



Please Pray That

- All affected by COVID-19 and other diseases will find healing and comfort in the Great Physician.
- Families will use this time of “social distancing” to grow closer together as a community of persons.
- Families will be true schools of love, where all family members become more Christlike.
- Parents will help their children foster respect for all people.
- Families will be safe places to learn how to handle conflict and challenges to relationships.
- Parents will have the strength to teach their children selfless generosity in a culture of selfishness.
- Our culture will reclaim the lost art of true friendship and civil respect.
- Families will foster an attitude of gratitude and contentment to combat the materialism of our culture.
- Parents will have the strength to selfless generosity in a culture of selfishness.

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Necessary Conversations About the Importance of Community

Last Easter my wife, children, and I arrived at my parents’ house after a harrowing, icy trip. We arrived to a dark house and a dark neighborhood. The power had gone out and the power company didn’t think it would be back up for 24 hours or more. We had to finish Easter dinner on the gas grill. We ate by candlelight. After dinner we sat in the dark living room without lights or television. The loss of technology forced my children to join the family conversations. Without lights we couldn’t even play board games like we usually do. We were forced just to talk. It was an adventurous Easter to be sure. And it was one our children will never forget. That little crisis forced our family to work and talk together and to be a community of persons.



As I write this, we are in the middle of another crisis. COVID-19 has all but shut down society. Schools are closed, as are most businesses. We aren’t able to go to Stations of the Cross or even the Holy Mass. Our family has been forced together all day, every day for the past week, with at least weeks more to look forward to. It’s too cold to spend much time outside. There’s no place to go. We’re literally stuck with each other.

While a pandemic is certainly a crisis, it may also be a God-given challenge to families to find ways to come together as a community. Sure, we get on each other’s nerves. Yes, we get sick of each other. But we also have a wonderful opportunity. All of us are being forced to see that selfishness makes everyone around them miserable. We have been given the opportunity to combat self-centeredness and entitlement by living as members of a true community. This is an opportunity for our family. As parents we just need to seize it.

These extraordinary lessons are pretty rare, but they do happen. During this time of social distancing and enforced isolation, we also need to pay attention and teach **smaller** lessons in being a community of persons with our families at any time. Let me explain.

My children are both entering adolescence, and that means that they prefer to spend their time alone in their rooms. When I recall my own adolescence and my need for

solitude, I can understand why they want to be alone and discover the joys of introspection.

On the other hand, the family is the primary community and I want my children to learn to be contributing members of a community. The family is where they learn things like interdependence, the common good, and sacrifice for the sake of others. They can't learn those things if they are isolating themselves in their bedrooms.

Teaching Community during the COVID-19 Pandemic

My wife and I know that a balance needs to be found between the desire to be alone and the need to be together. That is why we do our best to combat the overwhelming attitude of entitlement among our children. We are constantly reminding them that they need to consider the needs of others, not just their own desires. At the same time, we guide our children towards the productive use of their 'solo' time by engaging them in spirited and lively conversations about real matters happening in their world and the one that surrounds them.

Necessary Conversations about Community

Build a more meaningful community of persons during this time of increased family togetherness. Here are a few suggestions that can lead to greater family intimacy, trust, and love.

- One of the most tried-and-true methods for building community in the family is to eat a family meal together every day (or as close to every day as you are able). Enjoying good food and good conversation together is relationship building. Use this time to practice meaningful conversation.
- Take the time to listen to your children as they tell you about your day. Talk to them about your own.
- Teach your children how to be members of a community – especially the community of your own family. While human beings are naturally social, community building is still a skill that needs to be learned and practiced. Challenge them to think of ways to add real value to your home during this time of increased family togetherness.
- Set boundaries that keep your children from isolating themselves. Finding that balance between necessary alone time and anti-social behavior can be difficult. At some point you need to get your children out of their bedrooms and into the family room. Setting limits on electronic device usage and social media is also very important.
- Create opportunities for your family to serve others in charity. Reach out to your neighbors to see if they need anything, especially in times of crisis. Challenge your children to find ways to use social media that allow them to exercise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Help them to experience the needs of others in safe, meaningful ways.
- Foster family interdependence. Share daily chores (meal planning and preparation, cleaning and sanitizing). Give each family member a daily opportunity to reveal one thing that would make their day more joyful. Pray for and with each other at least once each day.

This article tells about just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the [Teaching the Way of Love](#) program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the [Teaching the Way of Love](#) home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.

