

Ask what it means to create a Catholic home, and you will get a wide variety of responses. Some Catholic homes have crucifixes, statues, or holy pictures on display. Some Catholic homes have Catholic books or newspapers on hand. In some Catholic homes serving the needs of others is a priority. In other Catholic homes the focus is on family prayers or devotions.

What all Catholic homes share is a common set of beliefs and traditions, along with a commitment to pass along these Catholic beliefs and traditions to future generations.

The purpose of this little booklet is to help you create a Catholic home that has meaning for you and the members of your family.

Don't worry! It won't cause more stress!

It simply offers personal, practical, prayerful, and fun-filled ideas for instilling Catholic faith, attitudes,

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and practices that will help you and your family members strengthen your relationship with the Lord.

Sound interesting?

Throughout this booklet you will find a variety of short topics. You don't have to read this booklet cover to cover. You can pick and choose whatever topics interest you. No pressure! Adopt whatever makes sense in your home and ignore what doesn't work for you.

Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. The result will be a Catholic home that will sustain and nurture your entire family in good times and in bad, bringing with it a sense of peace, a sense of purpose, and a sense of joy.

THE BALANCING ACT

If you are a busy person, you juggle a lot of different things. How many balls are you trying to keep in the air?

Work? School? Church? Kids' activities? Cooking? Cleaning? Shopping? Laundry? Repairs? Bill paying? Health care? Exercising? Spending time with family and friends? Volunteering? Vacationing? Reading? Sleeping? And probably much more...

There's nothing wrong with being busy. Busy people accomplish a lot. But in the daily hustle and bustle of life, busy people sometimes undermine themselves by allowing one aspect of life to dominate. Maybe we work too

much. Or eat too much. Or don't get enough exercise. Or neglect our spiritual lives.

As Catholics, we know that we were created in God's image with a heart, a mind, a body, and a soul. Keeping these four aspects of our life in balance is the foundation for a Catholic home. When we are out of balance, we feel unsettled. We move from one busy moment to the next with no sense of direction. We may become impatient, irritable, or easily upset.

The first step toward reclaiming balance is to talk to family members about how your lives are structured right now. Ask some questions: What could we do to make our home life better? How could we work together to create a better sense of balance? What activities could be reduced or eliminated from our daily or weekly schedule?

Here are some other things to consider:

Matters of the Heart Are we kind and caring with one another? Do we take time to listen to one another? Do we look for ways to help one another? Do we celebrate the good things that are happening in our lives? Do we need to spend more time together? Do we need to have more family fun?

Matters of the Mind Are we open to learning? Can we find time to read together? Can we decrease the amount of time spent watching television or on the internet? Do we talk about what is happening in the world or in the

media in relation to our Catholic beliefs? Can we help one another understand the differences between right and wrong?

Matters of the Body Do we eat well balanced meals? Can we find ways to exercise together? Are we getting enough rest? Can we create additional “down-time” in our schedules for relaxation? Can we all help with household duties?

Matters of the Soul Can we build family prayer time into the day? Is going to Mass on weekends a priority? Do we thank God for all the good things in our lives? Can we find ways to strengthen our relationship with the Lord?

Write down your goals and what changes your family plans to make on a daily or weekly basis. Creating balance may not be easy at first. But as family members move into a new pattern of balanced living they will discover that balance provides a sense of calm, a sense of purpose, a sense of peace, a sense of joy. It refreshes us. It restores us. It makes us feel whole.

GOOD MORNING, GOD

Creating a Catholic home means incorporating a spiritual element into everyone’s day. It doesn’t have to take a lot of time. It doesn’t have to be difficult!

One of the best ways to nurture your own spiritual life is to start each day with the recognition of God's presence. Before you get out of bed, simply ask God to guide you through the day.

As you take a shower, imagine that the water pouring down on you is God's love. Ask God to wash away worry, regrets, resentments, or anything else that is troubling you. Swallow some of the water and ask God to fill you with his love.

At breakfast, pray this simple morning offering together as a family: "Lord, we offer you this day and all that we think, and do, and say." These simple words turn the entire day into a prayer.

Encourage everyone in the family to be on the lookout for the ways God reveals himself to us throughout the day. Little miracles happen all the time. We just need to be spiritually alert. We need to look at the world through eyes of faith.

Help your family members recognize God's presence in the beauty of nature, in thoughtfulness of someone who helps them, in a new idea that solves a problem they are facing, and in the peacefulness of a quiet moment.

Teach family members to consciously smile each time they experience God's presence. Suggest that they thank God—aloud or in the silence of their hearts—each time God's presence is revealed to them.

Assure family members that they can ask God for help at any time throughout the day.

At bedtime, thank God for guiding everyone through the day. Promise that tomorrow morning you will once again be on the lookout for the amazing experiences that God reveals to you and your family.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

One of the foundations in a Catholic home is an attitude of gratitude to God for all that he has given us. Counting our blessings instills in us the recognition that God gives us everything we need. Even in troubled times, we can be grateful that God will support us through whatever difficulties we face.

Gratitude offsets stress. Thanking God for everything that is going well in our lives helps us to put things into perspective and to calm anxious feelings.

Gratitude offsets worry. Thanking God for problems solved lessens our fear of what might happen in the future.

Gratitude offsets self-doubts. Thanking God for our gifts and talents helps us to see that there is meaning and purpose in our lives.

Gratitude offsets envy. Thanking God for all the good things we have banishes feelings of jealousy.

Gratitude offsets sadness. Thanking God for the things that make us happy helps to chase the blues away.

Gratitude offsets negativity. Thanking God for the beauty of nature, the kindness of other people, and the graces we receive every day helps us to appreciate what is truly good in life.

An attitude of gratitude is just a habitual way of thinking. When we cultivate an attitude of gratitude, we begin to see ourselves, other people, the world around us, and the God who made us in a new and exciting way. Here are some ideas on how to cultivate attitudes of gratitude.

- Make a list of things your family members are grateful for. Write each item on a slip of paper and create a gratitude jar. Encourage everyone in the family to draw a slip from the jar whenever they are having a bad day.
- Suggest that family members look for what they are grateful for when doing something they don't want to do. They can be grateful they have a place to sleep when they make their beds each morning. They can be grateful they have food to eat when they're setting the table or cleaning up. They can be grateful when a rainbow follows a rain storm.