

## Family Life Office

5379 Portage Street

Lilly, PA 15938

(814) 886-5551

familylife@dioceseaj.org

JANUARY 2019

Volume XXXIV, Number 2

## IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

### Family Ritual

#### Celebrate Special Days

On New Year's Day, have a calendar party to mark your new calendar with "special days"—birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, baptismal anniversaries, and other occasions that happen within your family. Write a short prayer and tape it to your calendar. As these special days come up through the year, get out a "special day plate" for the person being celebrated and say the prayer at your family meal.

### "GRASP" Priority Time

It's a New Year and you need to plan a variety of activities that you and your partner can look forward to for the rest of the year! Focus on being together.

**G** is for games. Each partner chooses one or more games to play—old favorites or new! Be creative and play games.

**R** is for romance. Each partner writes a scenario for what they consider a romantic evening. Plan two separate evenings—one for each scenario or combine both scenarios to meet the desires of both partners in one evening.

**A** is for academic. Take a course together or go to the library and research a new topic that interests both of you.

**S** is for spiritual. Plan to attend a retreat or a spiritual lecture together; attend church services together. Meditate together or hold hands and say a short prayer together to start your day. *"Divine Spirit, grant us this day's portion of grace. Bring us closer to You and closer to each other. Amen"*

**P** is for physical. Join a gym or fitness center and work out together as often as possible. Take a yoga class together and practice the postures together several times a week. Learn a new sport together!

### A Pro-Life Message

Many problems darken the horizon of our time. We need but think of the urgent need to work for peace, to base relationships between peoples on solid promises of justice and solidarity, and to defend human life from conception to its natural end. And what should we say of the thousand inconsistencies of a "globalized" world where the weakest, the most powerless and the poorest appear to have so little hope! It is in this world that Christian hope must shine forth! For this reason too, the Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making his presence in a meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by his love.

-Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, no.20  
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### This Day's Greatest Gift

We can't change the past...  
But we can gather up  
It's lessons and move on,  
Stronger and wiser.

We can't control the future...  
But we can send our dreams  
Ahead of us  
To help prepare the way.

We can live each moment...  
Heart and soul,  
And cherish this day's  
Greatest gift...  
The gift of now.

May peace with the past  
And faith in the future,  
Gently guide you through each  
Precious moment of Today.



## *Families and the Gospel*

**January 1**

**Luke 2:16-21**

The gospel tells us “Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” We would do well to imitate Mary in our New Year’s resolution. Instead of criticizing let’s “keep it in our hearts.” Criticism isn’t productive or well received anyway!

**January 6**

**Mt. 2:1-12**

After meeting Jesus, the Magi returned home by “another way.” What in your family needs to be done “another way?” Do you need another way to resolve differences, to communicate or show affection? This is a new year. It’s time to change what isn’t working. Take a tip from some wise men, there’s always “another way.”

**January 13**

**Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

Jesus was a young man and his Father affirmed him in front of a huge crowd saying, “You are my beloved son; with you I am very pleased.” Our children are never too old to appreciate our praise.

**January 20**

**John 2:1-11**

At Cana, we get a good insight into Mary’s parenting style. She did not plead, argue, demand or manipulate. She merely pointed out the situation and trusted her son would make the best decision.

**January 27**

**Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21**

In today’s gospel Jesus was “praised by all” except at home in Nazareth where the “eyes of all were intently on him.” Acceptance can be hard to find at home due to unreal expectations.

Jesus challenges us to “proclaim liberty” to anyone “oppressed” or “captive” by our expectations.



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A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar

## **Guidance Through the Year**

By Lois Snelling

In faith, O Lord, you guided me  
Through every day of the year;  
Come blinding storm, come doubt or pain,  
Your hand was always near.  
The year was long, till I had trod it through;  
But I walked secure because you walked there too.  
That year is past and all its days  
Now finished, lie behind;  
But reaching out ahead of me  
A strange new year I find.  
So strange, untried, these newer days—  
But Lord, I have no fear—  
For I know well that every hour  
Your presence will be near.

Clip-Art Features for Church Newsletters4  
George W. Knight, Compiler, Howard Paris, Illustrator

## **Finding Your Own Way to Pray**

By Jim and Susan Vogt

Susan isn’t comfortable raising her arms in praise. Jim found Forty Hours devotion less than satisfying even as an altar boy. As children, we both learned the rosary but seldom say it. None of these prayer styles is wrong; it’s just that prayer is such a personal experience. What inspires one person bores another. What seems old-fashioned to one connects another with their religious heritage.

**Prayer**, be it memorized or spontaneous, individual or communal, filled with incense or the fragrance of pine needles in the woods, **is communication with God.**

Most people eventually seek answers to life’s persistent questions: *Is there anything more than what meets the eye? Is there really an afterlife?*

We may not often be aware of these yearnings, but sooner or later, a crisis occurs, a life-changing decision is before us or we simply marvel at the miracle of a newborn child—and so we pray.

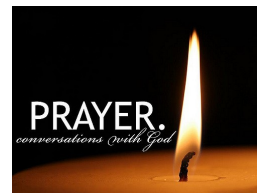
Are we holier if we pray more? Yes, prayer puts us in a more conscious relationship with God. This relationship of thankfulness, dependence, trust and honor should make us better people—more aware of our inner selves and more attentive to the needs of others.

Prayer generally falls into the broad categories of verbal or nonverbal, individual or communal, memorized or spontaneous, contemplative or active. Those seeking a more prayerful life might experiment with many forms of prayer and let trial and error lead them to deeper conversation with God.

Remember, prayer is basically conversation with God. Books and organized prayer can help, but if you have a relationship with someone, you want to spend time together. If you can talk, you can pray. Talking isn’t even required; just being in each other’s company is what counts.

But prayer isn’t all there is to spirituality. Becoming a holier, more spiritual person includes having an attitude of gratefulness, looking for the good in others rather than complaining, living out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and doing the dishes and changing diapers as acts of service for those we love. Donating money so that others’ lives may be a little better, putting up with annoyances, enduring an illness or physical pain, sacrificing our wants for the needs of another—all these actions make our hearts bigger and deepen our spirituality.

Consider this: If you’re too busy to pray, you’re too busy.



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