

Introduction

The International Day of Families, observed on May 15 each year, serves as a reminder of the fundamental role families play in society. It is a day to recognize and celebrate the vital contributions that families make to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of communities worldwide. Families are often regarded as the cornerstone of society, they are where children first learn about relationships, respect, responsibility, and faith.

For the Catholic Church, families are seen as the “domestic church,” where faith and spirituality are nurtured and passed down through generations. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia,” said, “The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church.” This statement underscores the Church’s commitment to supporting and strengthening families as they navigate the complexities of contemporary life.

The International Day of Families provides an opportunity for people around the world to reflect on the diverse forms of families and the challenges they face. It encourages governments and communities to promote family-friendly policies and to support those families that are vulnerable or struggling. As society evolves, so too must our understanding of what constitutes a family, embracing diversity while upholding the core values that make families the enduring foundation of our communities.

International Day of Families

May 15, 2024



Biblical Reflection

“Whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim 5:8 NRS)

St. Paul’s stern and compelling admonition on providing for one’s family forms a central part of his guidance to Timothy on how to build and maintain harmony within the community. The apostle asserts that establishing a framework of support for one’s family, both immediate and extended, is a fundamental characteristic and duty of a believer—an indelible part of Christian identity. This biblical principle underscores Pope Francis’s assertion pronounced in our contemporary context, which likewise places the welfare of the family as a decisive factor not only for the Church but also for the future of the human community.

The apostle’s teaching reveals that providing for the well-being of the family transcends mere social obligation; it is a profound religious duty rooted in the life pattern and teachings of the early Church. The early Christian communities understood the pivotal role of the family, establishing their ecclesiastical structures on this foundational unit—a life pattern embodied and practiced in the network of house churches. In navigating our modern and intricate world, it is imperative that we remain steadfast in upholding this foundational characteristic of the Church. Our ecclesial life is not just about maintaining an organizational structure or adhering to doctrine. It is about preserving the essence of what it means to be a Church. And at the heart of this essence is the family. Therefore, upholding the welfare of families and safeguarding their stability remains a pivotal Christian responsibility that transcends time and contexts; it is a religious duty woven into the fabric of our faith.



Vision-Mission Statement and Action Plan

Make vision-mission statement for each family. These statements will give a foundation for leading a family with clarity and purpose. The vision is your dream, and the mission is what you want to achieve, and the Action plan is how and when you want to achieve it.

Family Prayer and Meal. Let the prayer become your culture in the families, set a short time for this. Try to have meals together at least once a day.

Liturgy and Social Gatherings for Families. Organizing special liturgies on Family or Bible study would help the people, and at the same time organize some social gatherings for families, where all the family members participate.

Family Counseling Cells. In each parish/institute, establish Family Counselling Cell or Center to reach out to the needy families.

Conduct Seminars on Family – Reconciliation and Peace. These seminars are motivation for the whole family to attend, discuss and discern each one's role and participation for the welfare of the family as well as the growth of each one. Discuss on Christian values, reconciliation, peace in the family, the present realities and the voice of God today, etc.

Action Plan for Families

Create a “Gratitude Jar”. Write things you're grateful for on slips of paper and add them to the jar. Read them together at mealtimes or during family nights.

Service and Outreach. Engage in service projects and outreach activities as a family, both within the Church community and beyond, e.g. soup kitchen, homeless people, or any cause you care about.

Building Common Home. Being aware of the deteriorating situation of our Common Home – Earth, each family or families together have some concrete plan of action in building our Common Home, nurturing nature and environment.



Prayer of Pope Francis for the families

(slightly adapted)

Heavenly Father,
We come before You to praise You
and to thank You for the great gift of the family.

We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
and know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.

We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.
Sustain them and make them aware
of the path to holiness upon which You call them,
so that they might experience Your infinite mercy
and find new ways to grow in love.

We pray to You for children and young people:
may they encounter You and respond joyfully
to the vocation You have in mind for them;
We pray for parents and grandparents:
may they be aware
that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God
in caring for the children who, in body and spirit,
You entrust to them;

Lord, grant that each family
might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church
as a call to become missionary disciples,
in the service of life and peace,
in communion with our priests, religious,
and all vocations in the Church.

Amen.

