



Recommendations for Parish Ministries and Families

For Parish Pastoral Leaders

Parish leaders should become familiar with the resources offered on the www.radiatelove.info website. The major themes that flow from the readings this weekend include:

- Children are an amazing gift from God, always unexpected because what they bring and who they are becoming is unknown to us; parents grow from sustaining and protecting this gift to become their best selves
- Raising children may not always be easy, but it is always good, irrespective of the circumstances, because every child is brought into existence by the creative and loving action of the divine will of God (*Donum Vitae*, Intro, 5)
- Catholic marriage is always open to life given by God and calls the couple to responsible parenthood (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50); indeed, truly responsible procreation must be the fruit of marriage (*Dignitatis Personae*, 6), with trust in God's providence (Psalm 54:6 "God is present as my helper; the Lord sustains my life.")
- Fertility awareness/NFP is a valuable tool for couples seeking to cooperate responsibly with God in the mission of procreation and education of their children
- Quarrels, jealousy, and conflicts can arise in family life, especially between siblings. But wisdom and righteousness are sown in peace (James 3:16-18) when families are centered on the teachings of Jesus. Families, become what you are (*Familiaris Consortio*, 17), the basis for innumerable social goods
- As disciples of Jesus, we are called to welcome children in his name (Mark 9:37). Since the pandemic, as many as 60,000 babies born to Catholic parents in California have gone unbaptized. Let us seek them out and invite them to baptize their children



Sample ideas for parish programs and activities this month:

- Undertake a review of baptismal preparation in the parish:
 - Are parish secretaries and baptismal catechists trained to extend a warm welcome to individuals or couples seeking Baptism for their child, regardless of the marital status of the parent(s)?
 - Does the baptismal preparation program offer guidance or resources for effective parenting in general, and specifically with regard to forming the faith of the child?
 - Include in the baptismal preparation packet an attractive flyer with information about Fertility awareness/NFP and contact information for local instructors; be prepared to answer questions with accurate information or a referral
 - For parents who are not sacramentally married, incorporate into the training a non-judgmental invitation to reflect together on the benefits of a sacramental marriage for themselves and their child(ren), and offer pastoral accompaniment to those who are interested in growing as a Christ-centered couple
 - Be prepared to recommend resources and movements that help couples to encounter Christ, placing him and his teaching at the center of their marriage; see the Married Couples section of the *Radiate Love* website
- It may be necessary to supplement or replace the materials currently in use for baptismal preparation; see the Parishes section of the website for some options
- Once the baptismal preparation process or program has been updated, use the homily, social media, and a bulletin announcement to encourage parishioners to invite parents they know to baptize their babies, toddlers, or older children



For Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs) and K-8 Catechists

By late September, catechetical instruction may have already begun for the year. If so, catechists and parents should be encouraged to deepen their understanding of the importance of baptizing children:

- PCLs: when you communicate with the parents and families you serve this month, share with them the parish or diocese's social media that reminds them of the importance of baptizing children, and invite them to share this information with loved ones whose children have not yet been baptized
- Catechists: take some time to learn more about:
 - The practice of infant Baptism (see Fr. Mike Schmitz [here](#))
 - How Baptism makes us adopted children of God (see Fr. Mike Schmitz [here](#))
- Incorporate a 5 to 10-minute reflection, discussion, or activity into the catechetical sessions this week, drawing from the materials and resources in this Radiate Love packet. Some options might include:
 - Select a few verses from the first reading (becoming a child of God in Baptism) or the Gospel (bringing children to Jesus for Baptism) and do a [lectio divina](#) with the children. Pflaum's [Gospel Weeklies](#) provides age-appropriate content you may find useful
 - Offer baptism-themed coloring pages (i.e. [here](#) and [here](#)) for the younger kids

For Parish Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leaders

The recommendations for PCLs and catechists also apply to parish youth ministry leaders. If the youth ministry is gathering this month, it would be a great time to conduct a session on one of these topics:

- The unexpected gift of a child (see this week's bulletin insert), and what it means to prepare for responsible parenthood



- Lifelong, exclusive, and faithful sacramental Marriage as the most ideal setting for welcoming a child into the world (see also the “[success sequence](#)”)
- What it takes to form a lifelong, exclusive, and faithful relationship, open to children from God, in the Sacrament of Marriage, and how the model of Christ’s love can help us
- How the Church reveals the love and mercy of God by accompanying and assisting women or young couples when faced with an unexpected pregnancy

For Catholic Couples and Parents

Families and couples are always encouraged to visit the [Families](#) and [Married Couples](#) sections of the Radiate Love website. In addition, take some time this month to learn together as a couple and pray as a family:

- USCCB – [For Your Marriage](#) and [Por Tu Matrimonio](#)
 - [Learning Love: Theology of the Body and the Family \(Part 1 and Part 2\)](#)
 - [Sharing the Faith with Your Child: From Birth to Age Four](#)
 - [How Natural Family Planning Changed My Life](#)
 - [Grasped by God, Held by Family](#)

A Morning Prayer for Elementary School Children

Heavenly Father, I offer you this day
all that I do and think and say,
uniting it with what was done
by Jesus Christ your only Son.

Jesus, shine through me
and be so in me
that every person I meet
may feel your presence
in my soul. Amen

