

Spousal Prayer & Communion

“The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the “domestic church” where God’s children learn to pray “as the Church” and to persevere in prayer. For children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church’s living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit.” ~CCC 2685

The Family as a School of Prayer

- *Ideally*, our mother, the Church, nourishes us through her liturgy, her teaching, and through being a communion of love. It is in this context that our desire for God is patiently awakened and nurtured as we grow in receptivity to God’s action in our lives. Our father, our priest, one with Jesus through ordination, lays down his life for his bride, the Church, re-presenting Jesus’ own sacrifice, the Eucharist, filling the Church with the grace and love necessary to sustain her in this life-giving process.
- Mom is *ideally* the model of receptivity as she receives the love of God directly and through her husband. She orders us to worship God, to obedience, and teaches us to take the initial steps of faith. She is the heart of the family as a communion of love. She “holds us in her heart,” just as our perfect mother Mary, as the Holy Spirit knits us together spiritually.
- Dad is *ideally* receiving love from the Father and his wife as he lays down his life, pouring out his very life to God, for mom, loving her, caring for her, cherishing her, and thus filling her with the grace and love necessary to sustain her in this life-giving process.
- Mom and Dad thus receive the love of God, directly from him and through each other. They then tutor their children in this way of discipleship, in the way of Jesus and Mary. We are all the bride, and this is where we learn how to receive the divine life Jesus offers us. Mom teaches us how to listen obediently to God the father, both directly and through our Father. She teaches us how to listen obediently to Jesus, the spouse of our souls, and receive the life he gives as he lays down his life in love for his bride, the Church.
- This is the school of prayer that is the domestic church. The learning of how to give and receive through our parents’ living witness. By coming from and being drawn into the mystery of their love, we learn to love. By being drawn into their own individual prayer, and spousal prayer, we learn the way of prayer.
- This happens as the grace of the sacrament is released in our marriages, facilitating this deep bond of intimacy and communion that pours life from the husband and wife’s union, first bringing about children, then nourishing them in the way of Christ. It is from this communion of love, this giving and receiving with God prominently in the middle, that the Holy Spirit patiently awakens the hearts of our children. The Holy Spirit flows through the sacrament of marriage to bring life first to the spouses, and through them, their children.
- All of this is the ideal. Many of us have not experienced this in our families of origin, and still more of us have not lived this in our families today. The question is not whether Jesus, can

transform our families into this ideal, the question he's asking each of us is "Do you want me to transform your marriage? Will you let me?"

Spousal Prayer

"Prayer is the most intimate experience a couple can share and, thus, demands the deepest level of trust." ~Deacon James Keating

- One of the most difficult things for married couples to do is pray together, because we are unique individuals with different ways of praying.
- Marriage is never about the merger of identities or a loss of our individual personalities. It's about two people coming together as a new entity, a family.
- Individually we are called to receive Jesus in prayer, through honestly revealing our hearts to him in vulnerability and asking him to meet our needs.
- As a couple we are called to come before *God and our spouse* in humility, just as we are, revealing our hearts in vulnerability, asking Jesus to meet all our needs.
- Remember our spouse is the primary person through which we are to receive the love of God.

A Way of Spousal Prayer

- Find a quiet time and place where you can both be attentive to God and each other. For the span of an "Our Father," remember you are in the presence of God our Father who looks upon you with love.
- One spouse, for this example, the husband, begin by telling the other spouse about the most significant thing that happened today, significant or insignificant. There is no right or wrong here, it's about sharing your heart. You are also not limited to sharing one thing. This is an exercise of revealing your heart to God and your spouse, of learning to give and receive in the presence of God.
- As the husband shares, the wife just listens. She listens to God and her husband. What arises in you as you hear your husband reveals his heart to you? Don't try to help him or give advice, just listen to him with love soaked ears.
- After he's done sharing, you simply pray for him, out loud. You've heard his heart, now ask Jesus for what you sense he wants for your husband. Is it encouragement, support, or healing? Or do you just need to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace God has given him today?
- Then switch. The wife shares and the husband listens and prays.
- Be patient and kind with yourselves and your spouse! "Love is patient and Kind...and rejoices in the right..." (1 Corinthians 13:4,6b) Sharing hearts may be new to both you and your spouse. It takes time to get comfortable revealing your heart, listening, and praying for one another, so rejoice in what is right and don't focus on what is wrong. If you open the door of your heart just a little to your spouse, God will bless your efforts abundantly.

