

SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR FAMILIES

The following practices constitute a “menu” from which you are invited to select an activity each week. You may also consider ideas not on this menu from your own tradition (e.g., a Catholic rosary). Experiment with different practices and look for a few that you decide to adopt long-term.

- ♥ Eat dinner together, at the table, whenever possible.
- ♥ Say grace before meals (some examples are provided on the back of this sheet).
- ♥ Take a “thank you” walk. What do you see, hear, smell, feel, even taste? Who or what can you thank?
- ♥ Sing with your children – use a song they often sing at school or church, or ask them to teach you a song. Camp or scouting songs are good, too! Singing opens up a different place in our hearts than talking.
- ♥ At dinner or bedtime, take turns sharing the one grace and one disappointment of the day (see *Sleeping With Bread*, in bibliography).
- ♥ Draw, paint or work with clay together with child.
- ♥ Perform a deed of service with your child(ren).
- ♥ Share some silence -- as an invitation, not a command ☺ Start with 20 seconds, then share what each of you has noticed. Work up to a minute or more.
- ♥ Talk about giving money to church or a helping agency. Set up a system for children to give their own offerings.
- ♥ Attend Saturday or Sunday worship, *and reflect on it together afterward*. Talk about what you and your child(ren) liked, what was most important, what you would like to leave out, etc.
- ♥ Select a Bible story to read or tell each night this week.
- ♥ Bless your child with touch and simple prayer as you part each morning.
- ♥ Tell family stories – not necessarily religious in nature. Connection is spiritual.
- ♥ Walk a labyrinth in the neighborhood, create one in your backyard, or use a finger sand labyrinth or a pocket version. Notice how it makes you feel and talk about it afterward.
- ♥ Set up a prayer basket in your home where family members can write prayers of thanksgiving or petition. Read prayers out loud (unless they’re marked “private”) at dinner or bedtime so all can pray for each other’s intentions.
- ♥ Pray together – use your own words and/or a memorized prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer, or use a shortened form of the rosary for Catholic families.
- ♥ If your child is baptized or has been dedicated in some other form, light a candle on the anniversary of that event. You might want to look at pictures, or just tell what you and s/he remember.
- ♥ Talk about your child’s name – and yours. If your child is named for a person you want to remember, or a saint, tell the story of that person.
- ♥ See other suggestions in Karen-Marie Yust’s *Real Kids, Real Faith*; or Elizabeth Caldwell’s *Making a Home for Faith* (see bibliography).
- ♥ Create your own traditions and rituals!

SUGGESTED TABLE GRACES

For what we are about to receive
May we be truly grateful. Amen.

Lord, thank you
for the food before us
and the love between us.
Keep us ever mindful
Of the needs of others. Amen.

For this new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food,
For love and friends,
For every gift your goodness sends,
We thank you, gracious God. Amen.

We close our eyes,
We bow our heads,
And offer thanks
For daily bread. Amen.

Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you, God, for everything. Amen.

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts
Which we are about to receive
From thy bounty,
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

We thank you, Lord, for happy hearts,
For rain and sunny weather,
We thank you, Lord, for this our food,
And that we are together.

(sung)
Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise him, all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heav'nly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Without thy sunshine and thy rain,
We would not have the golden rain.
Without Thy love we'd not be fed,
We thank Thee for our daily bread.

Lord,
Bless this food to our use
And our lives to your service. Amen.

Food, oh God, is your love made edible.
May we be swept into your presence.

O God, bless this food
we are about to receive.
Give bread to those who hunger;
And hunger for justice to us who have bread.
Amen.

God of pilgrims,
Give us always a table to stop at
Where we can tell our story
And sing our song. Amen.

A Quaker grace:
(Everyone at the table joins hands for a
silent moment.)

The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make his face to shine upon us.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon us
And give us peace. Amen.

*A member of the family may, of course,
pray extemporaneously, in his or her own
words.*

— compiled by The Rev. Dr. Rosemary
Beales, October 2012