

The Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is going to Rome



The Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life recently asked my wife, Lisa, and me to present the opening keynote for the Tenth World Meeting of Families in Rome this June. The Rome event is billed as a “pastoral/theological congress” attended by more than 2,500 representatives from national bishops’ conferences around the world. We’ve been asked to speak on the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life, a newly articulated model of family spirituality and family ministry that may also have even broader implications for the way the Church approaches evangelization, ministry, parish life and even how dioceses and parishes are structured.

What is the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life?

If the phrase “Liturgy of Domestic Church Life” seems somewhat familiar, you may have first read about it in *Our Sunday Visitor* a couple of years ago. By serving as the major sponsor for the 2019 Symposium on Catholic Family Life and Spirituality at Notre Dame, the OSV Institute was instrumental in the development of the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life model. Likewise, throughout 2020, I [dedicated my monthly column](#) in *Our Sunday Visitor* to unpacking the three “rites” that make up what my collaborators and I call the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life.

The [rite of Christian relationship](#), which suggests simple practices that allow families to fill everything they do with a little bit of God’s love, helps families live out the priestly mission of baptism.

The [rite of family rituals](#), which suggests simple ways for families to make a little time to work, play, talk and pray together everyday, enables families to live out the prophetic mission of baptism by helping them develop Christian attitudes toward all the things human beings do.

Finally, the [rite of reaching out](#), which offers simple suggestions for ways families can be God's blessing to others – often without even leaving home – helps families live the royal mission of baptism.

Together, the three rites of the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life help Catholic households experience family life as a “little way of holiness.”

In our work as directors of the Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life (an apostolate of the Congregation of Holy Cross), my wife and I have been conducting professional ministry trainings in the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life for two years, but until recently, there were only limited opportunities families to learn directly about the model.

A new resource – CatholicHOM.com

Fortunately, that is changing. Beginning in June of 2022, Catholic families can visit and subscribe to CatholicHOM.com. CatholicHOM stands for “Households on Mission.” The project is a partnership between Pastoral Solutions and Holy Cross Family Ministries in association with RENEW International. At CatholicHOM.com, families can discover for themselves how the simple practices associated with the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life can help them love and cherish each other more deeply, connect more meaningfully, and care for each other and the world more generously.

At the heart of CatholicHOM.com is the CatholicHOM Foundations series, which is made up of six short animated videos developed by Family Theater Productions in Hollywood and

designed to help viewers of all ages discover how to become the family God created them to be.

In addition, subscribers to CatholicHOM.com will have access to many other resources, including dozens of supplemental HOM-Improvement Videos designed to help parents overcome common family challenges, regular livestream events, exclusive podcasts (“The CatholicHOM-cast,” “MOMfidence” and “The BeDADitudes”), original, downloadable family activities, moderated discussion forums and opportunities for peer support and professional coaching. Also available are CatholicHOM Activity Kits filled with games and kid-friendly projects that painlessly teach the different practices associated with the liturgy of domestic church life.

The bigger picture

Besides helping families around the world connect with this resource, there are several additional reasons the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is resonating with Church leaders.

The first is that the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is making it possible to develop a real understanding of what it means for a family to be a domestic church, fully capable of participating in the “life and mission of the Church” (*Familiaris Consortio*, No. 17). Although the Catechism of the Catholic Church (cf. No. 2204) offers a theological definition of the domestic church as an “ecclesial communion,” that definition offers very little practical insight into what it takes to form, maintain or support Catholic families in their mission. The liturgy of domestic church life is making a more meaningful conversation about this possible.

Defining the domestic church

Second, the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life (and CatholicHOM) is not just a framework for so-called “ideal families,” or even Western families. The model is applicable to any type of

household anywhere. Through the Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life, my wife and I have presented web trainings on the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life to bishops, pastors and family life ministers in over 30 countries on five continents. In every case, participants report that regardless of the ethnic background, cultural traditions, socio-economic status or even the composition – for example, married household, divorced household, blended family, single-parent family, grandparenting family, foster family, etc. – of the particular families they serve, the framework of the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is helping Catholic families create stronger, healthier, happier and holier home lives.

A vibrant lay priesthood

Third and finally, the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life is helping the Church develop a more practical understanding of the role of the “common priesthood of the laity” in the life of the Church. Every baptized Christian is a priest – a lay priest. Rooted in baptism, the lay priesthood is different from the ministerial priesthood, but it is still tremendously important. While the ministerial priesthood consecrates the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life, the lay priesthood, is meant to take that Eucharistic grace home and use it to consecrate the world to Christ.

The problem – at least practically, if not theologically, speaking – is that the common priesthood has, historically, struggled against the perception that it is a priesthood in name only. There is no such thing as a “real” priesthood without a liturgy that is integral to its work. What is the liturgy that enables the lay priesthood to fulfill its mission?

Without an accompanying liturgy the common priesthood runs the risk of being theologically abstract and practically useless concept. It could be argued that this fact is the primary driver behind both the spiritual disease of clericalism and

many well-meaning but misguided attempts to clericalize the laity.

But the Liturgy of Domestic Church Life – which was actually instituted by God when he created the human family – provides a coherent framework that enables common priests, like you and me, to claim the full, spiritual dignity and authority of our priesthood by engaging in the “divinely instituted act of worship” (i.e. “liturgy”) that is part and parcel of building a dynamic domestic church and consecrating the world to Christ.

Taken to their logical conclusion, these insights have profound implications for the way the Church approaches almost everything it does. The Liturgy of Domestic Church Life doesn’t propose a revolution in how we “do church.” But it has the potential to revolutionize everything about how the Church ministers and operates, giving it a clear means by which it can become what it truly is: a “family of families” (*Amoris Laetitia*, No. 87) and a “kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:6).

Dr. Greg Popcak and his wife, Lisa, are the directors of the Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life and the founders of CatholicOM.com. Their books, [“Parenting Your Kids with Grace”](#) and [“Parenting Your Teens and Teens with Grace”](#) (OSV, \$15.95) show parents how the liturgy of domestic church life can help them create healthier, happier, holier families.