

The rite of Christian relationships helps families live the priestly mission of baptism. When we work to overcome the selfish, sinful ways we treat one another; imitate Christ’s sacrificial, incarnate love; and consecrate the things we do all day to Christ, it is then that family life becomes a “little way of holiness.”

- **Prioritize family time.** Because we can only form godly children if we spend meaningful time together every day, don’t let outside activities compete with efforts to create a close-knit, family team.
- **Be extravagantly affectionate.** Christ’s love is generous and incarnate. As a Christian household, imitate Christ by being generously and appropriately affectionate, affirming, and supportive of one another.
- Pope Saint John Paul II said that **Christian relationships are characterized by “mutual self-giving.”** Work hard to respond to one another’s needs (parents and kids) promptly, generously, consistently, and cheerfully.
- **Practice discipleship discipline in the home.** As Saint John Bosco taught, reject harsh punishments and focus on teaching, supporting, and encouraging godly behavior through “reason, religion, and loving kindness.”



The rite of family relationships equips families to live the prophetic mission of baptism. When families work, play, talk, and pray together every day, they witness to the ways Christians relate to work, leisure, others, and faith.

- **WORK RITUALS.** Each day, instead of dividing and conquering, make time to do at least some household chores together. Don’t think of chores

- as just “things that have to get done.” They are opportunities to learn to be a team and take good care of one another.
- **PLAY RITUALS.** Every day make a point to play together, enjoy one another’s company, and model healthy ways to celebrate your life together.
  - **TALK RITUALS.** Several times a week have meaningful conversations (not lectures) about faith, values, how God is showing up, and how to take better care of one another.
  - **PRAYER RITUALS.** Pray together as a family throughout each day. Relate to Jesus as another member of the family. Regularly praise him and ask for his help.



The rite of reaching out equips families to live the royal mission of baptism. We reign with Christ by serving with him.

- **Take good care of others in the home.** Authentic Christian service begins with caring generously for the people under our roof.
- **Think about others even when at home.** As a family, donate gently used items, look for ways to help neighbors, and make your home a place where others can enjoy godly fun and fellowship. Regularly engage in charitable service together as a family.
- **Implement kind and thoughtful attitudes and use good manners in and outside the home.** As a family, be conscious of leaving people happier than you found them.

Every family has strengths and areas for growth. To discover more ways the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life can bless your family, visit our Facebook discussion group, CatholicHOM — Family Discipleship.

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**Inventory No. P2608**

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# Living as a DOMESTIC CHURCH



“The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion ... it can and should be called a domestic church.”

— CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, 2204





Did you know that your home is holy? It might not feel like it sometimes, but similar to the way God transforms common bread and wine into his precious Body and Blood, God uses sacramental grace to transform your messy family life into a “domestic church.” This is a truly sacred place where you are meant to encounter God’s grace in the everyday stuff of everyday life, learn how to care for one another with the love that flows from God’s heart, and bring the world to Christ through your witness.

But what does it really mean to be a domestic church?

A domestic church is a household of persons who are (1) united to one another and God through the sacramental life of the Church, and (2) committed to living out the Christian/Trinitarian vision of love in their relationships with one another and the world. Let’s break that down.

**A household of persons who are united to God and one another through the sacramental life of the Church means that it is grace that makes a household a domestic church.**

In ancient Roman society, the family was a tribe based on blood. Christianity challenged this tribalistic view by teaching that all the baptized were God’s family. For Christians, the ties of grace are even more binding than ties of blood. In fact, it was this new understanding of family that gave rise to religious and monastic communities. Monasteries and convents are types of domestic churches. Like every other Christian family, they are households of persons united to God and one another through the sacramental life of the Church.

Of course, just living under the same roof doesn’t make a domestic church happen any more than standing around in a physical church makes Mass happen. In both cases, the people who are gathered together need to be intentional about what they are doing. That’s why, besides sharing a sacramental connection, a domestic church must also be committed to **living out the Christian/Trinitarian vision of love in their relationships with one another and the world.**

The world offers a lot of different ideas about what love means. At its core, being a Christian disciple means living a life that promotes a uniquely Christian vision of love. For Christians, loving someone means (1) working to be in intimate communion — as the Trinity is revealed to us as the perfect communion of life and love — and (2) giving everything we have to help one another become everything God created us to be — like Jesus did. The mission of every domestic church is to build grace-filled, loving, intimate households rooted in the commitment to work for



one another’s ultimate good.

Whatever the makeup of your household, the degree to which you can say that the people you live with are united by sacramental grace and committed to living out the Christian/Trinitarian vision of love in all your relationships is the degree to which you can say your household represents a true domestic church. Likewise, the degree to which this isn’t true of your household is the degree to which God is calling you and yours to grow. Every domestic church lives in the tension that exists between the already present and the not-yet-fulfilled kingdom of God.

Out of the different types of domestic churches that exist, households rooted in marriage rightfully enjoy a special pride of place, but not because they represent some kind of human ideal. They deserve special respect because they share a stronger sacramental connection and, as “icons of the Trinity,” they are better equipped to witness to Trinitarian love. That doesn’t mean other households are lesser domestic churches, or that married households are automatically ideal. It just means there are different kinds of domestic churches — all of which share some sacramental connection, but each of which witnesses to Christian/Trinitarian love in the manner that’s most appropriate to its specific reason for being.

## THE LITURGY OF DOMESTIC CHURCH LIFE

One reason people can be confused by the term domestic church is that, when we go to church, we usually celebrate a liturgy — namely, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. But families don’t celebrate liturgy at home, do we? Actually, yes, we do! We celebrate the *Liturgy of Domestic Church Life*. Theologians tell us that Christian family life is liturgical. The Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is the liturgy over which we, the common priesthood (a vocation we received at baptism), preside.

Liturgy is an act of worship that God uses to heal the damage sin does to our relationships with him and others. The Liturgy of the Eucharist, over which the ministerial priesthood presides, facilitates communion with God and makes communion with others possible. The Liturgy of Domestic Church Life, presided over by the common priesthood, enables families to bring Christ home so that he can help us overcome the selfish and sinful ways we tend to treat one another and learn to care for others with God’s love instead.

Similar to the way the Liturgy of the Eucharist is made up of different building blocks — that is, rites — we can say that the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is made up of three parts: the “rite” of Christian relationships, the “rite” of family rituals, the “rite” of reaching out. Each of these so-called rites involves certain practices that help families exercise their baptismal mission to be priests, prophets, and royals, respectively.

So, how do we live all that? Considering each of the three rites we’ve explained, think how you might implement the following traits that can strengthen your domestic church.

