

*Created for
Relationship
Connectedness*



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

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 5

JANUARY, 2017

Increase Relationships in 2017

Have you ever wondered what might happen if the spirit of Christmas lasted well into the new year? Think about it. What would it be like if people would hustle and bustle through the days of January in the same way they do before Christmas? Imagine people greeting each other with smiles and good cheer on Valentines Day in the same manner that is expressed on Christmas eve. Wouldn't it be great if the spirit of solidarity – of brotherhood with our fellow human lasted until Easter?

Truly, the “Christmas Spirit” is different from what we feel during the other holidays. It is almost as if there is a supernatural quality to the sentiment surrounding Christmas that is hard to describe. The secret to the Christmas Spirit is indeed a sense of fellowship, but it's a fellowship that goes beyond simple human relationships. This Christmas Spirit actually flows from our very creation. The display of good cheer that commonly surrounds the birth of Christ is rooted in our nature. And, with a little practice, it's something you can hold onto all year.



PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Families will seek a deeper relationship with God this year.
- All children will come to understand that the Kingdom of God—the greatest treasure—consists in relationships, not possessions.
- Parents will help their children learn the skills and virtues necessary to form healthy and loving relationships.
- 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.

Relationship and Christmas Spirit

God created us for relationship. This means that relationship – being connected in love – is at the core of human existence. He created us first and foremost to be in relationship with Him. That means we are created to love He who is Love itself. That's a deep calling that lies at the very core of what it means to be human.

Relationship and Imaging God

In the Creation story, there is only one place where God says the words “It is **not** good.” It is not good that man should be alone. Why is it not good? Is it just because Adam was lonely? Well, Adam had an intimate relationship with God – the relationship He was created for. So he wasn't lonely. So why was it not good for Adam to be alone? The answer to that question lies in the fact that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. God is not a single person, but three Divine Persons who exist in a relationship of perfect love with one another. So despite reflecting many of the attributes of God, Adam could not fully express God's image and likeness alone. He needed to be in a relationship of love with one like himself. Again, we see that our relationship with each other is deeply ingrained in how we are created, and is intimately united to our relationship with God.

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

The Family of God

God created us to be in relationship with Him – to be His children. And He created us to be in relationship with each other. Putting these two facts of our creation together, we realize that family life is deeply, deeply ingrained in us. In fact, God created all of humanity to live together as members of His family. That’s exactly what the Church is – the Family of God (in our faith we use the term “covenant” to describe this relationship). The age-old formula for this love relationship is that we are created “to love God and to love one another for the sake of our love for God.” This is where humanity will find its true meaning, purpose, and JOY.

Keeping the Christmas Spirit

So what makes Christmas so unique? It is the one holiday widely celebrated by our culture that rightly celebrates the unity of the love of God and the love for our brothers and sisters. And we celebrate Christmas best when we hold both of these loves in our hearts together.

Keep the Christmas Spirit Alive in 2017

We would like to offer a few ideas to your family that can keep Christmas alive in your hearts all year. Talk about each as a family to see which you can put into practice in 2017.

- Find ways to consciously and deliberately focus your hearts on your love for God **and** your love for your family. When you profess your love for God, add prayers of love for each other. When you say you love each other, remember to include God!
- Deepen your relationship with God by receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist devoutly. Teach your children that the greatest intimacy with God comes from the Holy Eucharist. Help them learn the parts of the Mass and the meaning behind each part.
- Tell your family members that they are loved by you and by God – and do it often!
- Find ways as a family to reach out to others in your parish in order to emphasize that the parish is part of the Family of God.
- Encourage your children to show extra love and mercy to their family members by using good manners at home.
- Google “Catholic Family Prayers” and find one that your family will say often in 2017. Do your best to memorize the prayer so that you can say it whenever you want and wherever you want.
- Create a prayer corner in your home where you can display your family bible and crucifix. Add Holy Cards and a booklet where you can write down prayer intentions.
- Don’t have a family bible? Visit <http://abbey.ws/bibles> and get one! We highly recommend the Family Connections Bible (<http://abbey.ws/familybible>)!

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.