

A Prayer for Our Families

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CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: Our experience of the pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives, perhaps most especially, our relationships — with family, friends, coworkers, even ourselves. Many of us have been home with spouses, children or parents, working together and competing for attention in ways we have never had to before. Others have spent day after day with only virtual company, longing for physical touch and tangible expressions of care. Like no other time in our lives, this time has brought some blessings, but also has been a cause for anxiety.

Pope Francis wrote the apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, on love in the family five years ago. In 2021, the Church began the *Amoris Laetitia* Family year to bring focus to the family as a vocation and a pathway to holiness, especially in light of the pandemic. Let us listen and reflect on the words of Pope Francis.

Reader 1: “I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfill their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way ... there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems.” [*Amoris Laetitia* 57]

Leader: Take a moment to reflect. When in this last year have you faced challenges and found joy in the life of your family?

Reader 2: “The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty. Couples should be helped to realize that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship; instead, it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union. Life together should not diminish but increase their contentment; every new step along the way can help couples find new ways to happiness.” [232]

Leader: Let us again reflect. When in this last year have you faced a crisis and found a relationship strengthened?

Reader 3: “All family life is a ‘shepherding’ in mercy. Each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others ... Each of us is a ‘fisher of men’ who in Jesus’ name ‘casts the nets’ to others, or a farmer who tills the fresh soil of those whom he or she loves, seeking to bring out the best in them ... this is itself a way to worship God, who has sown so much good in others in the hope that we will help make it grow.” [322]

Leader: Take a moment to reflect. When in this last year have you left a mark on others that has given them a new hope? When have others left a mark on you that brought forth new hope?

As it feels appropriate, spend some time in conversation as a group.

Leader: Let us pray.
Heavenly Father,
We pray in gratitude for the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. May we continue to look to them for guidance as we nurture our family life in our journey to holiness.

We pray in gratitude for our loved ones, both near and far, who strengthened and supported us through the challenging times of the last year. May we continue to grow in our relationships as we find new ways to happiness.

As we await the end of this pandemic, we look to you for healing of our grieving hearts and hold fast in our faith that the family we lost are now with you.
Amen.