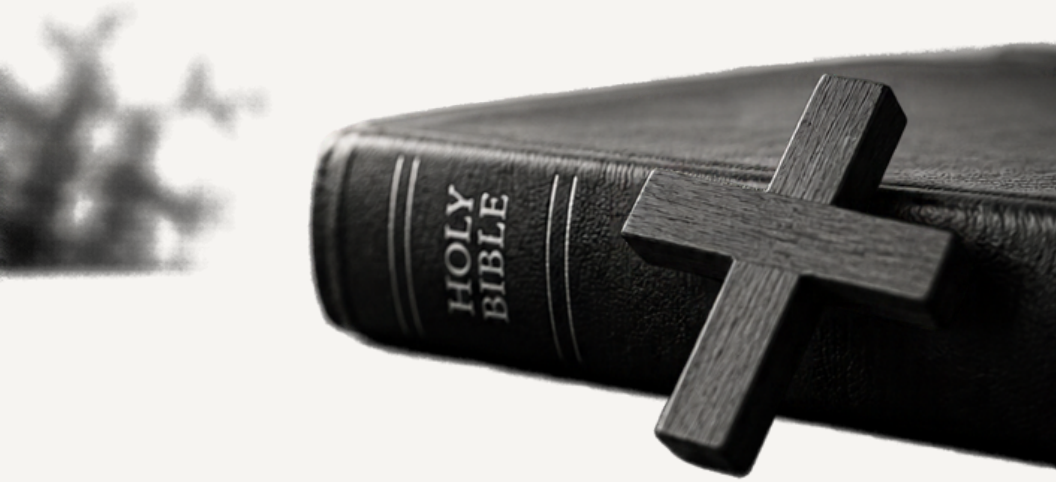
ONLY ONE THING IS NECESSARY

A 20-WEEK JOURNEY FOR ST. JOSEPH FAMILIES

Dear St. Joseph Families,

I am going to ask something of every family in our parish and school community. And this is one of those times when I wish I could sit across the table from each of you individually and say, "Please—give this a try."

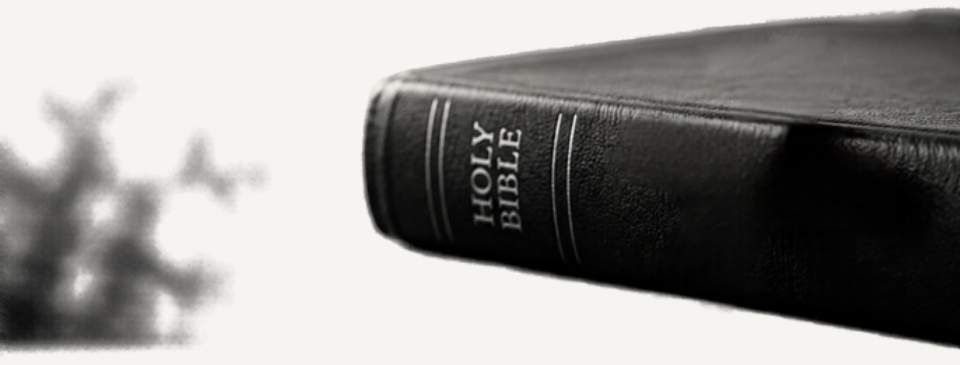
For the next 20 weeks, I am inviting every St. Joseph family to walk together through Archbishop Hebda's pastoral letter, Only One Thing Is Necessary. Please do this with us. I am not asking because you need one more thing on your calendar, you don't. I am not asking because your family isn't doing enough, you are. And I am certainly not asking because any of us has the perfect Catholic family, we don't. I am asking because I believe deeply that every one of our families can become a little holier, a little closer, a little more peaceful, and a little more centered on Jesus Christ.



No matter where your family is on its faith journey, this invitation is for you. Whether your family prays together every day or you're not quite sure how to begin, this is for you. Whether you attend Mass every Sunday or are struggling to make faith part of your family's routine, this is for you. Whether your family is experiencing a beautiful season of life or simply trying to make it through a difficult one, there is something here for you. We can all take another step. We can all grow in holiness. We can all move a little closer to heaven together.

And the investment really is small. The weekly readings are very short. The questions are simple. The activities aren't complicated. We are simply asking you to give a few intentional minutes each week to one another and, most importantly, to invite the Holy Spirit into the middle of your family.

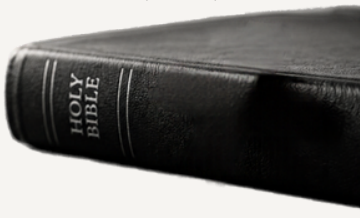
One important note about how I hope families will use this companion: you do not necessarily need to gather everyone around the table and read Archbishop Hebda's letter aloud together. Much of the letter is written primarily for adults, and depending on the ages of your children, reading the entire assigned passage aloud may not be the best way to engage them. Instead, I would encourage parents to read the short section themselves, perhaps together as a couple if possible, and then bring its heart into the life of your family.



Maybe Mom and Dad read the section together over a cup of coffee on Friday morning or after the kids are in bed. Talk for a few minutes about what struck you. Ask yourselves, What is the Archbishop really inviting our family to think about this week? Where are we already doing this well? Where might God be asking us to grow? Then, sometime during the weekend or the week ahead, bring the idea to your children in a way that fits their ages. Use the questions and family activity in the companion as your guide. That conversation might happen around the dinner table, while driving to practice, after Sunday Mass, or at bedtime. The goal isn't to "cover the material." The goal is to let the material open a conversation.

For families with older children or teenagers, you might choose to read portions together and ask what they think. With younger children, parents may simply take one idea from the Archbishop and put it into words they can understand. Some weeks may lead to a wonderful 20-minute conversation. Other weeks might produce five meaningful minutes in the car. Both are worthwhile. What matters most is that parents first encounter the message and then create an opportunity for the family to talk, listen, pray and act on it together.

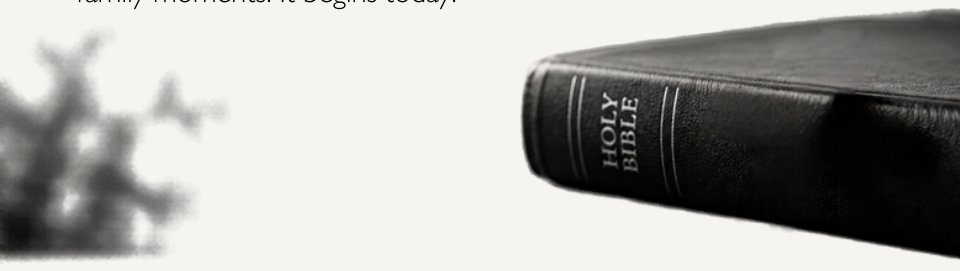
Think about what might happen over 20 weeks. That is 20 opportunities to put down the phones and really talk with one another. Twenty opportunities for your children to hear what you believe and for you to hear what is happening in their hearts. Twenty opportunities to pray for one another, to laugh, share stories, ask questions, forgive, encourage and grow. These are also 20 opportunities to create memories that your children may carry with them long after they leave your home.



I can't promise exactly what God will do with those moments, but I am confident of this: when we intentionally make room for the Holy Spirit, God does something with that space. Perhaps a child will ask a question you never expected. Perhaps you will learn something about your son or daughter that you didn't know. Perhaps a difficult relationship will soften. Maybe your family will discover a prayer or tradition that becomes part of your life for years to come. Maybe nothing dramatic happens at all, but week after week your family simply grows a little closer to one another and a little closer to Christ. That alone would be an incredible gift.

As parents and educators, we spend enormous amounts of energy helping our children succeed. We want them to learn, have good friends, discover their gifts and have opportunities to experience the world. We drive them to practices, lessons and activities. We worry about their grades, their health, their happiness and their future. All of those things matter. But there is something that matters even more: we want our children to become saints.

We want them to know that they are loved by God. We want them to know Jesus Christ—not simply know about Him, but truly know Him. We want them to discover the person God created them to be. And someday, long after their years at St. Joseph are finished, we want them—and ourselves—to reach heaven. That journey doesn't begin someday. It begins around our kitchen tables, in our cars, beside our children's beds, on Sunday mornings, and in thousands of ordinary family moments. It begins today.



There is another reason I am so excited about this. Imagine what could happen if our entire St. Joseph community spent the next 20 weeks intentionally inviting Christ more deeply into our homes. Think of the hundreds of conversations that would take place and the hundreds of prayers that would be offered. Imagine children hearing their parents talk about faith and parents really listening as their children talk about God. Imagine families praying for one another, homes becoming a little more peaceful, relationships becoming a little stronger, and all of us becoming a little more patient, forgiving, hopeful and loving.

That kind of transformation doesn't stay inside our homes. It spills into our classrooms and onto our playgrounds. It enters our workplaces and neighborhoods. It strengthens marriages and friendships. Slowly and quietly, family by family, it brings more faith, hope, love and peace into our community. That is how culture changes. That is how the Church grows. And that is how saints are formed.

So I am asking you—please join us. And please don't worry about doing it perfectly. If you miss a week, begin again. If the kids are restless, keep going. If a conversation takes an unexpected turn, follow it. If someone asks a question you can't answer, wonder about it together. If one week all you manage to do is read a few paragraphs and pray one Our Father together, that counts. The important thing is simply to begin and to keep inviting God into the ordinary life of your family.

Twenty weeks. A few minutes each week. One family gathered together. And the Holy Spirit invited into the middle of it all.

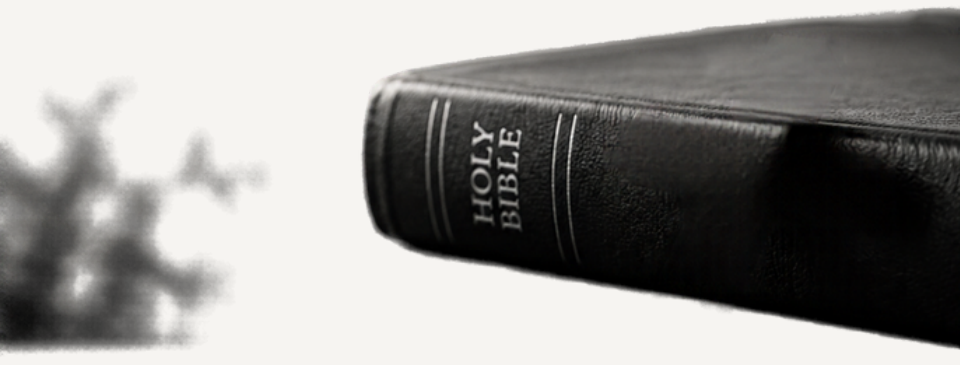
Who knows what God might do?

At St. Joseph, we talk often about helping one another Belong, Believe and Become. Perhaps these next 20 weeks can help us live those words more deeply in the place where they matter most—our homes. Let's help our children belong to something greater than themselves. Let's help them believe that Jesus Christ is alive and desires a relationship with them. And let's help one another become the people, the families and ultimately the saints God created us to be.

Let's take a closer step toward heaven together—and please, don't go alone.

In Christ,

Deacon Bruce Richards, Ed.S.
Head of School
St. Joseph Catholic STEM School



Only one thing is Necessary

A 20-WEEK JOURNEY FOR ST. JOSEPH FAMILIES

Twenty weeks to read it. A lifetime to live it.

Inspired by Archbishop Bernard Hebda's pastoral letter
Only One Thing Is Necessary

READ THE ARCHBISHOP'S LETTER

BELONG • BELIEVE • BECOME

WEEK 1

SAINTS NEXT DOOR

READ THIS WEEK:

Preface pgs. 23-27

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Archbishop Hebda begins with ordinary families whose holiness grew in ordinary life. The goal is not a flawless household; it is a home in which God is welcomed into joys, losses, work, sacrifice and love.

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Choose one ordinary family routine this week - a meal, drive, bedtime, or morning departure - and consciously invite Jesus into it with a short prayer.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, make our ordinary home a place where Your extraordinary love is known. Amen.

WEEK 2

BELONG • BELIEVE • BECOME

The Narrow Path

READ THIS WEEK:

Section I, paragraphs 1-2 pgs. 28-37

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Christian family life has always required courage. Today's distractions and pressures are real, but the Archbishop reminds families that the Church walks with them and that the path to life is worth choosing together.

TALK TOGETHER

1. What pressures make it hardest for our family to keep Jesus at the center?

2. Which activities or influences strengthen our family, and which tend to scatter us?

3. What would choosing the "narrow path" look like for us this week?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Have one device-free family evening or at least one meal and give everyone a chance to answer: "What helped me feel close to God or to our family this week?"

PRAY TOGETHER:

Lord, give our family courage to choose the path that leads to You. Amen.

WEEK 3

What Kind of Soil?

READ THIS WEEK:

Section I, paragraphs 3-4, pgs. 38-43

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Jesus' Parable of the Sower asks us to notice the condition of our hearts and homes. Distraction, shallow roots and worldly concerns can crowd out God's Word; rich soil receives it and lives it.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Which kind of soil best describes our family right now - distracted, shallow, thorny, or receptive?
2. Where do we have enough silence to hear God?
3. What most often crowds out prayer, conversation, or peace in our home?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Identify one recurring distraction and reduce it for seven days. Replace a little of that time with conversation, Scripture, prayer, or quiet.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Divine Sower, make our hearts and our home rich soil for Your Word. Amen.

WEEK 4

God Has Not Given Up on the Soil

God's grace sustains family discipleship and offers the chance to begin again.

READ THIS WEEK:

Section I, paragraph 5 + Section II, paragraph 6,
pgs. 44-48

THE HEART OF THE READING:

God keeps sowing even when our soil is imperfect. Family discipleship is a vocation sustained by grace, not a project we accomplish by our own strength.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Where do we sometimes feel inadequate as parents, grandparents, children, or family members?
2. How does it change things to see family life as a vocation from God?
3. Where might God be asking us to begin again rather than become discouraged?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

At the end of one day, name one mistake without excuses, ask forgiveness if needed, and thank God for the grace to begin again.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Father, work patiently in us. When we are discouraged, remind us that Your grace is greater than our weakness. Amen.

WEEK 5

God First Served

READ THIS WEEK:

Section II, paragraphs 7-8, pgs. 49-53

THE HEART OF THE READING:

The Archbishop's first two practices are to give Jesus primacy and to live a visible life of virtue. Children learn faith not only from what adults say, but from what they see adults love, practice, repair and return to.

TALK TOGETHER

1. If our children copied our faith life exactly, what would they learn?
2. Where do they see us turn to Jesus?
3. Which virtue does our family most need to practice right now?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Choose one visible act of faith to repeat every day this week: morning prayer, grace, a blessing before school, Scripture, or an evening examen.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, be first in our home. Let our words and actions help one another see You. Amen.

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WEEK 6

Loved, Dignified and Accountable

READ THIS WEEK:

Section II, paragraphs 9-10, 54-57

PRAY TOGETHER:

Father, help us love one another with both tenderness and truth. Amen.

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Children belong first to God. Christian love affirms their God-given dignity while also calling them toward truth, responsibility and holiness. A strong family culture can then bless the wider world.

TALK TOGETHER

What is the difference between loving a person and approving every choice?

How do we communicate both unconditional love and meaningful expectations?

What do we want our family culture to contribute to the world around us?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Tell each child or family member one specific God-given quality you see in them, and one way that gift can be used for others.

WEEK 7

Made for Communion

READ THIS WEEK:

Section III, paragraph 11, pgs. 58-60

THE HEART OF THE READING:

God did not create us for isolation. The Archbishop begins his reflection on marriage by reminding us that human beings are made for communion, companionship and ultimately for life with God.

TALK TOGETHER

1. When does our family experience genuine togetherness?
2. What habits make us more isolated even when we are physically together?
3. Who in our family or community may be feeling alone right now?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Choose one person who may be lonely and reach out together as a family - call, visit, write, invite, or pray.

PRAY TOGETHER:

God of communion, draw us closer to You and teach us to notice those who need companionship. Amen.

WEEK 8

Marriage Rooted in God

READ THIS WEEK:

Section III, paragraphs 12-13, pgs. 61-63

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Sacramental marriage is presented as a foundational communion: beautiful, fruitful, strong and also in need of grace. The Archbishop points families back to prayer and the sacraments as sources of strength.

TALK TOGETHER

1. What have we learned about faithful love from marriages we admire?
2. How can children see marriage as a vocation of self-giving rather than simply a feeling?
3. How can our family better support married couples who are carrying heavy burdens?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Pray intentionally this week for a married couple - your own marriage, grandparents, friends, or a couple experiencing difficulty.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, strengthen marriages and teach all of us to will the good of one another. Amen.

WEEK 9

A Family of Families

Mary and the Church accompany families, and parish life reminds us no family journeys toward heaven alone.

READ THIS WEEK:

Section IV, paragraphs 14-16, pgs. 64-69

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Every family carries wounds and unfinished work. Mary and the Church accompany families in suffering, joy and growth. Parish life reminds us that no family is meant to journey toward heaven alone.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Where does our family most need God's healing or patience?
2. When has the parish or another Catholic family supported us?
3. How could we become a stronger source of belonging for another family?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

After Mass, introduce yourselves to someone you do not know well, or invite another family to share a meal or conversation.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Mary, Mother of the Church,
stay close to our family and teach us to walk with other families. Amen.

WEEK 10

Family, Become What You Are!

READ THIS WEEK:

Section V, paragraphs 17-18, pgs. 70-73

THE HEART OF THE READING:

The Christian family is called not merely to function well but to become holy - a luminous sign of God's love. God stretches our hearts through the daily vocation of loving, serving and worshiping.

TALK TOGETHER

1. When you hear "our family is called to holiness," what comes to mind?
2. How has family life stretched your heart and helped you grow?
3. Which of these needs attention in our home: love, service, or worship?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Do one hidden act of service for another member of the family each day this week without seeking recognition.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Holy Spirit, stretch our hearts so our family becomes a sign of God's love. Amen.

WEEK 11

The One Necessary Thing

READ THIS WEEK:

Section V, paragraphs 19-20 + Prayer to the Holy Family, pgs. 74-79

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Jesus must have primacy. The Archbishop especially calls families to reclaim Sunday and points to Saints Louis and Zelie Martin as an ordinary family shaped by love, formation and worship.

TALK TOGETHER

1. What currently sets Sunday apart in our family?
2. What competes most strongly with Sunday worship and rest?
3. Which of time Martins' three priorities - love, teaching the faith, worship - could we strengthen?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Plan next Sunday before it arrives: Mass first, then protect one block of time for family, rest, hospitality, or a work of mercy.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Holy Family of Nazareth, help our home become a place of communion, prayer and Gospel life. Amen.

WEEK 12

THE CHURCH THROUGH EVERY SEASON

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VI, paragraphs 21-22, pgs. 80-85

THE HEART OF THE READING:

The Church knows the seasons of human life - birth and death, joy and grief, beginnings and endings - and offers a sacramental vision that accompanies us through them all.

TALK TOGETHER

1. What season is our family in right now?
2. Where do we most need the Church's wisdom or grace in this season?
3. Which sacrament has been especially important in our family story?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Share one family memory connected to a sacrament - Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Marriage, Anointing, or Holy Orders - and thank God for it.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Lord, be with our family in every season and draw us more deeply into Your sacramental life. Amen.

BELONG • BELIEVE • BECOME

WEEK 13

Rhythms That Steady Us

The liturgical and sacramental rhythms steady families and form consciences amid constant change.

BELONG • BELIEVE • BECOME

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VI, paragraphs 23-24, pgs. 86-89

THE HEART OF THE READING:

The liturgical and sacramental rhythms of the Church steady families amid constant change. They also form conscience so that Christ, rather than the loudest cultural voice, becomes our measure of truth.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Which rhythm of Catholic life helps our family most - Sunday Mass, confession, feast days, prayer, fasting, service?
2. Where do we feel pulled by cultural messages that conflict with our faith?
3. How can we talk about difficult moral questions with both truth and charity?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Look ahead at the Church calendar for the coming week and intentionally observe one feast, saint, sacrament, or liturgical practice together.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, form our consciences and steady our family in the rhythms of Your Church. Amen.

WEEK 14

Formation for Wisdom

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VI, paragraphs 25-26, pgs. 90-93

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Catholic formation is more than collecting religious facts. It forms a way of seeing, judging and living so that we can distinguish truth from falsehood and use knowledge - including technology - wisely.

TALK TOGETHER

What voices most shape the way our family sees the world?

How do we help our children ask, "Is it true?" Is it good? Will it lead me closer to God?"

What is the difference between having information and having wisdom?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Choose one news story, online claim, advertisement, or AI-generated answer and discuss it together using three questions: Is it true? Is it good? What does our faith add?

PRAY TOGETHER:

Spirit of Wisdom, teach us to seek truth, recognize goodness and use knowledge well. Amen.

WEEK 15

FAITH NEEDS FRIENDSHIP

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VI, paragraphs 27-28, pgs. 94-95

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Formation continues through relationships. Parish friendships, small groups, retreats, service and Catholic organizations help families grow because discipelship is strengthened side by side.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Who are the people with whom we can talk honestly about faith?
2. Do our children see adults enjoying Catholic friendship and community?
3. Where might God be inviting our family to participate rather than simply attend?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Choose one concrete way to deepen Catholic community this month: a parish event, small group, service opportunity, meal, retreat, or invitation to another family.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, give us companions who help us follow You, and make us good companions to others. Amen.

BELONG • BELIEVE • BECOME

WEEK 16

Let the Children Come

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VII, paragraph 29, pgs. 96-97

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Jesus places extraordinary value on children and tells His disciples not to hinder them. Passing on faith begins with the conviction that bringing children to Jesus is one of a family's greatest responsibilities and privileges.

TALK TOGETHER

1. What helps our children experience Jesus as Someone who welcomes them?
2. What might unintentionally make faith feel distant, forced, or only for adults?
3. What questions about God or faith are our children asking right now?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Give children the lead in family prayer one day this week. Let them choose the intention, prayer, song, Scripture, or saint.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, let the children come to You. Help us never place obstacles in their way. Amen.

WEEK 17

Pray Together

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VII, paragraph 30,
pgs. 98-100

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Family prayer does not have to feel perfect to be real. The Archbishop encourages perseverance and reminds parents that children learn to pray by seeing and hearing the people they love speak with God.

TALK TOGETHER

When is prayer easiest for our family? When is it hardest?

What do our children learn about God from the way they hear us pray?

What simple prayer could realistically become part of our daily life?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Pray together for five minutes on at least three days this week. Keep it simple: gratitude, needs, the Our Father, and one quiet minute with Jesus.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Lord, teach our family to pray - in joy, in struggle, and in ordinary moments. Amen.

WEEK 18

Live the Church Year

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VII, paragraph 31, pg.101

THE HEART OF THE READING:

The liturgical year gives family life a God-centered rhythm of waiting, celebration, sacrifice and joy. Its seasons can draw us away from anxiety and hurry and into the story of Christ.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Which liturgical season is most meaningful to our family? Why?
2. What traditions help our home feel connected to the Church year?
3. How could our home look or feel different because of the season the Church is celebrating?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Add one visible sign of the liturgical season to your home and explain its meaning together.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, draw our family into the rhythm of Your life through the seasons of the Church. Amen.

WEEK 19

A Devotional Life Together

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VII, paragraph 32, pgs. 102-105

THE HEART OF THE READING:

Devotions such as the Rosary, novenas and Stations of the Cross help families turn their hearts toward God together. The goal is not quantity but a heart increasingly attentive to God's presence.

TALK TOGETHER

1. Which Catholic devotion has touched someone in our family?
2. What makes repetitive prayer difficult for us, and what might make it fruitful?
3. Which devotion could fit naturally into this season of our family life?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Try one family devotion this week: a decade of the Rosary, a short novena prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, or several Stations of the Cross.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Mary, lead us to Jesus. Help our family discover the beauty of praying together. Amen.

WEEK 20

A FAMILY OF HOPE

READ THIS WEEK:

Section VIII, paragraph 33 and conclusion,
pgs. 106-109

THE HEART OF THE READING:

The letter closes with hope. Catholic families are vital cells of the Church and society. Prayer, sacraments, mercy, study, fellowship and Christ-like love can change the world one soul and one family at a time.

TALK TOGETHER

1. What has God shown our family during these 20 weeks?
2. Which one or two practices do we want to keep?
3. How can our family help another family flourish during the rest of this school year?

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY INVITATION:

Write a short Family Rule of Life with 3-5 practices you want to continue - for example Sunday Mass, daily prayer, device-free meals, monthly confession, service, or hospitality. Put it somewhere visible.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Jesus, You are the One Necessary Thing. Keep our family close to You, close to one another, and always moving toward heaven together. Amen.

OUR ONE NECESSARY THING

A simple family rule of life

After 20 weeks, choose a few practices that can continue shaping your family. Keep them realistic, visible, and centered on Jesus. The goal is not perfection; it is faithful return.

WE WILL MAKE TIME TO PRAY BY...

WE WILL PROTECT SUNDAY BY...

WE WILL GROW IN THE SACRAMENTS BY...

WE WILL STRENGTHEN FAMILY LIFE BY...

WE WILL SERVE / WALK WITH OTHERS BY...

Jesus, You are our One Necessary Thing. Help us take a closer step toward heaven - and never go alone. Amen.