Amen.

CONSECRATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

My queen and my mother, I give myself entirely to you, and, in proof of my affection, I give you my eyes, my ears, my tongue, my heart, my whole being without reserve. Since I am your own, keep me and guard me as your property and possession. Amen.

CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY FAMILY

O Jesus, our most loving Redeemer, Who having come to enlighten the world with thy teaching and example, willed to pass the greater part of thy life in humility and subjection to Mary and Joseph in the poor home of Nazareth, thus sanctifying the family that was to be an example for all Christian families, graciously receive our family as it dedicates and consecrates itself to Thee this day.

Defend us, guard us and establish amongst us Thy holy fear, true peace and concord in Christian love; in order that, by conforming ourselves to the Divine pattern of Thy family, we may be able, all of us without exception, to attain to eternal happiness.

Mary, dear Mother of Jesus and Mother of us, by thy kindly intercession make this, our humble offering, acceptable in the sight of Jesus, and obtain for us His graces and blessings.

O Saint Joseph, most holy guardian of Jesus and Mary, assist us by thy prayers in all our spiritual and temporal necessities, that we may be enabled to praise our Divine Savior, Jesus, together with Mary and thee, for all eternity. Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEALS

We give you thanks, Almighty God, for these and all your many benefits who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen. May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

GUARDIAN ANGEL PRAYER

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day (or night) be at my side, to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

[Note: The following three prayers would be good prayers to say before Mass as a couple and/or with the children. They would also be excellent as part of evening prayers. They could easily be kept handy and visible in your car.]

ACT OF FAITH

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

ACT OF HOPE

O my God, relying on your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.

ACT OF CHARITY

O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because you are all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.

[Note: The following prayer is an ancient tradition in the Church. The Angelus, honoring the Incarnation (God becoming man for our salvation), is traditionally recited morning, noon and evening, but can be recited as part of morning or evening prayers, before meals, before or after Mass (or however you decide to incorporate it) as a family.]

ANGELUS

Leader: The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary;

Response: *And she conceived by the Holy Spirit*
Hail Mary...

Leader: Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Response: *Be it done unto me according to thy Word.*
Hail Mary...

Leader: And the Word was made flesh,

Response: *And dwelt among us.*
Hail Mary...

Leader: Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,

Response: *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O lord, thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

[Note: The following is a great prayer to say in general and specifically to ask for protection against evil or a particular temptation.]

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PRAYER

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the Heavenly Hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

BRIEF PRAYERS

[Note: The following are simple, short prayers that can be said throughout the day, whether at work, in school or at home. They are helpful as a way to honor God during the day or to call upon him in some time of need or hardship. Commit a few to memory (and/or make up your own). When you have difficulty praying, a prayer will always be on your lips!]

My Lord and my God!

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner!

Come, Lord Jesus!

Jesus, I trust in you.

Jesus, I love you.

Blood of Jesus, wash me!

Wounds of Jesus, heal me!

Cross of Jesus, support me!

Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love!

Lord, come into my heart.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

Heart of Jesus, I adore; Heart of Mary, I implore; Heart of Joseph, Holy Just; in these three Hearts I place my trust.

Mary, my Queen, my Mother!

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I love you; save souls.

Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel, Saint Raphael, protect and help me.

THE ROSARY (guides to the Rosary available in most parishes)

Praying the *Rosary* has two functions: to meditate on significant moments in the Gospel (i.e. the birth of Jesus, the Passion of our Lord, the Resurrection, etc.) and to honor our Blessed Mother. We repeat the Hail Mary ten times as we reflect on each mystery as a way to establish a “rhythm” of prayer, as a way to continually recall Mary’s intimate involvement in our Redemption in Christ and to ask Mary to help us.

THE DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET (guides available in most parishes)

This prayer also establishes a rhythm of prayer while meditating on the Passion of Christ, particularly through His five wounds: hands, feet and side. Through the prayer, we make an offering, in union with our Lord’s, for the salvation of the world.

APPENDIX B: EDUCATIONAL AND PRAYER RESOURCES

(This is just a sampling of some key resources)

CATECHETICAL (TEACHING RESOURCES)

The Apostolate's Family Catechism (available through Apostolate of Family Consecration, Bloomingdale, Ohio, www.familyland.org)

Didache series (available through Emmaus Road Publishing and www.cuf.org)

Faith & Life series (available through Emmaus Road Pub. & www.cuf.org)

Mary Foundation (educational CDs, etc., available at www.catholicity.com)

Truth in the Heart DVD series for children (taught by the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecelia and available through www.ewtn.com).

Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism (available through various Catholic booksellers)

Saint Joseph Communications (educational CDs available at www.saintjoe.com)

Seton Home School materials, Front Royal, Virginia

PRAYER RESOURCES

Imitation of Christ by Thomas A Kempis

Magnificat (monthly periodical with daily Mass readings, morning and evening prayers and meditations available at www.magnificat.net)

Magnifikids (*Magnificat* for kids available at www.magnificat.net)

Mary, My Hope, by Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D.

Pocket Book of Catholic Devotions, by Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D.

Pocket Book of Catholic Novenas, by Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D.

Pocket Book of Catholic Prayers, by Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D.

Many prayers and devotions available through www.ewtn.com, www.familyland.org and others

OTHER RESOURCES

Apostolate for Family Consecration (www.familyland.org)

Catholic Action for Faith and Family (www.CatholicAction.org)

Catholics United for the Faith (www.cuf.org)

Couple to Couple League (www.ccl.org)

New Hope Publications (pamphlets and books at www.newhope-ky.org)

New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia (www.newadvent.org)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.usccb.org)

APPENDIX C: REFERENCE MATERIALS (BOOKS, PERIODICALS, ETC.)

(This is hardly an exhaustive list, therefore, the first several listings are a few publishing houses that are faithful to the Church.)

PUBLISHERS/BOOKSELLERS

Ave Maria Press (www.avemariapress.com)

Catholic Answers (www.catholic.com)

Emmaus Road Publishing (www.emmausroad.org)

Eternal Word Television Network (www.ewtn.com)

Ignatius Press (www.ignatius.com)

Tan Books (has many saint coloring books at www.tanbooks.com)

PERIODICALS: NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, ONLINE NEWS, ETC.

National Catholic Register (www.ncregister.com)

Catholic World News (www.cwnews.com)

Eternal Word Television Network (www.ewtn.org)

Faith & Family Magazine (www.faithandfamilylive.com)

Inside the Vatican (www.insidethevatican.com)

Lay Witness (Catholics United for the Faith at www.cuf.org)

LifeSiteNews (www.LifeSiteNews.com)

This Rock (www.catholic.com)

The Vatican (source of papal encyclicals, etc., at www.vatican.va)

Zenit (www.zenit.org)

BOOKS

Butler's Lives of the Saints

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Family Handbook, Fr. Lawrence Lovasik

Catholic for a Reason (several volumes), Scott Hahn and Leon Suprenant, Jr.

Compendium of the Catechism

Discipline that Lasts a Lifetime, Dr. Ray Guarendi

The Essential Catholic Survival Guide, Catholic Answers

Good Discipline, Good Teens, Dr. Ray Guarendi

Holy Bible (versions: *Revised Standard Version-Catholic*; *New American Bible*)

Life-Giving Love (on marriage), Kimberly Hahn

New Catholic Picture Bible, Fr. Lawrence Lovasik

Prayer Primer, Fr. Thomas Dubay

The Secret Diary of Elisabeth Leseur: The Woman Whose Goodness Changed Her Husband from Atheist to Priest

True Devotion to Mary, St. Louis de Montfort

AUTHORS (a small sampling)

Avila, Theresa (Saint)

Barron, Robert (Rev.)

Dubay, Thomas (Rev.)

Escriva, St. Jose Maria

Everet, Jason

Groeschel, Benedict (Rev.)

Guarendi, Ray (Dr.)

Hahn, Scott

John Paul II

Keating, Karl

Kreeft, Peter

Lewis, C.S.

Liguori, St. Alphonsus

Lovasik, Lawrence (Rev.) – Fr. Lovasik has many wonderful books for children and
Families, including the saints

Madrid, Patrick

Martin, Ralph

Ratzinger, Joseph (now Pope Benedict XVI)

Sheen, Fulton (Archbishop)

APPENDIX D: ENTERTAINMENT

CATHOLIC MOVIES (SAINTS, ETC.)

Ignatius Press

www.decentmovies.com

PILGRIMAGE SITES (a sampling)

Catholic Familyland (Apostolate for Family Consecration)
Bloomington, Ohio

Divine Mercy Shrine (Marians of the Immaculate Conception)
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Grotto of the Redemption
West Bend, Iowa

Marytown
Mundelein, Illinois

Our Lady of the Angels Monastery (home of EWTN)
Irondale, Alabama

Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine
La Cross, Wisconsin

Our Lady of the Snows
Belleville, Illinois

Saint Meinrad Archabbey
Saint Meinrad, Indiana

MUSIC (a sampling)

Gregorian Chant

Marie Bellet (family Christian)

Karl Kohlhasse (popular Christian)

Matt Maher (popular Christian)

Rich Mullins (popular Christian)

Andrew Peterson (popular Christian)

Rebecca St. James (popular Christian)

Sacred Music (many choices of Masses, hymns, etc.)

** Saturate your home with holy and wholesome sights and sounds!*

APPENDIX E: QUICK DAILY PRAYER CHECKLIST

[Not that prayer should ever be a “quick checklist,” but an encounter with the One we love. Nonetheless, to help develop a daily pattern, the following may be useful. Remember, this is a beginning habit-forming exercise, not the end product, onto which you will build]

- + Morning Offering (as an individual and as a family)
- + Prayer before and after breakfast
- + Prayer on the way to work/school (i.e., Our Father..., Hail Mary..., spontaneous)
- + Prayer before and after lunch (did you make the “Sign of the Cross” or hide your prayer?)
- + Prayer of thanks during the day (one or more of the “brief prayers” listed earlier)
- + Prayer on the way home from work/school
- + Prayer before and after supper
- + Prayer in evening with family/spouse (Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Scripture reading, spontaneous, other)
- + Prayer at bedtime (Guardian angel prayer, bless children and spouse with Holy Water, etc.)
- + Did you use the *Magnificat* morning and evening prayers/readings/meditations?

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