

POPE FRANCIS CELEBRATES

and FAITH
Family



30 Devotions from *Living Faith*

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has devoted much of his attention to the family. At World Youth Day in Brazil in 2013, he spoke often and profoundly to young people about faith and family, noting in one instance: “How precious is the family as the privileged place for transmitting the faith!”

Furthering his concern for family life, Pope Francis convened an “extraordinary” synod of bishops in 2014 to more fully engage Church leaders on this important issue. Shortly after that synod, he announced his desire to be present at The World Meeting of Families to be held in Philadelphia, September 22-27, 2015. Some 10,000 delegates from 150 countries are expected to attend. They will discuss the challenges and opportunities facing today’s families. That meeting will be followed by yet another synod of bishops at the Vatican in October 2015. There can be little doubt that Pope Francis is aware of the serious threats to family life. He has encouraged and been supportive of the boundless energy and commitment available through the Church to improve the spiritual life of families throughout the world.

With this booklet, we honor family life. In a blue box preceding each devotion, we have chosen quotes from Pope Francis to highlight his warmth, wisdom and wit. The booklet features several of our veteran *Living Faith* authors and includes 30 days of devotions paired with complementary Scripture passages that speak to the joys and challenges of our God-given gift of family. We think the booklet offers families an ideal way to begin a family meal, to start a discussion within your family or to arrange your own in-home family retreat. We hope you enjoy this addition to our line of *Living Faith* publications.

Paul Pennick
Editor

THE *Family* TREE OF LIFE

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham...

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

The Lord is asking us to care for the family, which has been from the beginning an integral part of his loving plan for humanity.

Homily, Synod on the Family, 2014

Matthew 1:1, 17

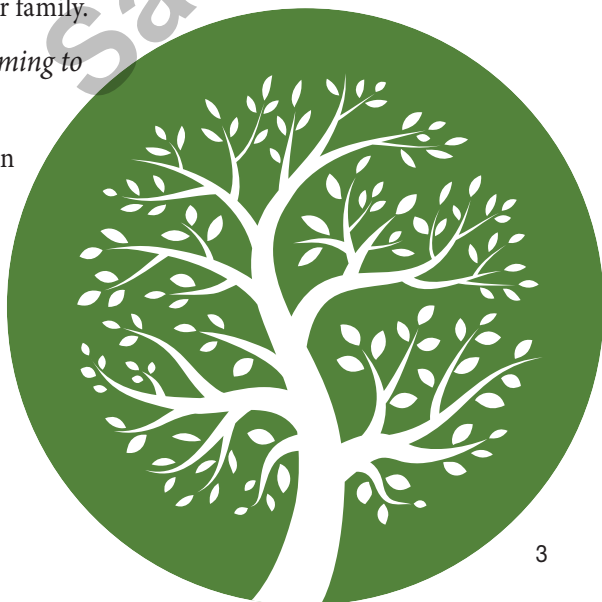
In this age of Internet research, one of the most popular activities is working out a family tree through the study of genealogical records. Family is so important because our roots tell us who we are. Families share experiences, the tragedies and triumphs of people growing together. In Christian families, the family Bible often provides records of births and deaths, baptisms and weddings.

Jesus was born into a family like ours, filled with all kinds of people with all kinds of stories. His was a family that, like faithful Jews through the ages, awaited the coming of the Messiah. His birth signaled a new beginning, not only for his family, but for the whole world.

Let us pray that all families remember where they came from and that they look for the Lord's presence in their family.

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to our human family.

Mark Neilsen



A family enlightened by the Gospel provides a school for Christian living! There one learns faithfulness, patience and sacrifice.

@Pontifex, 2014

Sharing BURDENS

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

Little children love to help. Hand them a sponge, they'll scrub. They'll sweep, mop and hammer (especially hammer), if you'd let them. It takes a while to wear off too. My ten-year-old is presently going through a stage of insisting on carrying grocery bags. I hope it lasts.

A small child's eagerness to help us might indeed be no more than an instinct to imitate, which is in turn the way they are built to learn. But remember—if we say they are built that way, it implies a Builder. As children grow, we do what we can to strengthen that God-planted enthusiasm for sharing burdens.

And we encourage that sense of joy in serving early and often because we know that as they grow, that burden-sharing won't always be as fun as squirting cleaner on a window. It will get heavier; it will transform into a cross—but the cross borne in love, carried with the joyful trust of a child.

Jesus, strengthen me to lovingly bear the burdens of others.

Amy Welborn

How important grandparents are for family life, for passing on the human and religious heritage which is so essential for each and every society!

World Youth Day, 2013

A CALL TO FAITH, *Family*

He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand.

Acts 7:25

There's a story about a man stranded on a roof during a flood, praying for God to help him. People come by with boats and life preservers to help, but he turns them down

because, he says, he is waiting for God to help. The point, of course, is that God works through us. Christ has no body now but ours.

So many grandparents and parents fall on their knees each day to pray for family members who have left God and Church behind while chasing lives that are not in accord with God's plan for us. Many of them will not understand or appreciate this gesture of faith and will not accept the outstretched hands of those trying to urge them into the boat, but we will continue anyway, for that's the unrelenting call to faith and family.

God, my rescuer and rock, help me reach those who need you.

Steve Givens

PART OF SOMETHING *Larger*

Your kindred are good people; you come of good stock.

Tobit 5:14

A relative of mine has been researching our family tree for years. He's devoted countless hours to squinting at microfiche and deciphering old church and census records. It's humbling for me to think that a person's whole life can be reduced to a few bits of information like that. But for him there's a certain thrill in recognizing a name in a list of data. He might not know what his ancestors were like or what mattered to them. He doesn't know if they were good or kind, if he inherited their sense of humor or their achy joints. But he knows he is here because of them. Maybe we all want to know where we came from, who we're connected to, what people and events brought us to where we are today. It reminds us that we are part of something larger than ourselves.

Father, thank you for the countless people who came before me and who brought me here today.

Karla Manternach

You would not wish to build [a house] on the shifting sands of emotions, but on the rock of true love, the love that comes from God. The family is born of this project of love that wishes to grow, as one builds a house that becomes the locus of affection, help, hope and support.

Meeting with Engaged Couples,
February 14, 2014

The first setting in which faith enlightens the human city is the family.

Lumen Fidei 2013

THE 'Gift OF THIRDS'

I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people...

Tobit 1:3

Last week, I helped one of my students clarify his ideas for an essay in which he described preparation for the Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha. He wrote that when they can afford to do so, in the name of God, his family purchases a cow and divides it into thirds, with one-third to feed his family, one-third given to relatives and friends and one-third donated to feed the poor.

As I reflect on this tradition, I consider how I can use this "gift of thirds" idea as a daily spiritual practice. Not unlike the biblical practice of tithing one-tenth of one's income, this intentional division into thirds is a way to ensure that one's abundance allows others to thrive as well. Not only are good things available for my family's enjoyment and use, but I can give an equal portion to my neighbors and, just as equally, share a third with those in need, whether or not I know them.

Claire J. King

When we realize that God is in love with our smallness, that he made himself small in order to better encounter us,...we beseech him: "Lord, help me to be like you."

Midnight Mass, 2014

AN Audience OF 'ONE'

...but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:15

I have reminded my children (and myself) on countless occasions, "Audience of One, guys." It's so easy to get caught up in pleasing people or obsessing over what other people think. With today's online influence, our culture is consumed

with how many "likes," followers or positive comments we have. We have immediate opinion polling available at all times, and it's making us sick.

The only remedy for this sickness is to refocus on serving the Lord. When we turn our hearts and our priorities in the direction of God, the opinions of the world fall into proper perspective and alignment. Remember whom you serve. Remind your children. When we focus on serving the Lord, our own needs are served. When we work to please God, we live the most pleasant life of all.

Lord, help me today to recommit my heart and my home to you. May our thoughts, words and actions please you and bring you glory. In Jesus' name.

Kristin Armstrong

IN *Loving* HARMONY

“Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise: “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:2-3

May each family rediscover family prayer, which helps to bring about mutual understanding and forgiveness.

@Pontifex, 2014

St. Paul is directing this commandment toward children, reminding them of their duty to obey their parents. He is quoting one of the Ten Commandments, which shows us that the early Christians understood the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. Paul is aware that good order in the family requires a structure of authority. If everyone insists on doing whatever they please, the result would be chaos and hurt feelings. Moreover, children often do not know how to choose what is good for them; they need direction and guidance from their parents.

On their part, parents are required to exercise their authority with reasonableness and with love. In the next breath, Paul urges parents not to “provoke your children to anger,” and we might add, “Nor burden them with unreasonable demands or restrictions.” This is a daily challenge for parents and requires prayer for guidance.

Lord, give all our family members the grace to live in loving harmony.

Fr. Martin Pable, O.F.M. Cap.

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From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has devoted a great deal of his attention to the family. He has spoken often and profoundly about the challenges facing today's families. Through the convening of synods of bishops, he has encouraged Church leaders to support the spiritual lives of families throughout the world.

With this booklet, we honor family life and Pope Francis' commitment to the important role families play in nurturing our faith in God. The booklet includes 30 devotions from several of our veteran *Living Faith* authors. Also included with each devotion are quotes from Pope Francis highlighting his wit, wisdom and warmth. The booklet is an ideal keepsake for every family for mealtime discussion, prayer or an in-home retreat.

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