

Session Six

Family of Families: The Parish Community and the Communion of Saints

Our family is not journeying toward holiness alone. Rather, our family is called to join a parish community where we can gather with other families to worship God, to grow as a domestic church, and to serve the world. Furthermore, there exists a bigger community in Heaven and on Earth, the communion of the saints, that intercedes for our family. In this session of *The Heart of the Family*, let us see ourselves within a larger network of relationships as we all journey together towards Christ.

Let's Read Scripture

On *The Heart of the Family's* website, play Video One and Video Two.

John 6:1-15

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee, and a large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick.

Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near.

When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?"

He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little bit."

One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Jesus,

"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number.

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted.

When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted."

So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat.

When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world."

Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

Let's Reflect

After you play the second video, invite each family member to take a moment to think about their responses to these reflection questions.

- Let us keep connecting the “table of the altar” with the “table of our home.” Everyone, take a turn and answer: what is one thing we can do at home to prepare for Mass? When everyone has said one idea, choose the one you’d like to start practicing as a family this coming Sunday, and then rotate the other ideas.
- Let's reflect on the story of the loaves and fish: Jesus asks his disciples, "What can you offer?" So, take a moment to reflect on: what is one talent that you have, no matter how small it seems, that you can offer to help your family, your parish, or someone in need?

Let's Pray

After you share your responses, play Video Three of this session and pray along as a family. First, let's rely on the wisdom of the saints and pray together with the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi; as usual, repeat the bold text. To close this prayer, parents, bless your children as you learned in the previous session.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

Amen.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, **let me sow love;**

where there is injury, **pardon;**

where there is doubt, **faith;**

where there is despair, **hope;**

where there is darkness, **light;**

where there is sadness, **joy.**

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled **as to console**,
to be understood **as to understand**,
to be loved **as to love**.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
Pray for us.

Parents, bless your children.

Let's Act

Inventory of our family gifts.

1. Each member of your family will draw a table like the one below and follow the instructions for each column.
2. In the first column, write the names of each family member.
3. To fill out the second column, pick one person at a time, and everyone will go around sharing all their beautiful gifts and talents.

Family member	What are the gifts and talents of this person?

4. Grab a parish bulletin next time you go to Mass, and looking at the ministries and activities coming up, answer the following questions:

- Is there a ministry or activity that a member of your family or your entire family finds interesting? Is there a ministry or event that you would like to attend? Is there one where you would like to volunteer? Do not be afraid to pick up the phone to call your parish and ask for more information about those ministries and activities.

The blessings from the altar to our table. Every time you are about to go to Mass, make a mental note about one thing that your family needs today. And when you have that in mind, make sure to offer your Mass for that intention, and ask for the grace to bring that blessing to your home. Though simple, this action can truly impact how we participate at Mass, and what God may do in our families. When you arrive to Mass or during communion, you may pray something similar to these words: Dear Lord, I offer today's Mass for [say your family intention].