



What Makes a Family Holy?

Pope Francis

1. First: *the family prays.*

...I would like to ask you, dear families: Do you pray together from time to time as a family? Some of you do, I know. But so many people say to me: But how can we? ...But in the family how is this done? After all, prayer seems to be something personal, and besides there is never a good time, a moment of peace... Yes, all that is true enough, but it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God... all of us! We need his help, his strength, his blessing, his mercy, his forgiveness. And we need simplicity to pray as a family: simplicity is necessary! Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it's easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And also praying for one another! The husband for his wife, the wife for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents....praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong: prayer.

2. Next, *the family keeps the faith.*

Here too, we can ask: How do we keep our faith as a family? Do we keep it for ourselves, in our families, as a personal treasure like a bank account, or are we able to share it by our witness, by our acceptance of others, by our openness? We all know that families, especially young families, are often "racing" from one place to another, with lots to do. But did you ever think that this "racing" could also be the race of faith? Christian families are missionary families. ...They are missionary in everyday life, in their doing everyday things, as they bring to everything the salt and the leaven of faith! Keeping the faith in families and bringing to everyday things the salt and the leaven of faith.

3. And finally: *the family experiences joy.*

I would like to ask you all a question today. But each of you keep it in your heart and take it home. You can regard it as a kind of "homework". Only you must answer. How are things when it comes to joy at home? Is there joy in your family? You can answer this question.

Dear families, you know very well that the true joy which we experience in the family is not superficial; it does not come from material objects, from the fact that everything seems to be going well... True joy comes from a profound harmony between persons, something which we all feel in our hearts and which makes us experience the beauty of togetherness, of mutual support along life's journey. But the basis of this feeling of deep joy is the presence of God, the presence of God in the family and his love, which is welcoming, merciful, and respectful towards all. And above all, a love which is patient: patience is a virtue of God and he teaches us how to cultivate it in family life, how to be patient, and lovingly so, with each other. To be patient among ourselves. A patient love. God alone knows how to create harmony from differences. But if God's love is lacking, the family loses its harmony, self-centredness prevails and joy fades. But the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is the leaven of society as a whole.

Dear families, always live in faith and simplicity, like the Holy Family of Nazareth! The joy and peace of the Lord be always with you!

[The excerpts above are taken from the homily given by Pope Francis during the Holy Mass for the Family Day on the Occasion of the Year of Faith in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, October 27, 2013.]

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A Remarkable Prayer

Channah Ben-Eliezer

This reflection was written in 2010. The writer's father, who is mentioned in the article, died on March 22, 2013.

My father, a Holocaust survivor, recently sent me his translation of part of a prayer that observant Orthodox Jews around the world say before going to bed:

*I herewith forgive all those who have angered or taunted me,
all those who have sinned against my person,
my wealth, my possessions or my honour,
through compulsion, knowingly with malice, or in ignorance,
by their words or by their deeds.
No one should suffer punishment because of me.¹*

Amazing! I read it again. "I herewith forgive all..." Yes, it said "all". No exceptions. Imagine people around the world saying that every night. Can it be that sixty-five years ago, Jews prayed this prayer even in the concentration camps or at the doors of the gas chambers?

I know that the early Christian martyr Stephen prayed for his tormentors before he was stoned to death as have other martyrs from different religions throughout history. Perhaps this could be a prayer for saints, I thought. But what about for you and me? How does such an attitude fit in with our human sense of justice, where wrongs need to be righted first, before one can move on? In my books, the wrongdoer should at least come begging on his knees for forgiveness first. A comment from Rabbi Danzinger of the Chabad movement gave me an insight:

According to the strict letter of the law: "If someone wrongs us and sincerely asks us for our forgiveness, we must forgive them – provided that they have compensated us for any actual damages." Acting beyond the letter of the law, we ought to forgive others even if they do not ask for, or even want, our forgiveness.²

So, the nightly prayer comes from a place beyond the letter of the law and devout Jews around the world are prepared to go to that place "beyond" every night. Imagine if Christians adopted the same practice! I have a sense that this is the place where healing for our broken world could be found. But how do we get to such a place?

I gained some more insight from another remarkable rabbinical quote I came across: "If even one person does authentic *teshuva* (repentance or turning around), it is enough to forgive the entire world."³

Does that really mean that all we have to do is to genuinely turn away from our wrongs or sins for the whole world to become new? How would that change anything? We all know how our society is teeming with countless broken and hurting lives that desperately need healing.

When my father talks about forgiveness he always says, "If I realize how much I myself need forgiveness, it is easy to forgive others for where they have hurt me. And when one person can forgive, it starts a cycle of forgiveness that will spread." Maybe that is part of the meaning of the quote about *teshuva*.

At the end of the day, of course, the question still remains: Will I be able to take this prayer of forgiveness with me not only into the peace of night-time, but also to hold onto it in the hard light of the next day? And what about you?



Christmas Programme 2018

Tuesday 1st January 2019

Mary, the Holy Mother of God, Mass at 10am only

Normal weekday Masses resume on Wednesday 2nd January 2019, 10.00am and 12.40pm

Feast of the Epiphany 6th January 2019

Saturday 5th January—Vigil Mass 6pm

Sunday 6th January—Masses at 9.30am, 11am and 5pm

Croatian Mass at 6.30pm

In Memoriam

Masses this Weekend

11am: Billy Hederman, Anniversary

5/6 January

5pm: Mary Daly, Anniversary

Masses and Confession

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm

Daily masses 10am and 12.40pm, Saturday 10am only

-Rosary daily after 10am mass

Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40

Church Collections

1st Collection: N/A

Share Collection: N/A

Weekday collections: N/A

THANK YOU

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