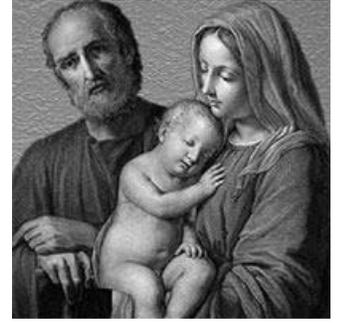


Building the Domestic Church

While Strengthening Our Parish

The Family Fully Alive



The Family that Prays and Plays Together, Stays Together

MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

APRIL, 2019

Faith In Action: Good Friday Family Promotion

The inner form of Christian familial love is mercy like God the Father who is “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4).

Breaking Open the Theme

Pope St. John Paul II has beautifully said mercy is “love’s second name.” Sacred Scripture speaks frequently about Christ’s love in terms of mercy. For instance, there are the memorable parables of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32) and the lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7). In fact, Christ’s strongest teaching about the sacredness and life long permanence of the marriage bond (Mt 19:12) is preceded by one of his strongest teachings about forgiveness in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21-35). During the course of the parable of the unforgiving servant, Christ instructs his disciples to forgive not just seven times, but 77 times — a symbolic number that represents a willingness to forgive without limit. In other words, Christ instructs his disciples to love unconditionally by being merciful. The fact that this teaching occurs right before his teaching about marriage’s indissolubility powerfully suggests that marriage, and the family life that flows from it, is to be held together by unconditional mercy. If the family practices mercy, they will be immensely blessed: “blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7).

Meditation

From Pope Francis’ *Amoris Laetitia*

Once we allow ill will to take root in our hearts, it leads to deep resentment. ... The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people’s weaknesses and to excuse them. As Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Yet we keep looking for more and more faults, imagining greater evils, presuming all kinds of bad intentions, and so resentment grows and deepens. ... Something is wrong when we see every problem as equally serious; in this way, we risk being unduly harsh with the failings of others. The just desire to see our rights respected turns into a thirst for vengeance rather than a reasoned defense of our dignity. When we have been offended or let down, forgiveness is possible and desirable, but no one can say that it is easy. ... All this assumes that we ourselves have had the experience of being forgiven by God, justified by his grace and not by our own merits. We have known a love that is prior to any of our own efforts, a love that constantly opens doors, promotes and encourages. If we accept that God’s love is unconditional, that the Father’s love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us. Otherwise, our family life will no longer be a place of understanding, support and encouragement, but rather one of constant tension and mutual criticism.

Family Reflections

1. Considering that Jesus forgave his persecutors from the cross, what does God’s mercy in the scriptures teach us about how to forgive our family members?
2. Why is it important to be forgiven by God? Why must we trust in his forgiveness in order to forgive others properly?
3. Do any of us find it hard to forgive? What holds us back from forgiving? Is it resentment based on ill will, unduly looking for faults, an excessive concern for our rights, the inability to forgive ourselves or to accept our own limitations? or is it something else?

Scripture Reading

Psalm 51:3-6, 11-15

A prayer of penance and longing for God’s abundant mercy

Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;
in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.
Thoroughly wash away my guilt;
and from my sin cleanse me.
For I know my transgressions;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your eyes
So that you are just in your word,
and without reproach in your judgment.
Turn away your face from my sins;
blot out all my iniquities.
A clean heart create for me, God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit.
Do not drive me from before your face,
nor take from me your holy spirit.
Restore to me the gladness of your salvation;
uphold me with a willing spirit.
I will teach the wicked your ways,
that sinners may return to you.

Family Project

As a family, go to church for the sacrament of reconciliation. A week later, take a few moments to discuss how the sacrament has helped each of you to be more holy and to fight against temptation and sin.