

VOCATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Marriage and Family Life is a Vocation of Service. God calls you to serve your spouse and your children so that all of you can grow in Holiness together. The Church teaches that parents are the first teachers of their children. May you be the best! Most often, it is our mothers who first share the faith with their children. But children need the help of their fathers who continually reinforce this faith by their leadership and example of daily prayer and weekly Mass with their families. Statistics indicate that when a father accompanies his spouse and children to Mass every Sunday, their children as adults are more likely to continue practicing their faith. Here are five practical ways that you can serve each other in your household and grow in Holiness as a couple and as a family.

- 1) *Pray and read the Bible together each day as a family. Each member of your family could give thanks to God for how they experienced the presence of God in their lives that day through the good things others have done for them or something good they have done for another. The most opportune times for prayer and Bible reading may be around the dinner table or before retiring at the end of the day.*
- 2) *Since as a couple you are very busy working and interacting with your children a great deal of the time each day, you also need to make special time for yourselves to nurture your marriage. Therefore, take time out at least once a month for a date in which the two of you are alone to spend time together. You and your marriage are worth it. It may mean that you will need to get a sitter for your children.*
- 3) *You and your spouse know what a special gift your children are to the both of you. But each one of your children also needs to feel how very special that they are to you. A great way for you and your spouse to help them feel it is when each of you does some one-on-one things with your children each month. Each of you could perhaps go out to breakfast or to a ballgame with each one of your young children individually. Fathers, date your daughters! They need to find a man's secure love in your home and not look for love in the wrong places during their teenage years.*
- 4) *Your children need your undivided attention. When they are speaking with you, put other things aside to listen intently. They need to know and directly experience that you really do care about them and that you are truly interested in their lives. If you are a good listener early in their lives, they know that you respect what they say, what is on their mind and in their world. And, later on when they have some really important issues, they will want to come to you because you have a listening heart.*
- 5) *As parents you and your spouse are models of a loving God to your children. They need your example to "Keep Holy the Lord's Day" by faithful community worship at Mass every Sunday. Weekly participation as a family at the table of God's Word and the Eucharist is a living expression of your love of God and your true Holiness. Families also need to come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently, and most especially during the Advent and Lent seasons. To forgive one another is divine!*