



# Theology Corner

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*Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation*

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## “What is the Domestic Church?”

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In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* #11, it references the family as the “domestic church.” Of course, the term “Church” most properly speaking, refers to the universal church led by the Pope and all the bishops in union with him (i.e., the magisterium). However, there are different levels of which people are entrusted with the responsibility to lead the faithful to God. For example, we have the local diocesan church at one level led by a bishop, the local parish church at another led by a priest, and finally the domestic (home) church led by the parents. The difference that clearly separates the domestic church from the other levels, is that the leaders have not (in most cases) received the sacrament of Holy Orders. However, as lay Christians, we too are given a participation in the priesthood of Christ.

The particular role of the domestic church is to lead the souls within the household to heaven. The parents are the primary catechists (teachers) of the faith to their children. This is because the parents have the most proximate authority over their children, and it is within the home that children first encounter the faith. If the domestic church is lacking, that means the parents have, on some level, failed to ensure that family life is kept centered on Christ as the glue uniting the family to God. Failing to do this leads both the parents and their children to lack unity in the faith, and if this glue is weak the family can fall apart. Parents and children begin to lose interest in going to Mass, their experience of the light of the faith is diminished and thus the light is dimmed. As a result, it is no longer Christ directing them by his grace, but rather the family is being led by the things of the world.

It cannot be stressed enough as to how important the domestic church is for the building up of the kingdom of God on earth. But now that we have covered what the domestic church is, what actions do we have to take to ensure the domestic church is fully alive? First and foremost, we have to develop a firm life of prayer. How do we do this? Read the bible as a family, pray the rosary or the divine mercy chaplet as a family, incorporate morning/evening/night prayers into your schedule (Liturgy of the Hours is a great resource for this!), and/or reflect on the daily liturgy of the word as a family. A good way to foster this life of prayer is to designate a prayer corner or ‘home altar’ to designate a sacred space where the family can gather specifically for prayer. This is beneficial because it can help separate ‘common’ spaces in your ordinary day-to-day operations within the household so that everyone has a place to go to communicate with God through prayer.

While we are currently all quarantined in some fashion during this virus outbreak, the opportunity to develop the domestic church has never been so readily available and so drastically important. As you know, we are presently unable to attend the Holy Mass or any other parish activities that we usually rely on to help remain centered on Christ. This is a time that can either make or break us. Let us not allow ourselves to wander in the wilderness searching for God’s presence. Let us instead find him intimately within the very spirit of our home. Holy week is quickly approaching. Due to Mass cancellations, we can either ignore Holy Week completely, or we can do whatever possible to preserve the great symbolism of the Easter Triduum. We at Sacred Heart will do our best to provide recordings of the homilies during this time, but the domestic church must be at work in this effort! Use this time to meditate upon the Word of God, make acts of spiritual communion often, wash each other’s feet on Holy Thursday, venerate the cross in your prayer corners for Good Friday, pray the stations of the cross as a family, light candles throughout your home on Easter Vigil, and shout “Alleluia!” from the rooftops that Christ is Risen on Easter Sunday.

May we all continue to build up our domestic church so that every day of our lives may be guided by the light of Christ. Amen.