

*February
In the Year
of Mercy*

*Your Family's
Door of Mercy*



Teaching the Way of Love

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PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Families will cultivate forgiveness in their daily interactions.
- Parents will choose gentleness and mercy when disciplining their children.
- All families will form community of persons that serve life, develop society and share in the life and mission of the Church.
- That husbands and wives will give each other the benefit of the doubt when conflicts arise.
- Children will see in their parents a constant example of forgiveness and love.
- Children will feel the love and mercy of God because of their parent's love.
- Families will reach out to each other in love and support, especially in times of difficulty.

The Holy Door of Your Family

One of the big events of each Jubilee celebration is the opening of the Holy Doors in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. The doors represent Jesus as the door through which we must pass to eternal life. Jesus calls Himself the "Sheep's Gate" and tells us "nobody comes to the Father except through me." When the doors are open, pilgrims who pass through them and who meet the requirements can gain a plenary indulgence—a special outpouring of Jesus' mercy granted through a simple act of devotion. So it is especially appropriate that the Holy Doors were opened during this Year of Mercy. But not only did Pope Francis open the Holy Doors in Rome, he called for every diocese in the world to designate Holy Doors in cathedrals and basilicas, showing how widespread and readily available God's mercy is.

Pope Francis also encouraged every family to make the door to their own home a door of mercy. His intent was to show us that our own families should model the great and abundant mercy of Jesus. When anyone enters our home, he or she should know that they are entering a home of mercy, where forgiveness is given and received every day and where the family members help each other learn to love.

This vision of mercy in the family is much more powerful – and much more realistic – than the ideal of having a family that is always at peace, never in conflict. Learning to love isn't easy. We're going to mess up. So Pope Francis gives us some very practical advice for practicing mercy in this special Jubilee year. His recommendation is to write three words above the main door into our home to remind us to live three aspects of mercy.

"May I" "Thank you" "Pardon Me"

"May I"

As parents, we often teach our children to say, "May I" when they ask for something. But parents can sometimes forget that the skills and manners we teach our children are to make them into loving adults. We can sometimes selfishly impose our will on our families – not for their good but



Because humanity passes by way of the family...

for our own gain. Sometimes we should ask, “May I” too. We can learn to walk more gently, to ask more politely, and even to seek the permission of our family members before we make our wills known. And we do this not just to model respect to our children, but to show them that we respect and love them.

“Thank You”

We often say “thank you” for favors granted to us. But to really say “thank you” in the context of family love is to truly appreciate the goodness in each family member. Our families should be a place where we draw out each other’s goodness and truly appreciate that goodness. When you say “thank you,” let the meaning of those words probe deeper into the goodness of each family member.

“Pardon Me”

And of course every family needs forgiveness. But for forgiveness to be granted, it must first be sought. We have to learn to admit when we are wrong, or when we cause harm (even when we didn’t mean to). Have you ever asked your children to forgive you for losing your temper, for over-reacting, or for making a hasty decision? Some parents think that apologizing to their children shows weakness. But the fact is, asking your children for forgiveness once in a while shows them that you recognize the faults in yourself that they have already identified in you. Make seeking and granting forgiveness a regular practice in your family.

Here is your February Challenge

The exterior doors of your home are opened every day to family members. You cross the threshold of your home every day when you leave for work or school or play. And you cross it again when you return home. Additionally, friends, extended family members and an occasional stranger also enter your home through your doorway.

There are two ways to announce to all who enter your home that they are in a place of mercy. The first is to write the three expressions of mercy (*may I,* “*thank you,*” and “*pardon me*”) above your door. Every time you walk through that Holy Door into your home, you will be mindful to make your home – your family – a home of mercy.

A second way to announce to all that your mercy begins at home is hanging the Year of Mercy door hangar created by the Diocese of La Crosse where all will see it. Order this beautiful door hangar from the Office for Marriage and Family Life at familylife@diolc.org or ask for it from your local parish. It will be available after February 15th.



This challenge is 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.