

The Domestic Church— The Church of the Home

The Catholic family as a domestic church is the fundamental community or cell of the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church. Christ has called all family members to union with God through Baptism and the other Sacraments and to share in the mission of the whole Church. Family members carry out the Church's mission by fostering mutual love in the home and, through that love, by building up the community of the Church and society.

The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called “the domestic church,” a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity. (CCC, no. 1666)

The Christian family forms an environment within which faith is professed and witnessed. When family members pray together, engage in lifelong learning, forgive one another, serve each other, welcome others, affirm and celebrate life, and bring justice and mercy to the community, they help each other live the faith and grow in faith. Some families may not understand themselves as a domestic church. Perhaps they consider their family too broken to be used for the Lord's purposes. They need to remember that a family is holy not because it is perfect, but because God's grace is at work in it.

What is a family? “A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family”

(CCC, no. 2202). A family as defined in the *Catechism* may be found in a considerable portion of the households in our nation. Other familial arrangements have developed, such as single-parent families, blended families, and families in which adult children care for their parents as well as their own children. All families are beset with many challenges. They deserve compassion and the hope that they can be faithful to Christ's way of love.

The Christian family is called to be a community of faith, hope, and love in an environment of prayer. Aided by a number of other virtues, such as prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, the family that practices them begins to actualize its spiritual calling as a domestic church. When a family becomes a school of virtue and a community of love, it is an image of the loving communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is then an icon of the Trinity.



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