

The Significance of Blessing

Recall the last thing that our Savior Jesus did before He ascended into heaven was bless His followers. See Luke 24:50-51. This was a blessing to extend throughout the **whole world**.

A blessing is a divine and life-giving action. God the Father is the source of all blessings. God blesses us *constantly*. He has given us so much. We often forget to bless Him—to publicly tell of God’s power and to thank God for His generosity. Tobit 4:19 reminds us: *At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him to make all your paths straight and to grant success to all your endeavors and plans.*

A blessing has several complementary connotations. It signifies gifts of divine favor, such as comfort, peace, happiness, and holy prosperity. It also signifies union and reconciliation between God and us. Just as God bestows blessings upon us, so parents—especially fathers—should bestow blessings upon their children. Children want to feel God’s love through their father, and Mary’s love through the mother. The father of the household should bless (see Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 27:27-29); the mother should prepare the hearts of the children to receive the blessing.

The mother prepares the hearts of her children for a blessing by (1) being vigilant in prayer (praying a lot for her children), (2) offering everything back to God, including her children (see 1 Samuel 2, Psalm 127, Luke 1:46-55), and (3) acknowledging interiorly, and with prayer, that the family exists not for itself, but **for God’s service, will, and purpose**.

We may think of blessings as powerful words from God. The Lord encourages us to believe that a word spoken in His name really means something and does something. For example, Isaiah 55:10-11 states: *For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do My will, achieving the end for which I sent it.*

Our Heavenly Father desires to speak His unconditional love and acceptance into the hearts, minds, and souls of children. Again, Almighty God desires that fathers express His good and holy intentions; mothers prepare the hearts of the children to receive the blessing.

To bless another is considered a **sacramental**. A sacramental is a sacred sign or action, instituted by the Church, to dispose one to receive the sacraments better and to sanctify their daily events and circumstances. Blessings are at the top of the list of sacramentals. At Baptism, all persons received a “royal” priesthood from God and are called to be a “blessing,” and to bless.

In sum, God desires fathers to bless their children **frequently**. God is all-powerful, and when one speaks in

His name, His word goes out to its intended audience or circumstance. When fathers bless their children, they give their children **love, security, identity, and destiny**. The children feel loved and know that the parents desire their spiritual growth and eternal union with God. They feel secure—that God their Father and their parents will protect them in times of trouble. Finally, they develop a strong identity as a Catholic Christian male or female, as princes or princesses. When they have difficulties in life, they will remember their root identity as being an adopted son or daughter of their loving God.

A good time to bless children is right before they go to bed. They will go to bed happy and probably wake up happy. You can give a short blessing before they leave the house for school. Also, you could let them go to sleep listening to praise music.

Giving a Blessing to Your Children

To bless your children, ask God’s divine favor upon them and use outward signs or gestures. For example, as you pray, lay your hands on their heads (or trace a cross on their foreheads, or sprinkle their heads and hands with holy water). Pick one of the following blessings. **If the biological father is not available, or he will not bless, the mother can give the blessing** by saying, “On behalf of his/her father, and through the intercession of St. Joseph, I bless this child with the following words:

A. St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, and Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, please fill _____ with the love that God gave you and into the places where love and healing of a father and mother is needed, in Jesus’ most holy name. Amen.

B. The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace! (See Numbers 6:24-26.)

C. Heavenly Father, inexhaustible source of life and author of all good, we bless You and we thank You for brightening our communion of love by Your gift of children. Grant that my/our children, [mention children’s names], will strive always to do what is right and good, and one day, by Your grace, reach their home in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord, in union with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, You loved children so much that You said, “Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me.” Hear our prayers and, with Your unfailing protection, watch over [mention children’s names] whom You have blessed with the grace of Baptism. When they have grown to maturity, grant that they will confess Your name in willing faith, be fervent in charity, and persevere courageously in the hope of reaching Your kingdom, where You live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Blessings to Pray Privately for Persons, Families, or Towns Said by Anyone

Begin with this short prayer and then pray by yourself—secretly—one of the following scripture passages: “*O God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I love You, praise You, and adore You. I pray Your Word into (this person or my family or every person in this town, etc.). I lift up this prayer to You through Mary’s Immaculate Heart, with St. Joseph, St. Michael, my Guardian Angel, and [your favorite saint].*”

Prayer Asking That People Trust In The Lord

Proverbs 3:5-9 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; in all your ways be mindful of Him, and He will make straight your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes, fear the LORD and turn away from evil; this will mean health for your flesh and vigor for your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce.

Prayer Asking That People Will Rejoice In The Lord

Psalms 149:1-4 Hallelujah! Sing to the LORD a new song, His praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let Israel be glad in its Maker, the people of Zion rejoice in their King. Let them praise His name in dance, make music with tambourine and lyre. For the LORD takes delight in His people, honors the poor with victory.

Prayer Asking That “Spiritually Dead” People Come Back To Life In God

Ezekiel 37:1-14 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and He led me out in the spirit of the LORD and set me in the center of the broad valley. It was filled with bones. He made me walk among them in every direction. So many lay on the surface of the valley! How dry they were! He asked me: Son of man, can these bones come back to life? “Lord GOD,” I answered, “You alone know that.” Then He said to me: Prophecy over these bones, and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Listen! I will make breath enter you so you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put breath into you so you may come to life. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. I prophesied as I had been commanded. A sound started up, as I was prophesying, rattling like thunder. The bones came together, bone joining to bone. As I watched, sinews appeared on them, flesh grew over them, skin covered them on top, but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me: Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man! Say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: From the four winds come, O breath, and breathe into these slain that they may come to life. I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath entered them; they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast

army. He said to me: Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel! They are saying, “Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.” Therefore, prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: Look! I am going to open your graves; I will make you come up out of your graves, My people, and bring you back to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and make you come up out of them, My people! I will put My spirit in you that you may come to life, and I will settle you in your land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. I have spoken; I will do it—oracle of the LORD.

Prayer for a Family to Follow God’s Plan

Ephesians 5:21-6:4 Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the Church, He Himself the Savior of the body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed Himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body. “For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right. “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the LORD.

[*Notes on Ephesians 5:21-6:4. Subordinate (ordered under) ~ being ordered to God. Note: some translations use the word “submissive.” “Submissive” comes from the Latin *sub-missio*, which refers to being under the mission of God (listen to God; work to build up His Kingdom of love). Hopefully, husband and wife are following God and are under His mission. If one spouse is not or is weak, then the other prays all the more. The goal of marriage is to pray and love each other into heaven.]

Joshua 24:15: *As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church—The Family

The Domestic Church

-1655 Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than “the family of God.” From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers “together with all [their] household.”¹⁶⁴ When they were converted, they desired that “their whole household” should also be saved.¹⁶⁵ These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

-1656 In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*.¹⁶⁶ It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”¹⁶⁷

-1657 It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way “by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.”¹⁶⁸ Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and “a school for human enrichment.”¹⁶⁹ Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous – even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life.

-1658 We must also remember the great number of single persons who, because of the particular circumstances in which they have to live – often not of their choosing – are especially close to Jesus’ heart and therefore deserve the special affection and active solicitude of the Church, especially of pastors. Many remain without a human family often due to conditions of poverty. Some live their situation in the spirit of the Beatitudes, serving God and neighbor in exemplary fashion. The doors of homes, the “domestic churches,” and of the great family which is the Church must be open to all of them. “No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who ‘labor and are heavy laden.’”¹⁷⁰

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God **Thursday, December 31** (Vigil Masses)

- St. Ignatius, 4 p.m. [Jordan and Victoria Goray]
- St. Anne, 5 p.m. [Joseph and Annette Burbach]
- St. Bernard, 7:30 p.m. [Mark Prather]

Friday, January 1, 2016

- Our Lady of the Snow, 9:30 a.m. [+Frances Baldrice]
- St. Peter, 10 a.m. [Jeff and Jackie Gilbert]

St. Peter Renovation Collection: \$40,380

Collection Envelopes are Available in the Churches

If you do not see your envelopes, please call the office and speak to Angela: 887-0032.

Air Force Academy Cadet Choir coming Jan 8-10

We need families to house the cadets on Friday and Saturday nights. They will sing at St. Anne (Sat) and then at Our Lady (Sun). Please call Angela: 887-0032.

Office Holy Season Closure

The office will be closed on Thursday, December 31, so that all of us can prepare for the Holy Days.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 10 (Sun).** Spanish Mass at Our Lady at 1 p.m.
- Jan 14 (Thur).** Fr. Joseph speaks on death and dying at Fraser Valley Library in the evening.
- Feb 14 (Sun).** Spanish Mass at Our Lady at 1 p.m.
- Mar 13 (Sun).** Spanish Mass at Our Lady at 1 p.m.
- Apr 10 (Sun).** Spanish Mass at Our Lady at 1 p.m.

Mass Collections, December 19 – 20

St. Anne	\$ 754
St. Bernard	2185
Our Lady of the Snow	2764
St. Peter	990
St. Ignatius	353
Total	\$ 7046

Vocations Prayer Calendar; December

Please pray for our seminarians every day.

- Sat**--Br. Peter Francis, SCJ & Christopher Considine
- Sun**--Felipe da Silva & Luis da Silva Mendes
- Mon**--Tom Scherer & Darrick Leier
- Tue**--Josh Meier & Julio Amezcua
- Wed**--Tommy Croghan & Angel Perez Brown
- Thu**--Daniel Ciucci & Daniel Eusterman
- Fri**--Men and women applying for formation

Mass Intentions and Schedule for StA, StB, and OLS

KEY: StA = St. Anne; StB = St. Bernard;
OLS = Our Lady of the Snow

- Sat, Dec 26, StA, 5 p.m., Stephen and Jan Robar
- Sat, Dec 26, StB, 7:30 p.m., +Larry and Sue Pellini
- Sun, Dec 27, StB, 7 a.m., Dale and Becky Redeker
- Sun, Dec 27, OLS, 9:30 a.m., Parishioners and visitors

Weekday Masses (see extra Masses listed in bold)

- Mon, Dec 28, StA, 8:30 a.m., Danita McGinn
- Tue, Dec 29, OLS, 7:30 a.m., Jo Creath intention
- Wed, Dec 30, StB, 8:30 a.m., John and Carolyn Murphy

-Thu-Fri: See Mother of God Mass schedule to the left

Mass Intentions and Schedule for StI and StP

KEY: StI = St. Ignatius (Walden); StP = St. Peter

- Sat, Dec 26, StI, 4 p.m., Mark and Debbie Goulette
- Sun, Dec 27, StP, 10 a.m., Parishioners and visitors