

Student worksheet for Family Field Trip #4: your home!

Grades 1-5

In January, you will get a break from field trips, because our topic this month is the “Domestic (family) Church.”

Parents, in order to help your child to do this homework, you will need to learn a little bit about what we as Catholics call the “domestic (family) church.” You can either:

1) read the attached pages on the “domestic church”

OR

2) watch the short video on “domestic church” (on the One in Faith Facebook page or One in Faith website)

Then talk with your child about the questions below, and help them to answer the questions.

1) The word “church” means “the building that we go to for Mass on Sunday,” but it also means “the group of people whom God gathers together.” Your family is a group of people whom God has gathered together. That means that **your family is a little church** (a “domestic” church)!

Write the names of people in your family church/domestic church here, or draw a picture of them (immediate or extended family):

2) Just like in your parish church community, people who are in your family church community **pray** together.

Talk/write about a time when your family church/domestic church prays together at home: _____

3) Just like in your parish church community, people in your family church community **serve** others who need help.

Talk/write about a time when you or your family served someone who needed help: (Helped clear the table after supper? Brought food to a neighbor whose grandma died? Babysat for your neighbor's children? Shoveled the walk for a grandparent?)

4) Just like in your parish church, people in your family church community **learn about God's love** from each other.

Talk/write about a time when someone in your family showed you God's love: (Maybe a time when they comforted you when you were sad? Or a time when they celebrated with you when you were happy? Or a time when they forgave you?)

5) Jesus tells us that when 2 or 3 of us are gathered in his name, he is there.

Can you think of times when you feel Jesus' presence at home, with your family? If so, write about it here:

6) When you have gone on field trips to see different church buildings, you have seen different things in the church building (statues, stained glass windows, flowers) that help the church community to think about God.

Is there anything in your family home that helps your family to remember God? (A cross? A statue? A Bible? A set of rosary beads? a photo of your baptism? A palm from Palm Sunday?) **Write about it here or draw a picture:**

(Parents, you can read this excerpt for background information, or watch the video online.)

Excerpts from “Follow the Way of Love,” by the U.S. Catholic Bishops about how the family is the domestic church: (<https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/follow-way-love>)

Families Are a Sign of God's Presence

Ways of Loving

When people talk about life in a family, they speak of love with its abiding peace, its searing pain, its moments of joy and disappointment, its heroic struggle, and ordinary routines.

"Family is where someone loves you no matter what," a teenager declares.

"Family doesn't mean just mom, dad, and kids, but grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others," explains a Hispanic woman.

"In a family you don't have to look very far to find your cross," a father observes.

"My child asks me such mystical questions," reports a young mother. "I learn so much."

"My teenagers were very sensitive to me during my divorce. God was there for me," a single parent recalls.

The story of family life is a story about love—shared, nurtured, and sometimes rejected or lost. In every family God is revealed uniquely and personally, for God is love and those who live in love, live in God and God dwells in them (cf. 1 Jn 4:16).

And so our message is one that springs from love and that offers you a reflection on love: how it is experienced in a family, how it is challenged today, how it grows and enriches others, and how it needs the support of the whole Church.

We [the U.S. Catholic Bishops] write to you as pastors and teachers in the Church, but we come to you as family members also. We are sons and brothers and uncles. We have known the commitment and sacrifices of a mother and father, the warmth of a family's care, the happiness and pain that are part of loving.

Some of us lived in single-parent families; others were adopted children. Some of us grew up in alcoholic homes. We came from affluence and from families where money was scarce.

Some of us have felt the hurt of racial discrimination or cultural prejudice. Some have lived for many generations in this country. Others are recent immigrants.

With our families, we celebrate the birth of a baby or a loved one's success. We rejoice at weddings and anniversaries of family members even as we grieve at an untimely death or the breakup of a married couple . . .

You Are the Church in Your Home

Baptism brings all Christians into union with God. Your family life is sacred because family relationships confirm and deepen this union and allow the Lord to work through you. The profound and the ordinary moments of daily life—mealtimes, workdays, vacations, expressions of love and intimacy, household chores, caring for a sick child or elderly parent, and even conflicts over things like how to celebrate holidays, discipline children, or spend money—all are the threads from which you can weave a pattern of holiness.

Jesus promised to be where two or three are gathered in his name (cf. Mt 18:20). We give the name **church to the people whom the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love, and through whose lives his saving presence is made known.**

A family is our first community and the most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us, and acts in the world.

The early Church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home.

This marvelous teaching was underemphasized for centuries but reintroduced by the Second Vatican Council. Today we are still uncovering its rich treasure.

The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the Church, but your daily life is a true expression of the Church.

Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by parishes and other communities within the larger Church. Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments. Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole Church.

You carry out the mission of the church of the home in ordinary ways when:

You **believe** in God and that God cares about you. It is God to whom you turn in times of trouble. It is God to whom you give thanks when all goes well.

You **love** and never give up believing in the value of another person. Before young ones hear the Word of God preached from the pulpit, they form a picture of God drawn from their earliest experiences of being loved by parents, grandparents, godparents, and other family members.

You **foster intimacy**, beginning with the physical and spiritual union of the spouses, and extending in appropriate ways to the whole family. To be able to share yourself—good and bad qualities—within a family and to be accepted there is indispensable to forming a close relationship with the Lord.

You **evangelize** by professing faith in God, acting in accord with gospel values, and setting an example of Christian living for your children and for others. And your children, by their spontaneous and genuine spirituality, will often surprise you into recognizing God's presence.

You **educate**. As the primary teachers of your children, you impart knowledge of the faith and help them to acquire values necessary for Christian living. Your example is the most effective way to teach. Sometimes they listen and learn; sometimes they teach you new ways of believing and understanding. Your wisdom and theirs come from the same Spirit.

You **pray** together, thanking God for blessings, reaching for strength, asking for guidance in crisis and doubt. You know as you gather—restless toddlers, searching teenagers, harried adults—that God answers all prayers, but sometimes in surprising ways.

You **serve** one another, often sacrificing your own wants, for the other's good. You struggle to take up your cross and carry it with love. Your "deaths" and "risings" become compelling signs of Jesus' own life, death, and resurrection.

You **forgive and seek reconciliation**. Over and over, you let go of old hurts and grudges to make peace with one another. And family members come to believe that, no matter what, they are still loved by you and by God.

You **celebrate life**—birthdays and weddings, births and deaths, the first day of school and graduation, rites of passage into adulthood, new jobs, old friends, family reunions, surprise visits, holy days and holidays. You come together when tragedy strikes and in joyful celebration of the sacraments. As you gather for a meal, you break bread and share stories, becoming more fully the community of love Jesus calls us to be.

You **welcome the stranger**, the lonely one, the grieving person into your home. You give drink to the thirsty and food to the hungry. The Gospel assures us that when we do this, they are strangers no more, but Christ.

You **act justly** in your community when you treat others with respect, stand against discrimination and racism, and work to overcome hunger, poverty, homelessness, illiteracy.

You **affirm life** as a precious gift from God. You oppose whatever destroys life, such as abortion, euthanasia, unjust war, capital punishment, neighborhood and domestic violence, poverty, and racism. Within your family, when you shun

violent words and actions and look for peaceful ways to resolve conflict, you become a voice for life, forming peacemakers for the next generation.

You **raise up vocations** to the priesthood and religious life as you encourage your children to listen for God's call and respond to God's grace. This is especially fostered through family prayer, involvement in parish life, and by the way you speak of priests, sisters, brothers, and permanent deacons.

No domestic church does all this perfectly. But neither does any parish or diocesan church. All members of the Church struggle daily to become more faithful disciples of Christ.

We need to enable families to recognize that they are a domestic church. There may be families who do not understand or believe they are a domestic church. Maybe they feel overwhelmed by this calling or unable to carry out its responsibilities. Perhaps they consider their family too "broken" to be used for the Lord's purposes. But remember, a family is holy not because it is perfect but because God's grace is at work in it, helping it to set out anew every day on the way of love.

Like the whole Church, every Christian family rests on a firm foundation, namely, Christ's promise to be faithful to those he has chosen. When a man and a woman pledge themselves to each other in the sacrament of matrimony, they join in Christ's promise and become a living sign of his union with the Church (cf. Eph 5:32).

Therefore, a committed, permanent, faithful relationship of husband and wife is the root of a family. It strengthens all the members, provides best for the needs of children, and causes the church of the home to be an effective sign of Christ in the world.

Wherever a family exists and love still moves through its members, grace is present. Nothing—not even divorce or death—can place limits upon God's gracious love.

And so, we recognize the courage and determination of families with one parent raising the children. Somehow you fulfill your call to create a good home, care for your children, hold down a job, and undertake responsibilities in the neighborhood and church. You reflect the power of faith, the strength of love, and the certainty that God does not abandon us when circumstances leave you alone in parenting.

Those who try to blend two sets of children into one family face a special challenge to accept differences and to love unconditionally. They offer us a practical example of peacemaking.

Families arising from an interreligious marriage give witness to the universality of God's love which overcomes all division. When family members respect one another's different religious beliefs and practices, they testify to our deeper unity as a human family called to live in peace with one another.

We share the pain of couples who struggle without success to conceive a child. We admire and encourage families who adopt a child, become foster parents, or care for an elderly or disabled relative in their homes.

We offer our heartfelt sympathy and support to those parents who grieve at the death of a child due to illness, stillbirth, or the violence so prevalent in our society today.

We honor all families who, in the face of obstacles, remain faithful to Christ's way of love. The church of the home can live and grow in every family.

In our pastoral ministry, we have listened to many families: to husbands and wives, to estranged spouses, to abused and abandoned spouses, to single parents, and to children. We know that all families long for the peace, the acceptance, a sense of purpose, and the reconciliation that the term church of the home suggests. We believe that with prayer; hard work; understanding; commitment; the support of other families, parish priests, deacons and their wives, and religious and lay pastoral ministers; and especially with God's grace, the church of the home is built in ordinary homes, in your family.