



## Family Holiday Traditions

Our families help us to think about what a “holiday” is. On these special days, it is natural to consider the goodness of God and the gifts that God has given us. It’s also an opportunity to realize that we should share what we have with others. At Thanksgiving, we gather around a table to give thanks to God and to remember that we must always think of others who have less than we have. Soon after Thanksgiving, we begin to get ready for Christmas. Our Advent wreath with its four candles helps us to prepare for the birthday of Jesus.



We are thankful for...



We share our blessings...



We await His coming...

### ***Think It Through:***

As a family, we give thanks for \_\_\_\_\_

As a family, we help those less fortunate than us by \_\_\_\_\_

As a family, we wait for Jesus’ coming at Christmas by \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Act:***

Meet as a family to plan ways you can share your many blessings with others during this holiday season.

Discuss how your family will prepare for Christmas by “waiting for the Lord” during the Advent season.

***Scripture:*** Matthew 25: 31-48

***Resources:*** Advent & Lent Activities for Children - Kielly & Geraghty (Twenty-Third Publications); Saintly Celebrations and Holy Holidays - Snyder (Liguori Press); Bundles of Faith and Tons of Fun - Mathson (Ave Maria Press).



## Family Rituals

*Rituals are repeated behaviors or patterns that call and bond family members together, reflect and celebrate family values and beliefs, and become ingrained in the fabric and life of the family. Rituals may also be referred to as traditions, customs, rites, or celebrations.*

Children are often best at determining what shared activity or event becomes a family ritual or tradition. If an activity or event is memorable and meaningful enough for children to request that it be repeated, in the minds of children the activity is already considered a ritual or a tradition.

Family ritual occasions:

Bedtime

Around the table

Holiday/Seasonal

Prayer/Sacramental

Travel/In the Car

Aesthetic/Artistic

Cultural/Ethnic

Leisure/Recreational/Athletic

Rites of Passage

### *Think It Through and Share*

Our family has a daily ritual of \_\_\_\_\_

Our family enjoys a weekly ritual of \_\_\_\_\_

Our family participates in a spiritual ritual of \_\_\_\_\_

Our family shares in a recreational ritual of \_\_\_\_\_

What I get most out of our family ritual of \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_



### *Act*

Create a family altar. Spread a special cloth. Have each member bring an item that represents what makes them unique. Decorate further with flowers, candles, or art. Have each member share why or how they chose the article they brought to the altar. Say a prayer or have a reading or reflection. Display your family altar in a visible location in your home.

### *Scripture*

*“Let each generation tell its children of your mighty deeds.”* Psalm 145:4

### *Resources*

*The Catholic Home* by Meredith Gould

*Sacred Dwelling* by Wendy Wright



## Uncovering the Sacred at Home

*“The family has been established as an intimate community of life and love.”*

--THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION ON THE FAMILY by Pope John Paul II, Nov. 1981

Every family has a unique way of experiencing God in their everydayness. When love is present in our family then God is there. **God is love.** 1 John 5:16. Below are ordinary ways that families make God’s love present. Circle the pictures that your family does often.



Daily efforts to be kind

Commits to act like Jesus (WWJD)



Prays together

Forgives each other



Celebrates

Goes to Church



### ***Think It Through***

What do you celebrate in your home? \_\_\_\_\_

When do you pray at home? \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus calls us to love one another. When have you helped another at home? \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Act***

Create a family container (box, jar, etc) labeled “A piece of God’s Love.” In the container put ordinary ways that we can make God’s love come alive in our home (i.e., be kind to often at home, help mom with the dishes, say – “I’m sorry” when you do wrong). Each week, draw out one suggestion and as a family work to make God’s love evident in everyday life.

### ***Scripture***

“God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.” *1John 4:17*

### ***Resources:***

Books: *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life* by Wendy M. Wright

*More Than Meets the Eye – Finding God in the Creases and Folds of Family Life* by Mary Jo Pedersen, Thomas Greisen, Ronald Wasikowski



## My Family's History

Each family has its own traditions and ways of doing things. Your parents learned from their parents and your grandparents learned from your great-grandparents. That's a lot of history! Your family is like no other family. It's fun to learn about your family's myths, traditions, challenges and triumphs.

**Talk about your family's favorites:**



Places to go on vacation



Family meals



Fun times together

### ***Think It Through:***

Traditions and rituals are things you do over and over which have special meaning to you and your family. How does your family celebrate holidays, birthdays or other special family events? \_\_\_\_\_

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Many of our ancestors made sacrifices for the next generation. Ask your parents or grandparents to tell you about sacrifices your ancestors made. \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Act:***

Ask your grandparents to share with you their memories about growing up. Ask them what life has taught them that they would like to share with your generation. Write it down so that your family will remember their wisdom.

If your family has a Bible with records of marriages, births and deaths, try to learn something more about your ancestors, where they came from, and what kind of work they did. Record whatever you discover about your family history in writing or on a video.

### ***Scripture:***

Luke 15:11-32, Story of the Prodigal Son  
1 Corinthians 13:4-13, Unselfish Love

### ***Resources:***

*For Children:* **Remembering Wilma** by Christy Baldwin, Tribute Books

**A Kid's Guide to Keeping Family First** by J.S.Jackson, Abbey Press

*For Parents and Children:*

**Making Heart Bread** by Matthew, Sheila and Dennis Linn, Paulist Press

*For Parents:* **The Everything Family Tree Book: Finding, Charting & Preserving Your Family History**  
by William G. Hartley, Adams Media Corporation

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