Five “Marks” of the Catholic Family

Are Catholic families supposed to be different? What would that difference look like?

1 Catholic Families Worship Together

The Eucharist is the source of the deep love and intimacy Catholic families are called to live out. To celebrate this, Catholic families attend Mass together on Sundays and holy days (and at other times as we are able) and actively participate in the sacramental life of the Church. In addition, recognizing that we sometimes struggle to love one another as we should, Catholic families regularly go to confession (recommended: monthly) to seek God’s healing, grace and inspiration to love more, and better.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How might each member of our family make Mass a priority this school year (and beyond)?

2 Catholic Families Pray Together

Catholic families are called to love with the love that flows from God’s own heart. We can only do this if we ask God – together – to teach us what this means. Therefore, in addition to both our individual prayer life and our worship with our parish communities, we gather together for family prayer each and every day. We use our daily, family prayer time to …

Praise and thank God for his blessings.
Ask forgiveness for the times we didn’t love as we should.
Ask for the grace to love each other and the world better.
Pray for both our needs and the needs of the Family of God.
Seek God’s will for our life.

We treat family prayer not as a duty or a chore but as the key to true intimacy and joy in our home.

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

After saying grace at mealtimes, grasp hands and ask each family member to share what they are grateful for this day.

3 Catholic Families Are Called to Intimacy

Most importantly, the Christian life is a call to intimate communion (see Jn 17:21). Catholic families serve that goal by being schools of love where we learn how to love God and each other with our whole hearts, minds, souls and strength (see Lk 10:27; Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1657). To do this, we constantly seek new ways to be even more open with and loving to one another as husband and wife, parents and children.

For instance, children are supposed to be the visible sign of the loving union between husband and wife. Catholic families live this out both in openness to life and by working hard on the quality of relationships with one another.

To do this, we cultivate marriage and parenting habits that make each member of the family feel loved and valued and practice all the virtues that help us live life as a gift. For instance, we choose loving-guidance approaches to discipline that teach virtue and good behavior instead of merely punishing wrongdoing. We schedule regular one-on-one time with each family member so that we can get to know each other’s thoughts, feelings and heart’s desires on the deepest level possible. And we take an active interest in all the things that each family member finds true, good and beautiful, even when those interests do not come naturally to us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

The next time your family is in the car together, say, “What is one new way we can be kind and loving to each other this week?”

4 Catholic Families Put Family First

Because our family relationships are the primary means God uses to help us become the people he created us to be, we treat family life as the most important activity in our week. We create and protect family rituals – like regular family dinners, time for prayer and worship, weekly game nights and family days, and regularly scheduled times for communication and relationship-building – that give us regular time to work, play, talk and pray together.

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

On Sunday afternoon, call a family “media break” and turn off all screens in your home for a set amount of time. See where the Holy Spirit leads your family. (Hint: ideas above!)

5 The Catholic Family Is a Witness and Sign

We recognize that God wants to change the world through our families. We actively participate in this plan in two ways.

First, we work hard to be witnesses of the love, joy and intimacy that every human heart longs for. We’ll share this love in good times and bad, in sickness and health, for richer or poorer.

Second, we carry this love outside the home by serving our community in a manner that keeps our family together. We intentionally practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy within our home and outside of it. We regularly talk about how we can do a better job of living out our family mission to be a sign of God’s love in the world.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What is one action we can take this week that will brighten someone’s day and share God’s love?