

Necessary
Conversations

Family
Togetherness



Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

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Togetherness: Blessing or Burden?

PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- All families find ways to live together in peace and harmony.
- Parents will guide their children towards the development of respect, obedience, tolerance and forgiveness.
- Parents will share the truth about God's love clearly and with charity.
- Parents will correct their children's behavior without hardening their hearts.
- Parents will love their children in the same way that God does; selflessly, consistently, unconditionally.
- Parents will make time to pray daily with and for their children.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.
- Families will reject selfishness and become selfless.

Intense family togetherness is not new. Think about families who hunker down during a tornado, hurricane, or national disaster. Think about those who vacation in an RV for a week. What about families who gather when a loved one approaches death?

But there is something different about what we are experiencing now. This situation feels different. It worries us. It makes us feel anxious or angry or annoyed. It tempts us to abandon our virtues and feed our vices. We give in to the idea that we can't bear this much longer.

Okay, folks. Let's take a collective breath and regain our sanity by recalling the following essential teachings of our Catholic faith. We can weather family togetherness. We can survive collective living by remembering God's plan for us as a community of persons.

Love is the central purpose of every family. Our faith teaches us that the mission of each family is to guard, reveal, and communicate love. God intends love to be the heart of your home. He wants love to be the primary motivator for all that you do. God does not want us to put worry, control, fear, or anything else in front of love.

Love must be first. It has to be the family's central goal.

Love is a decision - not a feeling - to will the good of another. Authentic love focuses on what is best for the entire family. It shifts one's concerns towards a sense of common good and away from selfishness. True love motivates a family to act interdependently and to do what is necessary even when it doesn't feel good to do so.

Love requires sacrifice. The Scriptures are full of examples of love revealing itself through personal sacrifice and suffering. Living in community can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. Pope Saint John Paul II wrote that "(family togetherness) *requires...a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to tolerance, to pardon to reconciliation. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension, and conflict violently attack and at time moral wound a family's common good*" (On the Family. #21).



Because humanity passes by way of the family...

God's mercy and grace help us love one another. Harmony in the home happens when we lean into God's help. We need to frequently pray *God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me!* God's grace and mercy keep us focused on the common good and strengthen us to live the virtues and conquer our vices.

Virtues overcome division and renew family harmony. Virtues are firm habits to do what is right and good. Bonding together as a family requires respect, obedience, tolerance, and forgiveness. These virtues can create a deep and rich bond of the family's spirit that links everyone together in a common mission of love.

Transforming family togetherness from a burden into a blessing begins with these foundational Catholic teachings. In order to see family closeness as a good you must believe that God's plan for the family is superior to any other cultural ideals. Let's consider some practical ways to do this.

Preparing for a Necessary Conversation about Family Togetherness

Translating God's teachings into everyday life involves the development of virtue and a commitment to turn to God for assistance when it is needed. Let's look at five central virtues that help a family reject selfish tendencies, overcome division and reestablish their unity.

RESPECT This virtue involves a deep admiration for someone elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements. Mutual respect can be shown by recognizing legitimate privacy for family members who need their space and by participating in activities with family members who need comradery. It is revealed in polite conversation, picking up after oneself and using manners.

OBEDIENCE This virtue gives due honor to authority and to treat those who are charged to exercise it with respect, gratitude and good-will. Obedience allows every family member to participate in the social life within the home. It can be developed by playing games where everyone has to adhere to the rules of the game or through the establishment of a chore list where everyone follows what is written.

TOLERANCE This virtue helps us endure hardship without adverse reaction. It helps the family respond in love when one of its members does something stupid or irritating. Tolerance reduces annoyance and it helps us to endure present evils without sadness or resentment in conformity with the will of God. It should be noted that tolerance is not the ability to withhold one's comments or to overlook something that is wrong. Family members who are tolerant also speak up and charitably correct each other.

FORGIVENESS This virtue is the ability to pardon someone who has offended you. Within the family, offenses will be both great and small. Withholding forgiveness often leads to great discord and division. But, offering forgiveness is the sure path towards unity and family peace. Family members should never tire of forgiving, nor asking for forgiveness. As Pope Francis often comments, the most important words spoken in a family are *I am sorry* and *I forgive you*.

Now that you have a better understanding of what to do to make your family togetherness a blessing, schedule a conversation with your family to discuss these virtues and how to put them into practice.

This article addresses 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.