



Spiritually Supporting Our St Francis of Assisi Families Through A Pandemic

Faith in the Home

Prayer is what keeps us together.

by [Chris Van Kirk](#) on April 1

Dear St. Francis Families,

I pray you are doing well and finding your new normal. We in the Faith Formation office are ZOOMing our way through ideas on how to proceed with forming the faith of our parishioners here at Saint Francis during this ever changing time. One way will be to send you a resource like this each Wednesday, offering ideas for practicing faith in the homes.

My own children are grown and out of the house so it is just me and my husband trying to find a new normal. But I remember 20 years ago, I had four very young children on September 11, 2001. That was another scary time. Time stood still as we tried to navigate through a new way of life. We all worried about our kids and how to explain what had just happened and tried to convince them they were safe even though we had no idea what the next day would bring. It is all a blur now how we got through it. But there is one special moment I remember vividly. My neighborhood moms and kids were outside in someone's front yard in our cul-de-sac. It was very quiet. We lived in the flight path of the Des Moines airport but all planes had been grounded. The kids were running around as the moms were gathered, barely talking on someone's driveway. We did not know what to say or how to feel. One mom suggested that we should pray. So we gathered the kids in a circle and prayed together. It was a beautiful moment amongst all the chaos and fear that I will always remember.

This made me think of all of you and your children. What will they remember of this time in 20 years? What will their memories be? This is a scary time when the daily topic around them is how many people died today. Are kids thinking that their parents, grandparents or friends are going to die? Are they going to have enough food and toilet paper? What can you as parents do to calm their fears and change the narrative of what they will remember of this time? The answer I think is prayer. This is a perfect time to turn to God in prayer. Set the tone in your household of hope and prayer. If you do not have a daily habit of prayer in your household now is the perfect time to start! Hopefully it will create a beautiful memory of how your family came together and prayed their way through this tough time or maybe it will strengthen the prayer routine you already have established in

your family. So how do you establish this type of prayer routine? Here is a simple plan you can use.

Establish Prayer As the Center of Your Home

Day 1 All the experts are saying that you should establish a routine for your school age kids as that is what they are used to in their school day. I'm sure your inbox is blowing up with all kinds of ideas as we are blessed to have the ability to stay connected with the outside world via technology. But, I am sure it is all a bit overwhelming as well. Take time right now and bow your head and pray this simple prayer...

*Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages "curing every disease and illness."
Come to our aid now, that we may experience your healing love. Amen.*

Day 2 Set a time and a location to gather as a family in prayer every day to pray for the world during the pandemic. Start today with the prayer above or a simple prayer from your heart. Then each child can finish this prayer starter: *God, thank you for...* Allow each member of the family to finish this simple prayer of gratitude. End your prayer by reciting the Hail Mary together. Tell your family that you will meet every day at this time (or as close to it as possible) for a family prayer.

Day 3 Before your Family Prayer Time, watch this video to learn how to prepare a prayer table in your home: <https://youtu.be/1OJJZughlXc>. Gather items like: a small table or stool, Bible, candle, crucifix or cross, rosary, Mary statue, and a purple cloth for Lent (this cloth can change with liturgical seasons, so change it to white for Easter). If you don't have a certain item at the moment, print off a picture of it. Set up the table when your kids are not looking and let them discover it. Tell them you will talk about it at your Family Prayer Time today. Start Family Prayer Time by introducing the items on your prayer table and why they are special enough to be on your prayer table. Remind them that these are sacramentals, sacred symbols of our faith and should be treated with reverence. They are not toys. Have a short prayer like yesterday and end with each family member finishing this prayer starter: *I praise God for...*

Day 4 Before your Family Prayer Time, read the attached article called *Enthroning the Bible in the Family*. Enthroning the bible as a family can become a tradition that your children will remember for a lifetime and helps children understand more clearly the importance of God's word in your home. A script is provided in the article. Before beginning, explain what a Bible Enthronement is. Give each child an item from the prayer table to hold. In the classroom we have them hold the items in alphabetical order to make it easy to know who goes first (i.e. Bible, candle, crucifix, Mary statue, Rosary).

Line up your family with their items at the front door of your house. Have the person holding the Bible hold it above their head and be the line leader as you all process to the prayer table. (Note that this is similar to how Mass begins with a procession!) When you arrive at the prayer table each person can then reverently lay their item on the table as you all gather around. Use the script in the article as your prayer today.

Day 5 At Family Prayer Time ask *Alexa* (or another virtual assistant) to play a song as a signal to the family that it is time to pray or have some church bells ringing. Start prayer

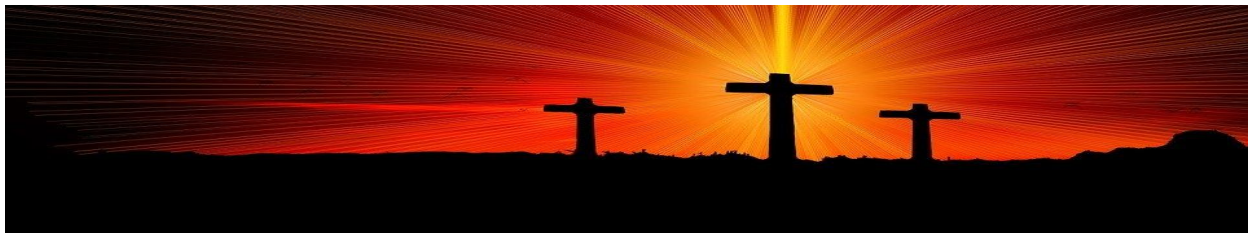
with the Bible Enthronement. Share a favorite prayer from a parent. Before you end your prayer time together each day offer one of the Prayer Prompts below. Model how to do this and then allow each person in the family to offer their prayer. Then choose a prayer to end your prayer time such as a Hail Mary or Our Father.

- Please bless...
- God, you are...
- I praise God for...
- God sometimes I feel...
- God, thank you for...
- Jesus, I ask that you...
- Lord, help me with

Day 6 Pray again! Let someone else be the line leader today. Process to your prayer table and pray. The daily readings are accessible on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/> if you want to include those in your daily prayer.

If you miss a day, it's OK. Start again the next day. There is no right or wrong way to do it. There are many resources online as well. The important thing is to gather together and pray every day to develop a habit of prayer.

We will all get through this tough time. It will end at some time in the future. Hopefully something wonderful can come out of all this chaos and your family can one day look back and remember how you came together and prayed. God bless you all.



Children/Families Resources

- Attached is an article entitled *Faith-fully Navigating Coronavirus with Your Kids*, which has some good advice for talking to kids about Covid-19.
- Are your kids getting bored being at home? Click [here](#) for some fun faith-filled games.
- [The Sunday Connection](#) provides useful background and activities to better understand the upcoming Sunday's Scripture readings, helping you to connect the Scripture to daily life in a meaningful way.
- Are your children used to attending Children's Liturgy of the Word during 9:30 or 11:15 am masses? Here is a [link](#) to the Leaflets for you to use at home.

Teen Resources

- [Resources](#) to help teens stay close to God's Word through the Sunday Readings.
- [An article](#) helping teens prepare for participating in live-streamed masses on Sunday.

Adults Resources

- [Fr. John Ricardo](#) whom many of you know through Catholic Radio that he is offering a three day reflection series THIS WEEK that will help you prepare for Lent.
- [Retreat-in-place](#) with the Benedictine monks of St. Benedict's Abbey. Title: All My Desires are Known to you.