



Family Life Office

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IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

Family Ritual

Celebrate our country's birthday in a spectacular way! Fireworks and picnics are great choices. Thank God for this special gift we have been given—Pray that we all recognize our freedom as a gift from God and choose to honor Him for His goodness to us.



A Family Birthday

We celebrate our family's birthday on our wedding anniversary. We have a birthday cake (everyone helps blow out candles) and get a family "present." We get out our wedding album and talk about the beginnings of our family, too. We also try to attend Mass together at the church where my husband and I were married. It has been great fun for all, and it helps our children feel connected to that "ancient event."

-Susan Caro

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Catholic Parent
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Reflecting—Maybe by the Pool

Christian service involves an element of reflection. We might pause before we serve, considering why it is that helping others is so central to our Faith. After our act of service, it's good to ask ourselves a few questions. How did my serving draw me closer to the Lord? If my experience of helping was unpleasant in some way, was it really a total loss?

Summer's pace might make reflecting on service or life in general a bit more likely. An excellent basis for reflection is our weekly readings from Mass on Sunday, especially the Gospel. Developing a habit of reading the Sunday Gospel beforehand and talking about it on the way to or from Mass, connecting it to helping others or any important aspect of your family's daily life, is an excellent practice to enhance spiritual wellbeing throughout the entire year.

Sacred Stories

By Judith Dunlap

The Bible is a library of books: poetry, wise sayings, history, letters and stories. All of the books have one thing in common. They all relate to God, who was very much active in the lives of his people. I like the stories best because I get to read about ordinary men and women as well as great kings and queens who had problems just like me. I get to see how their response brought them closer to or further away from God. Reading their sacred stories helps me when I reflect on my own story.

Each of us has a story. The weeks, months and years of our life turn into the chapters of our story. Few of us reach adulthood without experiencing enough comedy and tragedy to fill our own "sacred" book. What a shame if we never take the time to sit back and "reread" these pages that continue to shape our future.

The great philosopher Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." That's a rather dramatic way of saying that life is short, and if you don't stop once in a while to reflect on it, it will pass you right by. How can we grow as persons unless we look back and learn from our past? How can we grow as Christians if we don't look back on our lives with the eyes of faith to see where we have been and where we need to be?

Take time for theological reflection. Ask yourself where God was in the various chapters in your life. Take time to sit with your children and reminisce. Help them see you as the child you once were with your own fears and failings. Share your stories and your wisdom with them. Listen to their stories and teach them the life skill of reflecting on their own lives and seeing them as sacred stories, too. For Family Response: Ask family members to talk about their favorite birthday. Include as many details as possible. End with a prayer thanking God for the people and things that made that birthday special.

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Families and the Gospel

July 7

Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

Parents are like the disciples in today's gospel. We are "sent ahead of Jesus" to prepare our children to know and receive Him. Jesus calls us "laborers" and "lambs among wolves" because parenting is hard work in a culture which rejects our values.

July 14

Lk 10: 25-37

Children learn by watching us. Do they see you helping others like the Good Samaritan, or do they see you avoiding others like the Levite in today's gospel. Worry more about what your children see in YOUR LIFE than what they see on TV.

July 21

Lk 10:38-42

In today's gospel Mary planned to visit with Jesus after her work was done. If Jesus were to visit your home today, what would he say distracts you from giving more attention to family and friends?

July 28

Lk 11:1-13

Loving parents don't give children everything they request. We strive to provide what they need. This is the lesson of today's gospel. As our children trust us, so we must trust Our Father. Just as trust gives security to our children, so our trust in God, Our Father, will give security to us as well.

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A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar



One Land, Many People

Bless our beautiful land, O Lord, with its wonderful variety of people, of races, cultures and languages.

May we be a nation of laughter and joy, of justice and reconciliation, of peace and unity, of compassion, caring and sharing.

We pray this prayer for true patriotism, in the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

-Desmond Tutu, *Everyday Prayers for Children*,
St. Anthony Messenger Press

Fourth of July Prayer

Fr. Ed Hays, *A Pilgrim's Almanac*, P. 111

We lift up our hearts, O God,
on this day of celebration in gratitude for the
gift of being Americans.

We rejoice with all those who share in the
great dream of freedom and dignity for all.

With flags and feasting, with family and
friends we salute those who have sacrificed
that we might have the opportunity to bring
to fulfillment our many God-given gifts.

As we deny all prejudice a place in our
hearts, may we also clearly declare our
intention to work for the time when all
people, regardless of race, religion, or sex,
will be granted equal dignity and worth.

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"Apple Seeds"
Fr. Brian Cavanaugh, T.O.R.

Seek Out Sources of Help for Grief

There are many sources of help for persons experiencing grief. When one makes the effort to seek out help in identifying these resources it will be beneficial. Some possible resources are:

1. Books and reading materials. Almost every good book store has a section devoted to topics related to death and dying and self-help.
2. Find a local support group through your parish, hospital or area agencies.
3. Friends and relatives can become tremendous sources of help when asked.
4. Clergy, religious and other professionals. Seeking help/counseling is not a sign of weakness but a sign that one is serious about caring for oneself.

Reprinted from the booklet published by the Family Life Office entitled
A JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF -
Out of the Darkness... Into the Dawn.