

Celebrating the

JOY OF TAKING TIME

Diocese of Portland ~ JANUARY 2018



OPENING PRAYER

God of All Creation,
 You made all things out of your generous love.
Every time and each new season offers signs of your abundant grace
 and chances to respond to your gifts with faith, hope, and love.
As we begin a new year in relationship with you and one another,
May our minds contemplate your gift of time
 and discover how both stillness and action can give you glory.
May our eyes see your wonder in the world around us
 and recognize how we can protect and defend life.
May our ears hear your voice in the laughter and tears of those we meet
 and echo their joys and sorrows in our daily prayers.
May our hearts know your mercy through forgiveness and healing
 and choose to act for peace and the common good.
We ask this in your great name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

READINGS

Psalm 25:1-7

To you I lift up my soul, O Lord, my God.
In you I trust: let me not be put to shame,
 Let not my enemies exult over me.
No one who waits for you shall be put to shame;
 Those shall be put to shame who heedlessly break faith.
Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;
 Teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
 For you are God my savior,
 And for you I wait all the day.
Remember that your compassion, O Lord,
 And your kindness are from of old.
The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;
 In your kindness remember me,
Because of your goodness, O Lord.

AMORIS LAETITIA

“Media cannot replace the need for more personal and direct dialogue, which requires physical presence or at least hearing the voice of the other person.” (n. 278)

In marriage, the joy of love needs to be cultivated. (n. 126)

Another great challenge of marriage preparation is to help couples realize that marriage is not something that happens once for all. Their union is real and irrevocable, confirmed and consecrated by the sacrament of matrimony. Yet, in joining their lives, the spouses assume an active and creative role in a lifelong project. Their gaze now has to be directed to the future that, with the help of God’s grace, they are daily called to build. (n. 218)

This process takes time. Love needs time and space; everything else is secondary. Time is needed to talk things over, to embrace leisurely, to share plans, to listen to one another and gaze in each other’s eye, to appreciate one another and to build a stronger relationship. Sometimes the frenetic pace of our society and the pressures of the workplace create problems. At other times, the problem is the lack of quality time together, sharing the same room without one even noticing the other. Pastoral workers and groups of married people should think of ways to help young or vulnerable couples to make the most of those moments, to be present to one another, even by sharing moments of meaningful silence. (n. 224)

CONTEMPLATE AND SHARE

- Who do we include in our family circle? When do we spend time together? What have we discovered about God’s love and care through these times of family sharing?
- What distractions or concerns get in the way of our time together for prayer, learning, or enjoying the simple gift of being with each other as a family?
- Look at the schedule for our household for the past seven days. To what did we give the most time? Did this schedule include time to be together as a family beyond completing day-to-day tasks? Will spending our time this way in the coming weeks help our family be better connected with each other and God? If not, what is one thing we will do differently this week to care for our relationships with God and our family?
- On scale of 1 (miserable) to 10 (overjoyed), rate how you feel at the end of a typical week. Why did you choose this rating? How might the way you use our time affect the rating? What or who helps you to live with hope and joy even when life is challenging?

INTERCESSIONS

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, January 1 – May immediate and extended family members resolve to make regular, quality time for one another, we pray to the Lord:

Solemnity of the Epiphany, January 6/7: May the generosity of the Magi remind all families to share the precious gift of time with each other, we pray to the Lord:

Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord, January 8 – May the Church, which is God’s family of families, take time to pray together each and every day, we pray to the Lord:

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 13/14 – May families devote themselves to looking for the Lord and doing his will, we pray to the Lord:

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 20/21 - May parents teach their children the ways of Jesus and follow him wholeheartedly as a family of faith, we pray to the Lord:

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 27/28 - May families be freed from worldly distractions and anxieties and so better focus on spiritual realities and truths, we pray to the Lord:

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer for Every Family on Earth

Lord, from you, every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, you are Love and Life.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, the fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all the families of the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.

We ask this of you, who are Life, Truth, and Love with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pope Saint John Paul II
L'Osservatore Romano, May 25, 1980, p. 19

JOY IN ACTION

Weekly suggestions for the faithful to consider

January 7: Come together as a family to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany with a Twelfth Night Dinner. If you have children, bake a King Cake together to be served for dessert.

January 14: Is there a friend or relative you haven't visited or called lately? Take the time to reconnect.

January 21: Take just one minute each day to stop and pray together as a family. This week, as we mark the Day of Prayer for the Protection of Unborn Children, be sure to include prayers for respect for all human life.

January 28: Amid the need to shovel and snow blow, take the time to enjoy the winter beauty. Make snow angels or snowmen with your children or even as a couple.

REFLECTION

Title: The Joy of Taking Time

By: Suzanne Lafreniere, director of the Office of Public Policy

We live in a time where there is a lot of disconnectedness. Families are often not close to each other, both geographically and emotionally. When I married my husband Denis, it was quite bittersweet. I was moving away from my parents and three sisters who live in New York. I took solace in looking forward to the new memories I would create with him and with his family in Maine.

In our 13 years of marriage thus far, my husband, Denis, and I make a conscious effort to prioritize spending time with family. Sometimes, this involves months of planning ahead of time, such as when we go on a vacation with extended family. I want my daughters to have happy memories of quality time with their cousins and grandparents. We often travel in a pack, with both sets of grandparents, sisters, and cousins all coming along for a trip. Lots of people have remarked, "I would never agree to go on vacation with my (insert family member here)." We laugh those comments off, but we do try to share with others the joy that these vacations bring, both to us and our extended families. Our girls are so accustomed to traveling with other family members that they are disappointed if cousins aren't with us. As many members with different preferences, we don't always agree, and sometimes we argue, but we all see the value in being together and hopefully journeying together towards heaven.

In addition to time with extended family, we try to carve out intentional time with our children daily. It may be a spontaneous ice cream outing or a walk on the beach. Some days, on those really busy weekdays, if we were to be honest with ourselves, it is only mere minutes, but those minutes are in their own way sacred moments. Every night before bed, we sit down and pray together as a family. Lately, we have used Pope Francis's five finger prayer (it's great, look it up!) Even Claire, our 3 ½ year old, knows that it isn't time to sleep until we have brushed teeth, said prayers, and snuggled. Listening to the girls' prayers, we hear what is on their hearts and minds in a sincere way. We know that it is our primary responsibility to share our faith in Christ with our girls, and taking time to focus on God is one way we try to fulfil that duty.

If we don't take the time to really focus on rest and relaxation in the company of family, life can seem like a hamster wheel we cannot jump off. In *Amoris Laetitia*, our Holy Father writes, "Love needs time and space; everything else is secondary. Time is needed to talk things over, to embrace leisurely, to share plans, to listen to one another and gaze in each other's eye, to appreciate one another and to build a stronger relationship. Sometimes, the frenetic pace of our society and the pressures of the workplace create problems. At other times, the problem is the lack of quality time together, sharing the same room without one even noticing the other." n. 224

Consider how you can take time with your family, both daily and long-term. If it is anything like my experience, it will bring you both laughter and tears and is a concrete way to live out the grace of tenderness towards one another.