

*God's Plan
for Us:*

*Live His
Pattern*



**Teaching
the Way of Love**
because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 4

DECEMBER, 2017

**PLEASE PRAY
THAT**

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will honor the Holy Mass by going every Sunday.
- Families will find ways to make Sundays even more holy by celebrating at home.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a childlike love for God.
- Parents will witness piety for God and for God's children in a way that their children will desire to replicate.
- God's Commandments and the demands of the faith will be seen as loving directions from God.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

Church & Chicken: Keeping the Lord's Day

One of the most important traditions in my family growing up was Sunday dinner. Our family would go to Mass, then sit around the kitchen and talk while the air filled with smells of baking chicken and winter squash. We'd then sit around the table for a formal family meal. My parents expected good manners and active conversation.

My parents also expected that the entire family would be together for Sunday dinner. Even when busy high school schedules sometimes meant we didn't eat supper together during the week, everyone would be at the table on Sunday. There were times I didn't appreciate that. Sometimes it meant missing a Sunday matinee at the movies or an afternoon out with friends.

But mostly, I didn't **want** to miss Sunday dinners. The food was good, but what I really didn't want to miss was the sense of family celebration we enjoyed during these meals. It wasn't until I was in college that I fully understood the magic of those Sundays. Only then did I realize that the meals and the Mass were connected, that our dinner continued the celebration we had started in the sanctuary. Sunday dinner was my parents' way of more fully keeping the **Third Commandment to keep the Lord's Day holy**. Going to Mass was a given requirement, and a privilege. But the entire day was reserved for God, family, celebration and rest.

The Third Commandment teaches us to remember our purpose in life. It's the Day of the Covenant, the day set aside to remember that we are created to love and to be loved, to be members of God's family.

God gave us the Third Commandment because He knows how easy it is for us to forget to stay centered on the meaning of life when our daily cares and concerns dominate our attention, focus and energy. He gave the Sabbath to the Hebrew people, not just as a day of rest, but as a day to remember the Covenant. It was a day for His chosen people to reconnect to God and to remember the purpose of their daily lives.

From Biblical times (see Acts 20:7), the Church replaced the Sabbath of the Old Law (the Seventh Day of Creation) with the Day of Resurrection (the first day of the week, but also referred to by the early Church as the "eighth day" - the day of new creation), so we can remember that we are members of the

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

New Covenant under Jesus. Sunday is a day to reconnect to Jesus and to remember the great love the Holy Trinity has shown to us. For Christians and for Hebrews, the Lord's Day is a day to stop the day-to-day busyness and to take the opportunity to just **be** members of God's family.

God gave human families to us as a reflection of His greater family. Through our human families we should experience a love for each other that reflects God's love for us. So the Lord's Day is a time to focus on our family too. It's a time to be the Domestic Church and to join the celebration of the universal Church.

That's what my parents tried to teach us through the ritual of Sunday dinner. I'm grateful that they chose to make the Lord's Day a day of celebration and family togetherness.

What can you do to keep the Third Commandment on a deeper level as a family, to make it a day of celebration as members of God's Family and within your family? The best way is to encourage the **virtue of piety**. Piety means having a generous, childlike love for God. It means wanting to please God even if it means making sacrifices. Piety leads us to see God's Commandments and the demands of the faith as expressions of God's love for us. So it would mean approaching prayer and the Holy Mass as an act of joyful love rather than as a burden or a duty. Not only can this virtue help us to keep the Third Commandment, it can also help us keep it ever more deeply.

Encouraging the Virtue of Piety

1. **Pray for the Gift of Piety.** Piety is not only a virtue to be exercised, it's one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. That means it's a specific grace that we can ask to be strengthened within us. Pray for yourself and for your family so this great Gift can become stronger. God will help you exercise the virtue!
2. **Attend the Holy Mass.** If you're not already going to Mass every week, make that your first priority. The Holy Mass is the source and summit of our faith. In other words, it feeds our entire spiritual life. Without the Holy Eucharist, your family can't nourish its faith.
3. **Do something special to celebrate.** Create a family ritual or tradition to help you bring the celebration of the Mass home (literally). It doesn't have to be a big dinner. Maybe you can make Sunday evening family game night. Maybe you go out for brunch after Mass. The point is to do something you can enjoy as a family, something that celebrates Jesus, the Resurrection and the Holy Eucharist.
4. **Keep Sunday holy even if you have to work.** Part of keeping the Lord's Day holy is to refrain from unnecessary work. We should make every effort not to make Sunday just another workday—at our jobs or at home. That said, the Church recognizes that some people **need** to work on Sundays. If you can't avoid working, find some other way to make the day a holy day of rest, such as taking time for extra prayer or Bible reading.
5. **Speak about the Holy Mass with reverence and excitement.** In last month's challenge we recommended referring to holy things using words like "holy" or "sacred." That's great advice here too. Talk about the Holy Mass and the Holy Eucharist. Perhaps more importantly, don't speak about going to Mass as a duty or a burden. Rather, say things like, "We get to go to Mass today! Is everyone ready?"
6. **Serve Others.** To love God is to love the things the Holy Trinity loves. That means loving His other children. Citing the example of Jesus, the Church doesn't consider loving service as labor to be avoided on Sundays. Find ways to show God's love to others through acts of loving service and kindness.

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.