

# Reaching out to others is key for the liturgical life of families



The last several months in this space, I've been describing [the liturgy of domestic church life](#), a model of family spirituality that helps Catholic families “bring Jesus home” and makes the Faith the source of the warmth in our homes.

Liturgy is a word that means “act of worship.” For Catholics, it refers to the work God does through the Church to heal the damage sin does to our relationships with him and others. The liturgy of domestic church life has three “rites,” each of which represents a different way God wants to heal our families and draw us into closer relationship with him and each other.

The [rite of Christian relationships](#) helps families leave behind the selfish – and sometimes sinful – ways we treat each other and learn how to care for each other with the love of Christ. By living out Christ's sacrificial love, this rite helps us practice the priestly mission of our baptism.

The [rite of family rituals](#) encourages families to take a little time to work, play, talk and pray together every day. More than nice things to do, when a Christian family has strong family rituals, they are practicing the prophetic mission of baptism by modeling Christian attitudes toward work, leisure, relationships and faith.

[Read more from our Domestic Church series here.](#)

Finally, the rite of reaching out lets God use your family to be a blessing to others. This rite helps families practice the

royal mission of baptism. Jesus, the King of Kings, humbled himself and served us. To reign with Christ is to serve with Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, No. 36). We share in Jesus' royal dignity by using our gifts to make other's lives easier and more pleasant. Even while families are sheltering in place, there is still a lot you can do to be a blessing to others.

The first way to practice the rite of reaching out is to serve one another at home. St. Paul says, "If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3). Did you ever notice how much easier it can be to be kind to strangers than to the members of our own households? The rite of reaching out helps families remember that authentic Christian service begins at home.

- Do you respond promptly, generously, and consistently to each other's needs?
- Do you serve each other cheerfully (instead of grudgingly)?
- Do you see the chores and tasks you do around the house as ways to say, "I love you!" to your family, and "Thank you for this blessing!" to God? Or do you think of them as "just stuff that has to get done so you can get to the other more fun/more important stuff."

The more we practice loving, generous, cheerful service at home, the more the service we give to people outside our homes will be genuine (instead of self-aggrandizing) and properly-ordered (instead of competing with our domestic-church life).

The second way to practice the rite of reaching out is by thinking about others while being a family at home. The main way to practice this habit is by remembering that everything you have been given by God – your food, your clothing, your furniture, your toys – does not belong to you. They belong to God. The Church teaches that Christians are stewards – not absolute owners – of the things God has given us. We are to

care for the things we have well, so that when we are done with them, we can pass them along in good condition to others who may need them. Thinking about others while being a family at home means regularly asking if you can prepare a little extra food for a sick or disabled neighbor, or if – together as a family – you can go through the gently used toys, clothes and other things you no longer need and pass them on to other brothers and sisters in Christ who might need them next.

Once things return to normal, there are other ways to practice the rite of reaching out, including practicing hospitality and service in your parish and community, but just because your family is sheltering in place doesn't mean you can't still make a difference. God wants to bless others through you and through your family. These simple habits can help you celebrate some of the simplest ways God can work in you, with you and through you to make a difference – starting right now!

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