



By celebrating the liturgical year as the domestic church, families develop traditions and encounter Christ in the home.

The Liturgical Year at Home

Greetings!

When we consider handing on the faith to the people we love, we rightly emphasize regular participation in the Mass. During the Mass each one of us is transformed. We become the Body of Christ, then we go out into the world to be it: healing what is broken, carrying the peace that surpasses all understanding to a world in desperate need, bearing the light into the darkness.

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This transformation does not take place only within the walls of the church building. We consider the words of Jesus: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). These words remind us that it is not only when we gather for Mass that we experience the presence of Christ. From its earliest days, the Church recognized the home, the domestic church, as a primary place of sanctification and encounter. In many ways, this is obvious: to grow in anything, one must develop, little by little, through practice. Where do we have more opportunities

to practice forgiveness, compassion, mercy, and love than with the people who are by our sides day after day?

One part of that growth is bringing celebrations beyond the sanctuary. Celebrating feasts and seasons in ways big and small makes explicit that the transformations we undergo during the course of a life of discipleship are joyful ones. They are opportunities to see how God has acted in history so as to understand what God is doing in our lives right this minute. Further, celebrations in the home allow us to see the beautiful diversity of people, enlightened by Christ, who have used their lives as a gift for the life of the world.

Human beings love both the familiar and the new. We find both in the rhythms of the liturgical year: the opportunity for relationship with the One who is everlasting and always new, the God of Life. Celebrations in the home, ordered toward the liturgical year, are a place of encounter. We look forward to a particular dessert, a favorite prayer, or a song the family shares on a particular day; we look back on our traditions with gratitude. Our traditions can also help us understand the way that other people of faith express themselves. We might, for example, want to learn from a Jewish friend about how they celebrate the Sabbath, and note the similarities and differences between their practices in the home and ours, all of which are oriented in one direction: the slow work of growing in love of God and neighbor.