



Diocese of Austin



## YEAR OF THE DOMESTIC CHURCH BULLETIN TEXT

**December 2020** The Domestic Church

**January 2021** Vocations

**February 2021** Prayer at Home

**March 2021** Lent in the Domestic Church

**April 2021** Love Your Neighbors

**May 2021** Celebrating Parents

**June 2021** The Gift of Young People

**July 2021** We are God's Children

**August 2021** Eucharistic People

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**October 2021** The Witness of Marriage

**November 2021** Season of Stewardship

**December 2021** Hail Mary, Full of Grace

### **NOVEMBER 2021**

Often when we hear the term “stewardship,” the “three T’s” come to mind: time, talent and treasure. While we often hear about these in regards to participation in the life of a parish or while people are seeking monetary donations, stewardship affects all aspects of life, as everything that we have comes from the Lord. As faithful Catholics, we are called to take care of and use well all the gifts that the Lord has given.

Within the domestic church, our families provide ample opportunity for us to teach each other stewardship and hold each other accountable for our resources. For example, families can work together in serving the poor, joining a ministry at your parish that is in need, minimizing waste and consumable materials, spending time together in prayer, or simply serving each other lovingly when it is difficult. Children also rely on their parents to demonstrate what it means to give to the Church financially through tithing, as well as through giving of their time and talent.

All of the faithful, young and old, are called to be stewards of God's gifts. As the holidays approach, how can your family grow in understanding of stewardship? How can you serve a person or family in need? It is never too early or too late to be good stewards of God's gifts.

## OCTOBER 2021

The witness of marriage is a witness of the love that Christ has for his bride, the Church. From the beginning to the end of scripture, we see the importance of marriage. We see the marriage, the union of God and his people throughout the Old Testament. In Christ, we see the sacrificial love of God who lays down his life for his bride. And in the Eucharist, we participate in the wedding feast of the lamb; the eternal wedding banquet of heaven.

Christ's death on the cross demonstrates the self-sacrifice that unifies God with his people and husbands with their wives. We see love outpoured and new life given. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us "It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ (CCC 1615)."

The witness of marriage is an outward sign of the eternal love of God, and our journey toward eternal life with him. If you are married, in what way do you and your spouse demonstrate God's love to each other? If you are not married, in what ways do you demonstrate God's love to your neighbor?

## SEPTEMBER 2021

When we refer to our parish, we often refer to our "home" parish. Perhaps this is the parish we grew up at, or the parish we were married at. Maybe it's the parish where we raise our own families, or where we land after relocating to a new city. This is the parish we attend each weekend surrounded by families we experience life with, or watch from afar as they move in and out of seasons of life. Our parish homes are much like our personal homes. They are places where we live and grow together.

Within our parishes, we find God's family, the Church. And God's family is our family. In his address "The Parish is the Family of Families," Pope John Paul II said "I invite all you who are unsure about the Church or who doubt that you will be welcomed to come home to the family of families, to come home to your parish. You belong there! It is your family in the Church, and the Church is the household of God in which there are no strangers or aliens (cf. Eph. 2:19)."

There are no strangers in our parishes, as there are no strangers in our homes. In what ways can you reach out to a new parishioner to welcome them into your parish family? In what ways does your parish feel like home?

## AUGUST 2021:

The Eucharist lies at the heart of our Catholic faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls the Eucharist the "source and summit of the Christian life (CCC 1324)." The preeminence of the Eucharist in our faith points to the crucial role that the Eucharist plays in living a Christian life.



As members of Christ's body, we are a Eucharistic people. We are strengthened in grace through receiving Christ in the Eucharist. We are then called to go forth to love and serve others as Christ did. We do this by taking the Gospel message everywhere we go, including out homes!

In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II said, "There is a need to encourage shared spiritual moments such as participating in the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, daily prayer in the family and practical signs of charity. This will strengthen fidelity in marriage and unity in families."

In the Eucharist, we are strengthened as Christ's body, the Church. We are also strengthened as families. How can your family work together to be Christ-like to those you encounter?

### **JULY 2021:**

We are God's children. This may be something that you have heard since you were a child, but how often do you think about it and consider the implications of what it means that you are a child of God?

Jesus taught us to call God "father." Throughout his life, he desired that we would know God as the merciful and loving father that he is. Shortly before his death, Jesus prayed: "O righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you; and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:25-26)."

Through our baptism, we are made adopted children of God. As children of God, we share in the sufferings of Christ. We are also co-heirs of God's kingdom with Christ, and share in his life through his body, the Church.

When you pray, do you approach God as your father? What can we learn from Christ's life and witness about what it means that God is our father? If we are part of Christ's body with God's love within us, how can you demonstrate his love to others?

### **JUNE 2021:**

Young people are a gift from God. The Gospel of Matthew demonstrates the special place that young people have with God. It says: "Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Mat. 19:13-15).'"

Children contribute to the good of the family. They bring love and vitality to their families, as well as grow in and share faith with their families. They also learn Christian discipleship from their parents and contribute to helping their parents grow in holiness through mutual affection, love and forgiveness (cf. CCC 2225-2229).



As children grow into youth and young adulthood, they grow in faith according to their various stages in life, and are called to share in Christ's mission at each stage. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis states: "Filled with the love of Christ, young people are called to be witnesses of the Gospel wherever they find themselves, by the way they live (CV 175)."

We can look to the lives of young people as examples of what it means to rely on our parents for our basic needs. As children of God, we rely on the love and mercy of our heavenly father as we grow in holiness throughout our lives. In what ways is God a father to you?

### **MAY 2021:**

For the month of May, we continue our reflections for the Year of the Domestic Church by celebrating the gift of parenthood. We thank the Lord for the countless sacrifices that parents make, from sleepless nights to working long hours to provide for their families. Their roles are often thankless, but vital to our domestic churches. In their openness to new life, parents are cooperators with the Lord in creation and entrusted by God with the lives of their children.

Christ himself taught us to approach God as a parent. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus gives us the term "Abba," meaning father. The use of this word indicates a level of intimacy and conjures-up ideas of the tenderness between a parent and child. The term also indicates a level of authority. The faithful are called to obedience in their relationship with God, as a child is called to obedience in relationship with his or her parent.

By looking to Christ and his relationship with God the Father, we see the beauty of reciprocity in relationships between parents and children. This month as we celebrate the gift of parents, let us celebrate the gift of the people who brought us into this world, as well as the gift of a loving father in heaven.

### **APRIL 2021:**

The love of one's neighbor is an important part of our life of faith. When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus replied: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12: 30-31)."

To love one's neighbor is to love as God loves. Within the Domestic Church, parents demonstrate this by loving their children and spouses. Family members also express this love through the mercy and forgiveness that they extend to one another. However, this love is not limited to those within your household. We must love our neighbor by going out. We must meet our neighbors where they are at.



In his address “The Parish is a Family of Families,” Pope John Paul II encouraged the faithful to reach out to their neighbor. He says: “I wish to encourage all families and parishes not to be inward-looking, not to dwell on themselves. Jesus commands us to serve our neighbor, to reach out to those in need.” This encouragement allows us to reflect on how we answer this call. How does your family or household show love to each other? Who is someone in need that your family can serve? What is something small that your family can do for those in need?

### **MARCH 2021:**

This month we experience the season of Lent. A time in which we, like Christ, will spend 40 days in the desert for a time of prayer and sacrifice. Our prayers and sacrifices help us grow in relationship with Christ. They unite us more closely to him as we journey with him to the cross and celebrate his resurrection at Easter.

During this Year of the Domestic Church, we are reminded of the sacrifices and prayer that we offer for our families. Each member in a household has a unique role that contributes to the household and requires sacrifice. Often, we pray for members of our family during challenging times, or offer prayers of gratitude for each other when things go well, but does your family pray *together*?

As we enter the Lenten season and consider what personal sacrifice that we would like to “give up,” consider a way in which you can add, or increase prayer in the life of your family. Does your household pray together? Parents, do you pray with your spouse and set an example of prayer for your family? Does your family attend Mass together? Do you pray together daily or share prayer traditions? Maybe you don’t pray together and would like to start. Wherever you are in your prayer life, consider increasing the time that you spend together with the Lord. As we grow in relationship with him in our own families, or domestic Church, God’s family, the Church, grows together.

### **FEBRUARY 2021:**

Prayer is integral for a life of faith. It is through prayer that we are able to approach the Lord with whatever gratitude, burdens or petitions are on our hearts.

Christ himself taught us how to pray. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus teaches us to call God “father,” and in Luke 11: 2-4, we see the familiar prayer that we say at Mass: the “Our Father.”

In prayer, we approach the living God, our father, who calls us into relationship with him. As his children, our relationship with God grows and changes as we do. For this reason, from the time children are small, we teach them to pray with simple prayers and petitions. As people grow, their prayer life changes and deepens as their relationship with the Lord deepens.



Children look to their parents and loved ones as examples of how to live and express their faith. Praying together as a family teaches children to seek God in prayer, and be confident in his loving response. Praying together as a family also strengthens the relationships within the family and allows the family to grow in faith together.

Does your family pray together? What is one simple way that you can increase the prayer time with your family or those living in your household?

### **JANUARY 2021:**

Throughout history, God has spoken to man. He spoke through Abraham, Moses and the prophets. God's Word became flesh in Jesus, and he continues to speak to us today through Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. God also speaks to each person through his or her vocation in life.

Each person has a vocational calling. A person's vocation is the way in which he or she grows in holiness through service of God. Some people are called to marriage while others are called to the priesthood or religious life. Some people serve God in their single state of life. Regardless of a person's vocational calling, all of the faithful are called to serve God in charity and faithfulness.

In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II said: "The word of God, faithfully read in the family, gradually builds it up as a domestic church and makes it fruitful in human and Christian virtues; it is there that the source of vocations is to be found."

By remaining close to God's word in the Scriptures, families are able help each other discern God's voice in their own lives. In this way, families can support and nurture the vocation of its members as they help each other lead holy lives.

What is a way that your family can share the Scriptures with each other? How can you support each family member's vocation?

### **DECEMBER 2020:**

This Christmas season bring us the opportunity to reflect on the Incarnation of God when, in his infinite love and mercy, became man. We see this in a tangible way when we reflect upon the manger. The creator of heaven and Earth lay helpless as a baby, surrounded by his parents, Mary and Joseph.

The Holy Family serves as an example for all of our families of what it means to live faithfully. It is in the home that we receive faith from our families. It is also in the home that our faith grows and is nourished so that we can then take our faith into the world. For this reason, the family is known as the "Domestic Church."



At this unique time when many people are spending more time at home than usual, we have an opportunity to strengthen faith in our families, whether they have one or many people in them.

Starting on December 27, 2020, the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we observe the “Year of the Domestic Church,” inaugurated by the Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez.

For the next year, we have the opportunity to focus on faith in our home and family life. In what ways does the Holy Family serve as an example of living faithfully for our own families? In what ways does our family share faith with each other?

