

# Prayer on the Run



Your go-to guide for  
spiritual parenting,  
starting with the basics...



**Feb 2014**

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# Feb 2014



## This Month...

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| Su 2  | <b>The Presentation of the Lord</b>                         |
| Mo 3  | St Blaise & St Angsar                                       |
| We 5  | St Agatha   |
| Su 9  | <b>Ordinary Time 5<br/>Light of the World</b>               |
| Mo 10 | St Scholastica  |
| Tu 11 | Our Lady of Lourdes   |
| Fr 14 | Sts Cyril & Methodius<br>St Valentine                       |
| Su 16 | <b>Ordinary Time 6<br/>God's Teaching</b>                   |
| Fr 21 | St Peter Damian   |
| Sa 22 | Chair of St Peter   |
| Su 23 | <b>Ordinary Time 7<br/>Love your Enemies</b><br>St Polycarp |

Let's face it; modern parenting is a vast juggling act. Between school, sports, music, coaching, medical appointments and homework it's common to feel overwhelmed. Add to the mix for Christian parents, the responsibility to also nurture their child's spiritual and religious formation, and we've got a whole cohort of stressed out, frazzled, and probably grumpy, parents.

In *Familiaris Consortio, (The Family in the Modern World)* Pope John Paul II recognises the challenges faced by contemporary families ...

**[Many families] have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life.**

Bl. John Paul II, *Familaris Consortio*.

## What's a busy, exhausted set of parents to do?

With mortgages, food bills, endless laundry and small primates... oops!, children... and all their attendant activities, there is barely enough time or money to go round. We all know that corralling multiple children into a routine is like trying to pick up ping pong balls with chopsticks. Now there is Sunday Mass and family prayer expected on top of that?

# Social Benefits of Prayer

While most people wouldn't question that family prayer is beneficial, it's always helpful to have scientific proof. So what does the data tell us?

Religious practice is associated with a variety of positive social outcomes\* like greater marital satisfaction, better relationships with children, higher career aspirations, better physical health outcomes, as well as lower rates of teen pregnancy, violent behaviour, mental health issues, divorce and domestic violence.

These benefits are attributed to regular, weekly attendance of religious services and the community support that churches and parishes provide. It is more difficult to gauge the impact of private family prayer itself given it is unique to every family.

\*Why Religion Matters Even More, The Heritage Foundation.



However, sociologists have noted that the motivations of practicing religious families are critical to unlocking these benefits. Going to church for purely social reasons will not deliver these benefits. Rather, parents need to be motivated by their love of God (sociologists call this intrinsic motivation) to access these benefits for their family. Why does it make a difference? Most likely because Intrinsically motivated parents do not confine their faith to Sundays, but make family prayer an important part of every day life.



# Getting Started

Creating a vibrant spiritual life for your family is no easy feat. It requires attention, perseverance, patience and a very large measure of grace. Whilst you're busy cultivating those virtues, here are some tips to laying good foundations for your family prayer.



## Prioritise

The first thing you as a parent must decide is to make it a priority. If family prayer time is bumped for scheduling reasons, your children will take away the message that family prayer is less important than homework, the TV series, visiting friends etc. It will require sacrifice and forgoing other opportunities or enjoyable activities.

We all have the same amount of limited time in a day. Those that have successfully made family prayer a regular part of their life, have made it a priority.

# Timing

- If you have young children, keep it **SHORT**. Let's face it; a bouncy three-year-old boy could probably not sit through an entire rosary. So start with a Joey Rosary or a decade.
- Keep the timing as **CONSISTENT** as possible. Prayers can easily be incorporated into the bedtime routine whilst you have little ones. As they get older, consider a different time like after dinner or on the way to school in the mornings.
- At various seasons of your family's life, one single, whole family prayer time might be just too difficult, but that is not a reason to give up! Even if you have to **BREAK IT UP** into small groups, making sure you or your better half gets some time to pray with the kids will have an impact.

# Format

- **START SMALL, DREAM BIG.** Choose a simple, short format that you can consistently keep. Don't make this bigger than it needs to be initially because you can always increase time or complexity later if desired. Think of how you feel on the absolute worst day and what you could manage in that state. That should be your daily anchor
- Create a **FAMILY PRAYER SPACE** in a common area of your home. Not only is it a visual reminder of your family's commitment to prayer. It also destresses the process by having everything in one place.



FAITH

# 'Traditional' Prayers

For those times when you're exhausted, or you don't know where to start...

- **THE ROSARY**- comes in many varied forms, The Complete, the Decade, the Joey and the Minute.

- **THE DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET**

- **PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS.**

Some of our Favourites:

- Prayer of St Francis
- St Patrick's Breast Plate

- **GUARDIAN ANGEL PRAYER**



# Spontaneous Prayer

Spontaneous prayer with children can be heart-warming and great fun. To keep it somewhat orderly, especially with young children, have a special object to pass around to indicate who's turn it is to pray. You can use a candle, a cross or some other prayer aid.

## TRINITY PRAYER

This prayer follows a simplified version of St Ignatius' Daily Examen offering Thank You prayers to the Father, Sorry prayers to the Son and Helping prayers to the Holy Spirit.

# Daily Review

Start by asking your children about the best and worst of their day. This helps them to process strong emotions and to grow in self-awareness and emotional literacy. Then show them how to thank God for both good and unpleasant things that happen, for we learn and are enriched by both. This is a wonderful bedtime prayer but can also be done over dinner or after school.

# Scripture

Invest in a really good children's bible and read your kids bedtime stories. Bam! Two birds with one stone!

# Music

St Augustine said, "When we sing, we pray twice." If you or your better half can play an instrument/sing well, there is no reason why you could not incorporate those gifts. Learn some contemporary praise and worship songs and classic hymns and get jamming.

# Grace

Get into the habit of saying Grace before your family meals. It's a simple way to get the ball rolling on this family prayer thing. You could use a traditional Grace, or make up your own.

# Starting with Older Kids

If you have never introduced a regular prayer routine and your kids are 10 and older is a little more delicate getting them engaged.

- **CHOOSE A TIME WHEN BOTH PARENTS CAN PARTICIPATE.** Your kids, especially your sons just won't be interested if it is purely 'Mum's thing'.
- **TALK ABOUT IT.** Have a family discussion and let the kids have some input in the timing and format. Agree to some expectations around attendance and behaviour.
- **TRIAL AND ERROR.** Lent or Advent is perfect for starting a new habit and might make it a bit more palatable with a timed 'trial period'. If it doesn't work, adjust it as needed.





- **KEEP A CONSISTENT FORMAT** so that time is not wasted by with awkward discussion about what kind of prayer to do. We recommend starting with Lectio Divina.
- **KEEP THE PRESSURE OFF!** No nagging, guilt-tripping or cajoling. Remember, you cannot control their relationship with Jesus! All you can do is create opportunities and invite.
- **DON'T MAKE ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY.** Forced attendance just breeds resentment and frustration.
- **JUST START DOING IT.** Even if it is just you. You will benefit regardless and your example makes a powerful statement to your kids.



# At the end of the day...

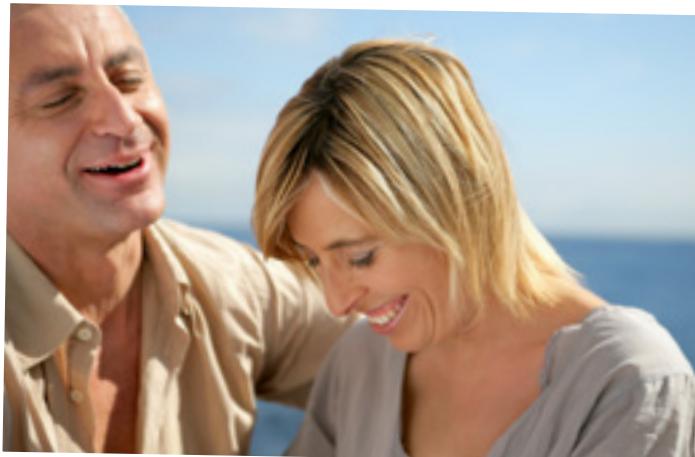
... much of this is in God's hands! He knows your struggles and will reward every effort, especially in the early days when it all seems fruitless and pointless. None-the-less as parents, the most valuable gift you can give your children is the knowledge that Jesus loves them. It will be imperfect, but thankfully, Jesus doesn't need perfect, just a willing and open heart.

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# Growing in Love

## Australian Catholic Marriage & Family Council

The popularity of St Valentine's Day grew out of the joy of celebrating romantic married love. The celebration also encourages us to renew and develop that love. God is love and this year we focus on one particular aspect of deepening the love of a couple, whether they are engaged or married – that is, by turning to God in 'couple prayer'.



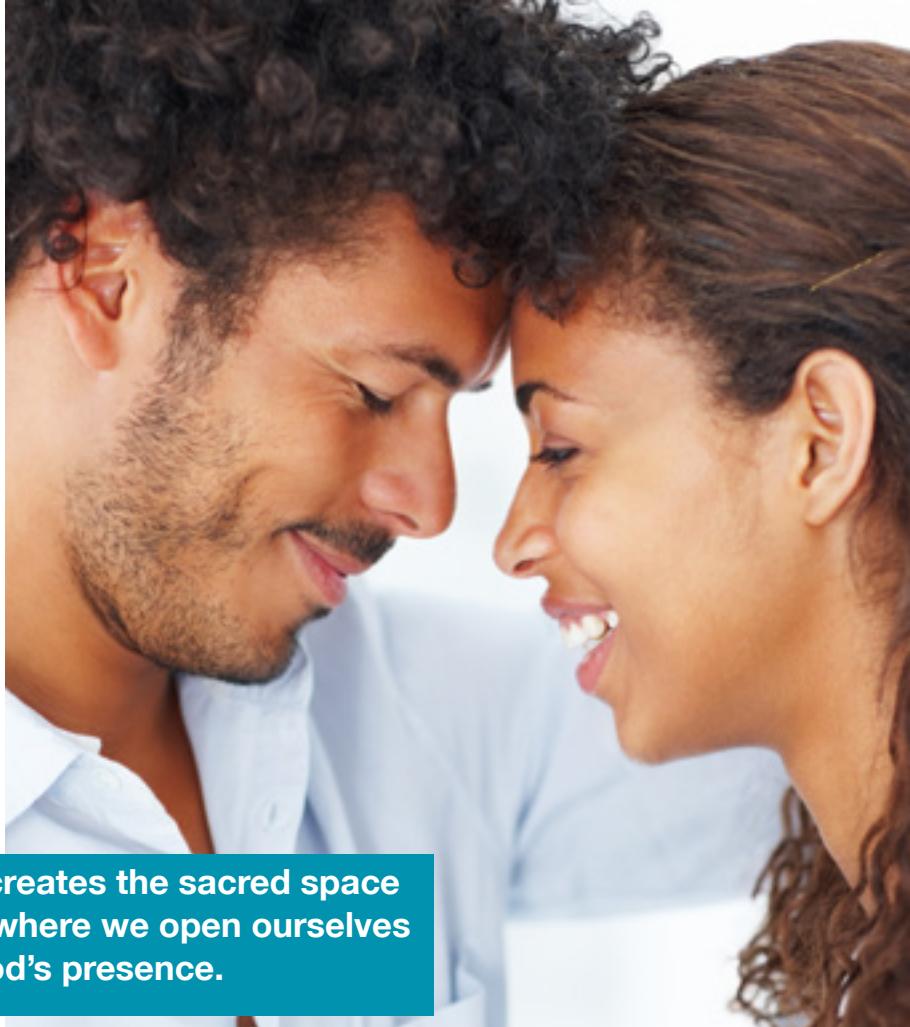
## ACMFC

Feb 14 is St Valentine's Day – a day to honour the life-long romance of marriage. CathFamily is proud to be associated with the Australian Catholic Bishop's St Valentine's Day which has been producing a resource kit since 2010 to commemorate this day. In 2014, the theme is Couple Prayer.

For additional resources, check out the ACMFC website

## **What is Couple Prayer?**

Couple Prayer is any prayer said by a couple together. Sounds simple? Well, yes and no! Many couples pray together when attending Mass, saying grace before meals or saying the Rosary. These are wonderful ways to pray but they are not 'Couple Prayer'. Couple Prayer is when an engaged or married couple speak to God about their needs, concerns and hopes while allowing the other person to hear. It requires a level of intimacy that can be challenging. However, God, the source of the couple's love can work powerfully through their prayer, deepening their relationship with each other.



**Couple Prayer creates the sacred space  
in our marriage where we open ourselves  
to God's presence.**

## Why Pray as a Couple?

One reason is the high correlation between couple prayer and marriage stability – the couple that prays together, stays together. Jesus promised that when two or more are gathered in his name, he would be in their midst.

While individual prayer is always essential, there is a special power that comes through couple prayer. The Sacrament of Matrimony is expressed through relationship and God's grace is always available to us in helping us to become more and more 'one flesh', that is, a communion of body and soul.

**Praying as a couple also enhances family prayer. The more comfortable parents are in praying together, the more effective they will be in drawing their children into family prayer.**



# Keys to Couple Prayer

1

## Trust.

We don't have to be 'super holy' to pray as a couple. God wants us to come to him as we are, without pretence. Aim to pray with the same trust and familiarity with which we converse with our closest friends.

2

## Regularity.

As with all relationships, regular contact keeps communication flowing easily. Just make a start. Then try to make it more regular. Developing a 'rhythm' of praying at a certain time helps to bring order into our pressured modern lives, prioritising God and each other. The key is to find a good time when our routine can accommodate some minutes for Couple Prayer.

3

## Flexibility.

However, 'prayer on the run' may be just what is necessary at certain moments. Try different approaches according to different needs and situations.

4

## Openness.

There are many things to pray about but our marriage is of central importance. Openness to each other in prayer opens us to God's grace. The more open and self-revealing we can be about our emotions and needs in our marriage, the more we will grow in affection for each other and the more we will grow spiritually.

## Ways to Pray as a Couple

There are as many ways to pray together as there are couples and no one way is the ‘right way’. The following are some suggestions.

1

### Just do it!

God loves us and yearns for us to be in communication with him. But we have to make a first step. It may be simply holding hands and praying silently together or saying a Hail Mary together. The Lord will always respond!

3.

### Scripture Prayer

Prayer can be based on a scripture passage (eg the Gospel of the day), reading the passage slowly and sharing what one hears God saying through it.

2.

### Evening Prayer

Hold hands and rest quietly for a minute to become aware of God’s presence. Think about how you have experienced God through your spouse today. Share with each other, then pray together:

*Lord God,*

*I praise you for the gift of my spouse,  
and I thank you for the blessings  
I have had through him/her.*

*Forgive me for the times  
that I have failed*

*to love my spouse the way I should,  
and help me to do better in bringing  
your love and acceptance to him/her  
Amen.*

# Family Prayer Resources

CathFamily has a huge bank of resources available free to enrich your Family's prayer life. Ranging from everyday anchors to special seasonal rituals, all are very simple and require minimal preparation. Check it out!



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Find out more about Catholic marriage and how you can enjoy deeper intimacy and spiritual connection.

