



SESSION SIX

A Gospel of Hope for our Families

Parents, guardians and grandparents learn that family moments are, in themselves, sacred. Family rituals build up a sense of family as community. Small ways in which parents teach their children, loving them, caring for them, providing for them, are already contributing to the children's growth. Giving children a sense of what it means to experience trust, generosity, tenderness and hope is, in itself, a gift. Indeed, it is pre-evangelisation. Helping them to know that they, too, can be gentle, forgiving, pure in heart, compassionate and bringers of peace, is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in a profound way. To pray with our children about life in all its realities is sacred. For parents to play with their children day by day is sacred too. (*Share the Good News*, 120)



1. Welcome, Introduction and Overview (5 min)

Welcome to our final session. Tonight we seek to finish on a note of hope. We hear how a variety of people have sought to bring love to their families: old people, young people, married people, single people and so on. We explore a spirituality for families and we listen to the advice Pope Francis offers on the practicalities of day-to-day living and loving in families.



2. Video Clip 17: Vox Pop (5 min)

A selection of short interviews with older people on what helped their love and commitment to endure throughout their lives, advice they offer the young generation.



3. Discussion (15 min)

- What did these stories say to you?
- What seemed to be important in their lives?
- Where did you see signs of hope for your own family?

4. VIDEO CLIP 18 INPUT: PART I: A SPIRITUALITY OF FAMILY LIFE



The spirituality of the family is a spirituality of communion. Family life is marked by thousands of small gestures of give and take, of sharing and doing without, and of putting the needs of others before one's own needs. In the midst of that reality of love, given and shared, God's love is always present.

The human person has 'an inherent social dimension'. Our growth to our full potential as human beings is best achieved in relationship with others. The family is the first place where we have the opportunity to experience and grow in communion with others.

“A few minutes can be found each day to come together before the living God, to tell him of our worries, to ask for the needs of our family, to pray for someone experiencing difficulty, to ask for help in showing love, to give thanks for life and for its blessings and to ask Our Lady to protect us beneath her maternal mantle” (318)



All of the moments of family life whether they be moments of suffering and pain, or of joy and celebration are opportunities for connection with one another and with God. A family where

love is shared and expressed is an image of the love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and God's love is always present.

“To want to form a family is to resolve to be part of God's dream, to choose to dream with him, to want to build with him, to join him in this saga of building a world here no one will feel alone” (322)

A family, where life is nurtured and cared for, shares in God's creative work. Families are open to life not only through generating new life but through offering hospitality and care to others, especially those in need. A family lives its spirituality by enabling love to grow within

the family unit and also by reaching out in love to others. Pope Francis also highlights the vital role of the family in developing the attitudes and values which urge us to care for our common home, the earth.

The family is the place where children's faith is first awakened. While parents want the best for their children and bring them for Baptism and accompany their early steps in faith development, they know it's not a question of imposing their faith on their children. Children need to have their own experiences of faith. They need symbols, actions and stories. Parents and others cannot impose their faith on children. Children's faith is nurtured through experiences of prayer and by having access to symbols such as good religious art, so that they begin to see for themselves that their faith is something attractive and beautiful. Moments of family prayer are particularly important, including opportunities to read and reflect on sacred Scripture.

There are moments in every day which offer themselves as moments for prayer or for fostering awareness of God's presence. Here are some suggestions, there are many others:

- Pray the Grace Before and After Meals, particularly at special meal times.
- Accompany children as they prepare to celebrate First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.



- Encourage children to help make a prayer space (they will have done this in school). They can add different objects that link with particular times or seasons and then it can become a focus for prayer.
- Encourage children to be aware of the beauty of nature during each season, and to see nature as the work of God.
- Show children how they can help to care for the environment, God's gift not only to us, but to everyone who lives on the planet now, as well as to those who come after us.
- Remind children to pray for family members who have died who continue to be connected with us and are members of God's family.
- Share with children how the day has been for both parents and children; how they have tried to love their neighbour; perhaps read a line from Scripture.

Discussion (15 min)

- What do you find helps you to create a sense of God being with you in all that happens in your family life?
- How important do you think it is for children to have opportunities to be in touch with a sense of the spiritual?
- What hints would you give to other families?



5. Distribute photocopies (page 58) of the advice Pope Francis gives to families. Invite the participants to take time to read them (5 min)

- Always remember to say Please, Thanks, Sorry ... In good times learn how to be open and communicate, so that you will be able to continue to do so in times of difficulty.
- Celebrate happy moments, and individual successes and support each other in the difficult passages of life. Value everyone's achievements, however insignificant they may appear.
- Respect each other's freedom. Everyone needs space, some more than others. An awareness of individual needs gives people a sense of being trusted and valued.
- Give a kind look. Never underestimate the value of a gaze of love.
- Learn to forgive. Before we can forgive others we must learn to forgive ourselves. Be slow to point out the limitations of a loved one.
- Listen to the older members of the family tell their stories and, in particular, encourage children and adolescents to do so.
- Be slow to judge another whose situation you do not fully understand.
- Always find time for family prayer, even a few moments every day.

6. Discussion (20 min)

- How do you feel about what Pope Francis says here?
- What do you find challenging?
- What, if anything, will you take with you from tonight?

7. Invite the participants to fill in the comment sheets

8. Video Clip 19: Closing Reflection (5 min)



9. Tea/Coffee



IN SUMMARY



The spirituality of the family is a spirituality of communion. We grow to our full potential as human beings through our relationship with others. The family is where we learn how to share life with others, through the give and take of every day, through sharing and doing without and through recognising and responding to the needs of others as well as our own needs. God's love is present in all of this.

All moments of family life are times of connection with one another and with God. Every family in which love is shared is an image of the love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Families where life is nurtured through welcoming new life and through caring for others are sharing in the creative work of God. Pope Francis urges families to nurture respect and care for 'our common home,' the earth.

Children's faith is first nurtured in the home. Every day there are opportunities for fostering children's faith, for example through:

- Family prayer
- Having religious imagery and symbols visible in the home
- Praying before and after meals
- Being involved in children's sacramental preparation

- Creating a prayer space in the home
- Helping children to appreciate the beauty of nature as a sign of God's care
- Encouraging care for the environment
- Praying for family members who are dead
- Reading and reflecting on short scripture passages



ADVICE POPE FRANCIS GIVES TO FAMILIES

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