

Guidelines for a Family Prayer Service for Forgiveness and Peace

These are guidelines to help families plan a family prayer service to teach and model forgiveness and peace within the family as a whole and between individuals. Please feel free to adapt and modify these to suit your family's needs and ages.

1. An opening prayer thanking God for all His blessings on the family (invite each member to say something they are thankful or grateful for.)

Suggestion: Lord, giver of life,
Thank you for all the many blessings you have given our family.
Thank you for our jobs and a way to provide for our family.
Thank you for a safe, dry house to protect and shelter us.
Thank you for good water to drink and refresh us.
Thank you for the food to put on our table.
Thank you for our church community.
Thank you for each member of our family.
And for what else shall we offer gratitude to God?

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your family to understand where they have hurt or sinned against each other.

Suggestion: Come, Holy Spirit,
We seek your inspiration and guidance.
As we help another member of our family
Learn to experience God's great mercy and love
In the Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation,
Help us to recognize the ways we have not loved each other as we should.
Help us to recognize how we have sinned, especially against each other.
Help us to be open to hearing and forgiving each other.

3. Reflect with a short list of questions to help each member think about times he/she has hurt another member by their choices and by their lack of choices.

Suggestion: Have I behaved disrespectfully?
Have I made unloving choices?
Have I been intentionally hurtful with words or actions?
Have I complained, whined, or begged?
Have I owned my mistakes, or have I tried to hide them?
Have I had unloving or unkind thoughts?
Have I been selfish or unwilling to share?

4. After a short time of silence, ask each member of the family to say this, or something similar to each family member, one at a time:

“_____ I am sorry for all the times I have hurt you.”

The response from each person should be,

“Thank you,” or “I hear you,” and, “I forgive you.”

5. Once each person old enough to speak has had a turn, pray the Our Father together.
6. Offer each other a hug of peace and love, or share a big group, family hug.
7. Share a special dessert or another special treat to celebrate.
8. Make plans to go celebrate the Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation as a family soon!