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IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

Family Ritual

Christian Unity Week – January 18-25

Invite a Christian family from another faith tradition to visit and share prayer or music together. Afterwards enjoy a dessert.

Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 | World Council of Churches
https://www.oikoumene.org/

To Start a New Year

"A new year is unfolding-like a blossom with petals curled tightly concealing the beauty within."
Lord, let this year be filled with the things that are truly good—with the comfort of warmth in our relationships, with the strength to help those who need our help and the humility and openness to accept help from others.
As we make our resolutions for the year ahead, let us go forward with great hope that all things can be possible –with your help and guidance. Amen.

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"Apple Seeds"
Fr. Brian Cavenaugh, T.O.R.

A Prayer for Life to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

O Jesus, you came that we might have life and have it in abundance. Together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, you form us in our mothers' wombs and call us to love you for all of eternity.

As your most precious gift of human life is attacked, draw us ever closer to your Real Presence in the Eucharist. Dispel the darkness of the culture of death, for you are the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

By the power of your Eucharistic Presence, help us defend the life of every human person at every stage. Transform our hearts to protect and cherish all whose lives are most vulnerable.

For you are God, forever and ever. Amen
From the Respect Life Committee

Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call

What happens when your prayers seem to go unanswered, when you don't get what you've been praying for? Are you hurt? Angry? Frustrated?

Benedictine Father Keith McClellan says in his CareNote on prayers that the first thing to do if you feel your own prayers haven't been answered is to look at the big picture.

"No matter how hard you pray," he writes, "you cannot manipulate God's response. You can, however, learn to open yourself to receive and accept God's answer—an answer that always, though sometimes mysteriously, represents the fullest measure of divine love."

McClellan warns against looking at unanswered prayers as an indication of God's disfavor; to counter that he advises his readers to re-examine their image of God. God is not, the priest cautions, the God of our childhood, dispensing rewards and punishments.

Remember, too, he continues, that if all prayers were answered according to our own preferences, the fullness of God's kingdom would never arrive. And keep in mind, he adds, previous examples of God's providence:

"God is present to you in curious ways. You don't know he was there except by the evidence afterward. At your time of need, God may seem absent. Through the gift of time, however, it is often possible to look back and see that God was there all along—sustaining, comforting, encouraging. Think back to previous times of trial when God did not 'fail' you. Keep praying and take heart."

"God does answer your prayers, though the response to your prayers may be wrapped in mystery. But whether appearing as a startling miracle or a chilling silence, it is destined to accomplish God's ultimate purpose: the removal of all needs through a perfect union of love."



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Families and the Gospel



January 4, 2026
Epiphany Matthew 2:1-12

Today's gospel tells us "all Jerusalem" was upset because "King Herod was deeply troubled." A similar ripple effect happens in families; one person's negative attitude can affect the whole family. If you want a peaceful and joyful home, it must start with you. Be peaceful and joyful!

January 11, 2026
Baptism of the Lord / First Sunday of Ordinary Time
Matthew 3:13-17

The words in today's gospel, "This is my beloved, with Him I am pleased," are words every child needs to hear often. Affirmation is important to raise happy and confident children.

January 18, 2026
Second Sunday of Ordinary Time John 1:29-34

Can you say "I have testified Jesus is the Son of God?" If you aren't talking about Jesus in your family, you aren't testifying. If you are not walking your talk, your children will see your words as meaningless.

January 25, 2026
Third Sunday of Ordinary Time Matthew 4:12-23

When Jesus called his disciples, they came "immediately." Parents wish their children would respond as quickly, but they don't. Children grow slowly into responsibility. It is a process like walking, not done "immediately", but in small steps. Parenting demands patient encouragement

A Family Perspective
By Bud Ozar



Winners Finish Last

By Judith Dunlap

Many of Jesus's sayings are hard. Surely the one from Matthew, "the last will be first," is one of them. We live in a culture where success means being number one. Coming in last is unacceptable. Yet Jesus teaches, by his words and actions, just the opposite.

Seeing the virtue in being last is difficult enough for us adults, but for a youngster, being last or left out can be traumatic.

It can be wrenching to watch your children suffer the pain of being left out. I remember being barraged by all sorts of feelings—empathy, anger, frustration—when this happened in our household. It was hard to face the reality that I could not make the hurt go away.

So what can we do when our children encounter rejection? First, love them and listen to their pain. Allow them time to talk about the experience. Help them find words to express their feelings. Perhaps you can share a story from your own childhood about a time you felt rejected or left out. Later you might read or tell them a relevant story from Scripture. (1Samuel 16:4-13, 17:1-51 or Luke 19:1-10)

When you share your stories and the stories of our faith family, you not only comfort your children but also plant seeds and provide a tool to help them grow. You are teaching them to connect their stories with the stories of others, and discover they are a part of a larger family where success and being first are measured with a different yardstick.

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