
LIFE TEEN PARENT LETTER

Thank you for allowing your teen to join us at Life Teen. Below you'll find some information about this Life Night's topic. Please dialogue with your teen and encourage them to share what they learned.

LIFE NIGHT: MADE AS ONE

CONTENT OVERVIEW

There wasn't always a Church nearby. Mass wasn't always offered at several Churches multiple times a day. The Church is not an accident or coincidence. The Church was intentionally made. The Church is founded on Christ, sustained by the Holy Spirit, and has Peter as its governing authority.

There are four distinguishing and intentional characteristics of the Catholic Church called "marks." They are "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." We proclaim our faith in these every Sunday at Mass when we recite the Nicene Creed. This first Life Night focuses on "one."

God Himself is a communion of persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, Who are bound together in a relationship of love. Made in God's image, we are made for community. The Church is a community that shares one faith and that faith comes from Her source, God. (CCC 254-255, 357, 813, Genesis 1:27)

The Church while being one in faith is still very diverse and made up of people of different personalities, income levels, ages, occupations, family situations, and experiences. We each have different gifts we can bless the Church with and there is a place for each of us in the Church. (CCC 814)

Life in a community such as our families or the Church can be challenging. When we make mistakes, we have a tendency to isolate ourselves. This is the opposite of God's plan. God wants community. Satan wants isolation. Isolation leads to further feelings of disappointment and anger. Instead of running away from uncomfortable situations, we are called to press into them patiently and with love. God desires that we work towards Reconciliation. (Genesis 3:9, Matthew 18:15-17)

As parents, we are called to teach our children the value of being part of a community and to encourage them to discover their unique contributions to a community. As members of the Church and members of a family, we can show and guide our children to celebrate the oneness of the Church and family and encourage them to embrace the diversity that each member contributes.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. What are your unique gifts and contributions that you can bring to your family and the Church?
2. Describe your place in your family and your Church.
3. Have you ever worked through a time of isolation? Share the experience.
4. How can we as a family support each other?
5. Share a memory of how your family has been united.

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LIFE NIGHT: MADE FOR MORE

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Last week we discussed how the Church is “one.” This week we are looking at the second mark of the Church, “holy.”

Christ established the Church as a means for us to grow in holiness and help us towards our goal of eternal life in heaven. The Church is holy because Christ, who united Himself and sacrificed Himself for Her is holy. Though the Church is holy, she is made up of humans and humans who, unfortunately, struggle with sin. She is called the Pilgrim Church because She, like us, is on the journey towards holiness. (CCC 823 – 825, Romans 3:23)

Sometimes a member of the Church can act in a way that doesn't seem very holy. We need to remember that the imperfections of the Church's members do not make the Church any less holy, but are reflections of its members who are still a work in progress.

We have all been hurt at one time or another by a member of our family and, in turn, we have ourselves most likely hurt a member of our family. Like the Church, our families experience imperfect holiness. We need to provide opportunities in our families for charity and forgiveness.

As members of the Church, we are called to grow in holiness. Holiness requires us to align our lives with God's will and seek to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, and soul and love our neighbor as ourselves. This journey looks different for each of us but is always rooted in prayer. (CCC 826)

The lives of the saints provide examples of people who attained holiness despite their struggles with temptation and sin. The Church canonizes these exemplary lives led by ordinary people in order to encourage us to seek the same for our own lives. Not all saints started out making the best choices. This gives us hope that God can do great things. (CCC 828)

As parents, we are called to lead by example and live lives that continually pursue holiness as well as guide and encourage our children on that same path.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How does your family facilitate reconciliation when members hurt each other? How can your family improve this process?
2. Does your family pray together or participate regularly in the sacraments together? How might growing in this help your family on its journey towards holiness?
3. How do you personally feel called to work towards holiness? How can your family support you?

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LIFE NIGHT: MADE FOR ALL

CONTENT OVERVIEW

The third mark of the Church is “catholic,” which means universal. The Church is “catholic” in that she is present throughout the world and because Jesus Christ dwells in her, and in Him, all things are held together. (CCC 830-831)

Every human heart yearns for God - young and old, rich and poor, people from different countries and cultures. It is a universal yearning and a universal answer, Jesus. Jesus dwells in the Church. (Colossians 1:15-18, CCC 830-831)

Even though the Church is present in all the countries, Jesus is not present in everyone's hearts. Thus, we must continue our missionary efforts.

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus commissioned His apostles and us, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” We may not all be called to the foreign mission field, but we are all called to respond to Jesus' call in a real way. As parents, we especially are called to be missionaries to our children.

Our missionary efforts are inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In John 20:21, Jesus says, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” Then, He empowers the apostles by breathing the Holy Spirit on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Then again, in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit fills the disciples, and they go forth proclaiming the Good News and converting thousands. (CCC 852, Acts 2:41)

We cannot give what we do not have. We have to be filled with the Holy Spirit before we can go out. Remember to offer up a prayer to the Holy Spirit before you go out on mission. In the words of St. Josemaria Escriva, “Don't have a ‘small town’ outlook. Enlarge your heart until it becomes universal - ‘catholic.’ Don't fly like a barnyard hen when you can soar like an eagle.”

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How have you experienced the yearning of the human heart for God?
2. Have you ever attended Mass or met Catholics in a different country? What was that experience like?
3. How can you better rely on the Holy Spirit in your missionary endeavors?

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LIFE NIGHT: MADE TO LAST

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The final mark of the Church is “apostolic.” Christ built the Church on the foundation of the apostles, who with the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to hand down the deposit of faith today through their successors, the bishops, and our supreme head, the pope. The Church is also “apostolic” in that she continues to be taught, guided, and sanctified by the successors of the apostles who are led by the Holy Spirit. (CCC 857, Matthew 16:18-19, 2 Timothy 1:14)

After the Resurrection, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him and Peter replies that he does. Jesus then instructs Peter to feed His sheep. This is an odd command. Is Peter supposed to feed us food? In Scripture, God calls truth, law, and sacraments, “food.” (John 21:15-19)

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3.)” God’s word is truth, and it feeds us. We hunger for wisdom and understanding. We want to know what is good and true. If we are curious about the life and Death of Jesus and how salvation works, we have the Gospel accounts, guarded and passed down by the Church, to teach us.

God continues to speak truth through the Church today about modern issues - stem cell research, just war, the environment, etc. The pope has the authority to speak out on issues of faith and morals and guides his Church. (CCC 892)

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work (John 4:34.)” Not only do we want to know truth, but we also want to follow truth. We not only want to hear about the life of Jesus, but also want to start following Him. Following God feeds us because it leads to living a blessed life.

Lastly, Jesus’ actual Body and Blood is food for us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In John 6:55, Jesus says, “for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.” Not only do we receive sustenance in the Eucharist, but also in the healing and forgiveness received in Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick.

As parents, we know the importance of providing food for our children so that they can grow and develop. Jesus did not leave us helpless but gave us a Church that we can trust to provide all that we need on our journey towards heaven.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Host a time of family prayer to thank God for the “yes” of Peter and the early apostles.
2. What can you do as a family to support those that serve the Church today?
3. How can your family guard and pass on the faith to those around you?