How precious is the family as the privileged place for transmitting the faith!" - Pope Francis

Overview
The family is called to be an image of love and self-sacrifice. The husband and wife give everything to each other and out of this boundless love new life is created just as in Christ’s own self-sacrifice, there is new life and redemption.

Discussion Questions
• For you, what were the main points of the video, “Family: A Community of Love”?
• How is Family a sign of God’s presence?
• How do Families model Christ’s love for us?
• How does your Family reflect Christ’s love?
• How did your Family of Origin reflect Christ’s love?
• Why are Families important to society?
• Name some ways that Marriage benefits all of society.
• What do you do in your Family to create a community of love?
• Share your understanding of Family as the Domestic Church.
• Recall one or more instances where you experienced as a Family being the Domestic Church, either in the home or outside of it. What was the outcome?
• As the Church teaches, Family is like the Eucharist in the selfless, loving sacrifice of daily life. Share a time when you witnessed Family as Eucharist.
• Did the video, “Family: A Community of Love”, affirm your thoughts on Family?
• Was there anything presented that surprised you about how the Church sees Family? How you see Family?
• Reflect for a moment on your life as a Family. Do you recall a time when you felt God's presence in your midst?
• What image, feeling, or memory comes to mind when you think about your family? What does it tell you about your life as a Family?
• Why is family life the foundation of any society? Why do we consider the family the “domestic church?”
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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Questions for Families**
- How can our Faith sustain our Family in difficult times?
- What are some of the joyful things about our Family? What are our challenges?
- Does our Family share what it treasures with other Families?
- As a Family, do we show respect for one another? How can we strengthen this virtue?

**Questions for Groups – about Family**
- How could a Catholic Christian respond when a Family from the neighborhood or from the church community is experiencing difficulties or struggling spiritually, financially or emotionally? How we could respond as a community?, as a ministry?, as a church?

“**Strong families are built on the foundation of strong marriages. Strong societies are built on the foundation of strong families. Indeed all civic communities should do what they can to promote economic and social policies that aid young married couples and facilitate their desire to raise a family.”**

- Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:39-45: “Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.”

• Mary visited Elizabeth her kinswoman to help her in her time of need. The presence of Mary gave comfort and strength to Elizabeth and the two of them prayed. Presence, prayer and accompaniment are important aspects of family life.

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Luke 2:51-52: “He [Jesus] went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them...And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.”

• Jesus lived in a family with Mary and Joseph: A community of Love.

The Most Holy Trinity

John 16:12-15: “…the Spirit of truth...will guide you to all truth...Everything that the Father has is mine.”

• The divine love that exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is given to each person that they might live out that love in their relationships with others. The family is a privileged place where this divine love is manifested through sacrificial love and community.

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Saint Pope John Paul II (patron saint of World Youth Day) Feast day: October 22

Saint Pope John Paul II was born Karol Jozef Wojtyla in the town of Wadowice, Poland on May 18, 1920. He was elected Pope in 1978, with his pontificate lasting almost 27 years, when he passed on April 2, 2005. Saint Pope John Paul II is remembered for many things, including his love of young people. He established the World Youth Days which served to bring together millions of young people from around the globe. Saint Pope John Paul II was known for his ability and willingness to reach people around the world as one of the most traveled world leaders, visiting 129 countries during his papacy. His passion for strengthening the family was illustrated in 1994 when he began the World Meeting of Families. Saint Pope John Paul II was canonized on April 27, 2014.

Saint Gianna (patron of mothers and unborn children) Feast day: April 28

Saint Gianna was a pediatrician, wife and mother who is known for refusing an abortion and a hysterectomy when she was pregnant with her fourth child, despite knowing that continuing with the pregnancy could result in her death. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and canonized on May 16, 2004. Gianna’s husband Pietro, and their child Laura, were present at the canonization ceremony, the first time in the history of the Church that a husband witnessed his wife’s canonization. In his homily at her canonization Mass, Pope John Paul II called Gianna “a simple, but more than ever, significant messenger of divine love.”

Mary, Undoer of Knots

Mary, Undoer of Knots, has drawn global adoration and devotion, especially in the time of Pope Francis’ election. The Mother of God miraculously conceived Jesus after being visited by the angel Gabriel who told her she would have a child. As the mother of God, Mary is loved and honored more than any other saint, known as the ultimate mother and leader of family. Mary Undoer of Knots is revered for her love and devotion to her son Jesus. She is known for her ability to “undo” the knots, the challenges, in our lives. Her love and compassion for us as the children of God shows us just how much she is the mother of the Holy Family.

Saint Joseph (Patron Saint of Husbands, Fathers and the Working Individual)

Feast day: March 19

As the husband of the blessed mother, St. Joseph is known in a way as the foster father of Jesus. After being visited by an angel, Joseph leaves with Mary, protecting her and the birth of the son of God. St. Joseph was a father figure for Jesus, and a part of his childhood. Saint Joseph signifies the importance of fatherhood and family, as he took on the role of guardian of the Holy Family from God.
Saint John Bosco (patron of youth) Feast day: January 31
Saint John Bosco is known for his dedication to helping disadvantaged youth. Saint John Bosco was born in 1815 in Piedmont, Italy. He is known for his life in Turin, Italy where he focused on improving life, mainly through enhancing education opportunity, for street children and troubled youth. He founded many organizations and programs for educating and caring for the children of the poor. He founded the Salesian Cooperators which incorporated his educational mission to the poor, as well as the publication of the Salesian Bulletin, which continues to be published in 30 languages. Saint John Bosco died in 1888 and was canonized in 1934.

Saint Anne (patron of grandmothers) Feast day: July 26
Saint Anne is known as the mother of the Blessed Mother, and the grandmother of Jesus. After 20 years of marriage to Joachim from Nazareth, Saint Anne was without child. Joachim went into the desert to plead with God for a child. An angel later appeared to tell Joachim that they would be given a child to name Mary and dedicate to God. While Joachim was away, Anne went to the garden where she cried out to the lord. An angel appeared and told her that she would have a daughter, Mary. Soon after, Anne gave birth to a daughter, Mary, the blessed mother. Saint Anne became a grandmother after the birth of Jesus.

Saint Joachim (patron of grandfathers) Feast day: July 26
Saint Joachim is known as the father of the Blessed Mother, and the grandfather of Jesus. He and his wife Saint Anne, were childless after 20 years of marriage. Saint Joachim went into the desert and pleaded to God for a child. After fasting in the desert, an angel appeared and told him that he and Anne would have a child to be named Mary, and dedicated to God. While this was happening, Anne was home. She too pleaded to God, and was also visited by an Angel who told her what Joachim was told. Soon after, Anne gave birth to a girl, who went on to be the mother of God.

Saint Raphael (patron of single people) Feast day: September 29
Saint Raphael is one of seven Archangels. He was sent by God to help Tobit, Tobias and Sarah. At the time, Tobias’ betrothed, Sarah, had seven bridegrooms perish on their wedding nights. Raphael accompanied Tobias disguised as a man named Azariah. Raphael helped him through his difficulties and taught him how to safely marry Sarah. For this reason, the Church calls Raphael the angel of love, and the patron of single persons, medical doctors and travelers.
Prayer for Families
Dear God our Father, you have called all Christian families to be a sign of your love to the world. Help us to be generous with the gifts of life and love that you have showered on our family. May we share them so that our homes become true signs of unitive and fruitful love.

Let us never forget to thank you each day for all that sustains us and to look to Christ, who comes to us in the events of family life, in the sacraments of the Church, and in service to the poor.

In all of this, our family becomes a living expression of your Church, a hallowed home of life and love. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may all of us—spouses, parents, and children—share, as members of his Body, in Jesus’ mission to build a civilization of love. Father, we ask this in Jesus’ name in union with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Family Prayer to the Holy Family
O Heavenly Father, our loving God, you have given us the Holy Family as our patron to bless and guide our families that the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control, shall reign in our homes.

As husbands and wives, teach us to love our spouses more than ever. As parents, give us wisdom and knowledge in rearing our offspring to be responsible and successful Christians forever. As brothers and sisters, may we learn to care and support one another and be of inspiration to each other. As children, teach us to be obedient just as Jesus showed obedience and respect to Mary and Joseph.

As Christians, melt us, mold us, fill us, and use us, in spreading the good news in our community that they may see Christ in us. When trials come, help us to face them with trusting faith and confidently hope that all things work for good for those who love God. May we have a happy holy family forever through Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, our miraculous patron, the adorable Holy Family. Amen

Family Commitment Prayer
Prayer card available to download at www.usccb.org by searching “Family Commitment Prayer”.

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To reserve resources from the Bishop Grady Memorial Library, contact BGML@orlandodiocese.org, call 407-246-4895, or visit the website at: www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/bishop-grady-memorial-library

**MEDIA RESOURCES FROM THE BISHOP GRADY MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

DVD-0518A-D  Meaningful Conversations about Prayer series

DVD-0778  Think Good Thoughts: A Tool for Teaching the Rosary

DVD-0157  First Reconciliation: A Family Journey

DVD-0161  First Communion: A Family Journey

DVD-0341  Active Parenting for Stepfamilies

DVD-0768A-D  Christian Family series

DVD-0816  Catholic’s Divorce Survival Guide

DVD-0737  Choosing Wisely before You Divorce

DVD-0144  Catholic Basics for Kids

DVD-0192  Mass for Children and Young People

DVD-037  Eucharist, the Source and the Summit

DVD-0676  Feeding Hungry Hearts: Celebrating the Eucharist

DVD-0368  Jesus Grows Up

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Documents and Websites

USCCB Search for these at www.usccb.org.

- Follow the Way of Love (also available in Spanish)
- Office of Laity, Marriage, Family and Youth

Other Resources

- Matrimonio y familia: search for this title at www.portumatrimonio.org
- Matrimonios sanos familias sanas: search for this title at www.portumatrimonio.org
- Seven Keys to Marriage: A Married Person Looks at the Bishops’ New Pastoral, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan search for this title at www.americancatholic.org

Vatican Documents Search for these titles at www.vatican.va

- On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (also available in Spanish)
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“And Joseph too went up from Galilee ... to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her firstborn son.” -- Luke 2:4-7

From this Holy Family, we learn much about God’s plan for families. The fact that, in Christ, God willed to be born into a human family has made each family a place where God is present.

“Families are a sign of God’s Presence.” - Follow the Way of Love, USCCB

The Eucharist and the Family have a deep and special relationship. If we understand the family as the domestic church then certainly we must recognize a connection between Eucharist and family. In the Eucharist we are made participants in the one sacrifice that Christ offered for our sins on the Cross.

In the same way, the family is called to be an image of love and self-sacrifice. The husband and wife give everything to each other and out of this boundless love new life is created just as in Christ’s own self-sacrifice there is new life and redemption. Therefore we can say that the Eucharist is a sacrament of love and sacrifice and that Marriage is likewise a call to selfless love and sacrifice for the sake of the other.

“We [the US Bishops] understand the pain of those for whom divorce seemed the only recourse. We urge them to make frequent use of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation.” - USCCB pastoral letter, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan (2009)

Those in non-traditional families are also called to a sacrificial foundation of relationship with Christ and each other. Whether divorced or single, in single parent or second marriage situations, all are called to honor God and to manifest His love in their lives.

Within our families, we learn how to relate with others and to trust and to love. It is also where we first learn about God and develop our understanding of right and wrong. The well-being of society absolutely depends on healthy families, committed marriages and responsible parenting.

“Strong families are built on the foundation of strong marriages. Strong societies are built on the foundation of strong families. Indeed all civic communities should do what they can to promote economic and social policies that aid young married couples and facilitate their desire to raise a family.” - Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Jesus was born into and grew up in a family with a mother and a father and gave the highest dignity to the institution of marriage and family life. The family is the basic unity of society. A healthy family is essential for a healthy society.

“Every child is descended from one father and one mother and longs for the warmth and safety of a family so that he may grow up secure and happy.” - Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207-2208

In the family, life is co-created with God, it is nurtured and protected. If the structure and centrality of family life is diminished, the dignity of the human person becomes obscured and we risk losing our identity as children of God. Since the family is the domestic church, it is fitting that parents always encourage their children to make decisions with serious consideration about the best ways to live out their faith.

What kind of love does Jesus call us to witness? It is the kind of love God gives us freely and abundantly. It is the love that led Jesus Christ to the cross and led Mary and Joseph to form a family despite the very real challenges they faced and the very real sacrifices they freely made out of love.

“The future of the world and of the church passes by the way of the family.” - Blessed John Paul II