

*Full of
God's
Goodness*

*Connect with
your family.*



Teaching
the Way of Love
Because humanity passes by way of the family...

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Connections

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will decide to enjoy rather than endure the coming months.
- Parents will fill their home with high love and high demands.
- Parents will help virtue come alive in their children.
- All children will know the security of true love from their parents.
- Families will create homes filled with Christ's light and warmth.
- Parents will witness a visible love for God for their children to see.
- Charity will flourish within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's loves and mercy.

November is an interesting month. Here in Wisconsin, the days shorten, the cold settles in and people hunker down for the winter. At the same time, families prepare for traditional get-togethers that include deer hunting, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Whether we like this time of year or not, November ushers in a season of family connection.

How do you look at the season of fall? Do you anticipate that this time of year will be enjoyable or not? Your viewpoint is likely dependent on your family's ability to live in community. If your family finds it easy to gather around the hearth you aren't bothered by the cold and darkness. But, if your family becomes testy when in close quarters, then you sense some dread in November.

Growing up, my family lived well in close proximity in the beginning because Thanksgiving and Christmas were close at hand. We had ample opportunity to work side by side on preparations. Honestly, some of my favorite family memories took place during the shortest days of the year. But, by January, cabin fever always seemed to creep in. I still remember my parents insisting that we go outside and play in the snow to avert major family strife. Trust me; those memories are not my favorites!



We all know that a proper attitude determines how well we connect with our loved ones over the next three to four months. What you expect sets the course towards either joy or despair. If you want to enjoy rather than endure the darkest months of the year, consider ways that you can connect as a family and live in charity under one roof.

Connecting family members together requires two basic elements; responsiveness and demandedness. What is responsiveness? This is your ability as a parent to *be with* your family. To *be with* means that you make time for them, listen to them and enjoy them. It requires you to slow down and regularly interact rather than constantly busy yourself with your own activities. To *be with* means that you become fully

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engaged – especially in the ordinary routines of each day (think cleaning or doing laundry or picking up before retiring.)

What is demandedness? These are the limits, consequences and expectations that you create which enhance the common good of the family. A few obvious examples include to expect your family (including yourself) to keep your home organized – specifically in the high traffic parts of the house, listening to others without interruption, using inside voices, and gaining permission to bring friends over. Less evident examples include joining the family at dinner, scheduling household chores, parking all electronic devices during family meals and designating bedrooms as no-device zones.

Family specialists tell us that the combination of high love and high expectations brings out the best in everyone and creates a certain family charm. Family members seem to care more about each other when both are present because a sense of peace and security exists. This is when people flourish.

The Catholic Church also teaches the importance of high love and high demands. Saint Pope John Paul II wrote, “The love that animates the interpersonal relationships of the different members of the family constitutes the interior strength that shapes and animates the family communion and community... Family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice...” (Familiaris Consortio #21) Love and expectations – both are essential for family unity.

Consider the dark months ahead as a gift to you from God; a gift that allows you to slow down and connect with your family. Take advantage of the close quarters to rediscover the goodness of being a family. Here are a few ideas to help you get on-board!

Discover God’s Goodness in November

Ready to change your mindset about the coming months? Here are a few suggestions to create family warmth and light during the dark months ahead.

- Embrace the darkness by adding lots of lights to your home. String white colored lights on your trees and bushes; add candles to your décor. And keep them up until the days lengthen in March.
- Try out lots of comfort food recipes. Rediscover your slow cooker. Place ingredients in it at night. Plug it in when everyone leaves in the morning. Come home to great smells and yummy tastes.
- Get out the cozy slippers, blankets and pillows. Set a time each week to cuddle up and drink hot chocolate. Try reading a classic book as a family as you snuggle together. Remember to say family prayers when you are close.
- There is no such thing as bad weather—only bad clothing. Don your coats, mittens, scarfs and boots and get outside to enjoy the sheer beauty of the season. Ski, snowshoe, skate, build snowmen....
- Invite friends over to share a meal or hot beverage. See how many people you can put around your table or in your living room for a couple of hours.
- When you are tempted to complain about the cold and darkness, train yourself to ask God to increase his light and warmth in your life.

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.