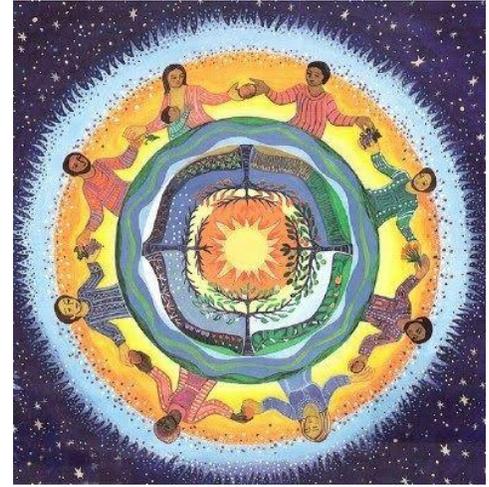


The Domestic Church: Prayer at Home

Worship in these days of “virus.”



We echo the words of the disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:10), as we strive to bring to God our joys and our sorrows, our hope and our fears in the ordinary day-to-day life of our faith. The heart of our belief is always “prayer:” personal quiet prayer, prayer as a couple or family, or with friends; prayer leading us always to the Great Prayer of the whole Church around the Sunday Table of the Lord.

During these crisis days of the Coronavirus, when our Sunday communal gathering around the Lord’s Table is not possible, we can hear the invitation to a renewal of prayer in our own lives and in the lives of our families and friends. Perhaps this is the gift we are given during these “crisis” days—a gift to enkindle a love for and practice of prayer in our day to day living—we who make up the Church, we who together are the Body of Christ.

Prayer must happen, day by day, in every time and season, in the “little churches”—the households, homes, the families—prayer which begins and ends in our Sunday gathering around the Lord’s Table. It is prayer at home which is as necessary and essential as our prayer at Mass on Sunday. Since our Sunday gathering is a community of prayer, that prayer must also be found in our homes, households and families. The spirit of our Sunday worship fills and shapes

our lives because the same spirit is found in the prayer of persons, and families at home.

This is why the Second Vatican Council calls the home “the Domestic Church.” It is there that the love of God is first recognized; it is at home that we first turn to God in prayer, there that we learn the language of prayer and the virtues of Christian living.

Perhaps these “crisis” days of “fasting from the Eucharist,” from Mass, bring us a gift of new insight and new appreciation of the value and necessity of “the domestic church,” the church at home. Days which invite us to remember what so many of us learned so long ago around the tables of our homes in moments of joy, sorrow, loss and gain. These were “lessons,” rooted in love, which shaped our lives, our believing, and gave us reasons to hope, and a longing to be at Sunday prayer with the Church around the Lord’s Table.

From one generation to the next, we all must learn, and hand on the words and gestures, the songs and Scriptures of our faith. At the altar on Sunday (for which these days we long), at table, at bedside all week, we learn throughout our lives who we are: the Body Christ. Some of us grew up

with such words and ways of prayer. Some did not. All of us, whatever our background, are still learning to pray, still learning to be Christians. For all of us, in many ways, these days invoke a new beginning, a new hope and a new way.

Use the many resources on our parish website (blessedtrinitymissoula.org) to support your daily and Sunday prayer. Pray out loud the prayers you know by heart. Pray, as so many of us now do, beside your children or grandchildren, even when they are very young. Then, as they grow, invite them into deeper prayer with you. Pray in your own words, by all means, but pray especially the words of the Church. Pray because you yourself need to pray. Then as your children and grandchildren grow, invite them into the prayer of the Church. Bless them each night, or as they come and go from your home (a simple trace of the cross on their forehead). Bless one another, spouse, friends, family in the same way. Pray at table each evening at supper, remembering that the table in your home is a reminder of the Lord's Table at church, so honor it with candles, grace it with beauty and make it the center of your prayer. Sing around it the songs of faith, read the Holy Scriptures aloud (use the resource for daily

Scripture on the website). Remember together that fasting and almsgiving, care for the poor and sick, and daily intercession for justice and for peace are what you hold most dear (use the General Intercessions available each week on the parish website). Pray them at table. And finally, if you live alone, as so many of us do, increase your daily prayer, especially, as you sit at table for a meal. Honor your table, pray there, be even more aware these days, of the abiding presence of Christ in your home, in your meal and in your spirit.

So, these "crisis days," as challenging and serious as they are, can also be days of blessing, renewal and faith. They must be days of deeper prayer, instilling a renewed longing for our Sunday gathering around the Lord's Table, where together again we can eat and drink of the Lord's supper and together, with the whole Church be the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ.

Let us keep faith. Let us pray. Let us be the domestic Church.

Article based on the Introduction:
Catholic Household Blessing and Prayers.
GRAPHIC ART: © The Banquet by Ansgar Holmberg, CSJ

Edited by Fr. Ed Hislop

