

Family

With *International Day of Families* falling on May 15th there is an opportunity and invitation throughout the month of May for each of us to pause and consider the mix of *challenge, pain, joy* and *blessing* that accompany the birth of a person into a family. At the same time we might consider the vast differences of how the actual experience of family might be played out for people in this 21st century.



REFLECTION ONE

While addressing families in the Philippines on 17 January, 2015 Pope Francis had this to say, *“In the family we learn how to love, how to forgive, how to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them.”*

Elsewhere in his address Francis goes on to say, *“The pressures on family life today are many... countless families are still suffering from the effects of natural disasters. The economic situation has caused families to be separated by migration and the search for employment, and financial problems strain many households. While too many people live in dire poverty, others are caught up in materialism and lifestyles which are destructive of family life...”* We can add to these challenges: the effects of war and terrorism, Aids, unwanted pregnancies, child and spousal abandonment, drug and alcohol abuse, abuse in all its other forms, individuals who really don't know anything about what it means to be a member of a family, those who struggle to create new understandings around the concept of family... and the list goes on.



- Of the many ways we can bring before God the challenges and pain experienced by families - we could try sitting quietly with the palms of our hands facing upwards.
 - Imagine that in these open hands we hold people in any or all of the circumstances outlined above (it might be helpful to take a moment to hold consciously, people in one circumstance at a time rather than try to take on all at once. At the same time, remember that this is God's work; we are simply being conduits of energetic blessing.)
 - If imagined faces appear for you, let them come and then fade away. It is likely that they will be replaced by another set of faces or perhaps sensations or feelings.
- As you hold out your open palms breathe a blessing on all who pass through them and release them into God's loving Energy.
 - At the end of your allotted time take in several deep breaths and release them and then shake out your hands to release any energy that needs to be released from the experience.

REFLECTION TWO

Along with the *challenges, pain, suffering* and *struggle* associated with family membership let us not forget the *joy, blessing, love, safety* and *sense of belonging* that are also gifts of such membership. Many statements have been made about family and the giftedness within it. Here are just a few:

To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right. Confucius

There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of humans are created, strengthened and maintained.

Winston Churchill

As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live.

Pope John Paul II

What can you do to promote peace? Go home and love your family.

Mother Teresa

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.

Desmond Tutu

We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, and spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.

Pope Francis

Family Rules

1. **Put the other person first.**
2. **Speak with love.**
3. **Tell the truth.**
4. **Mind your manners.**
5. **Make the right choice.**
6. **Be courageous.**
7. **Guard your heart.**
8. **Forgive freely.**
9. **Always do your best.**
10. **Be thankful.**



Sourced from: CoolNsmart.com

LET US PRAY

Loving God,
bless all families with your love.
Breathe your energy upon us
as we turn from anger that leads to division;
empower us to forgive as we have been forgiven;
and be with us as we venture along life's highway
to witness to your love and truth.
Amen.

Acknowledgements:

Prayer prepared by Maree Haggerty rsm, Celestine Pooley rsm & Patricia McDermott rsm