



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:

- There are two options for the first reading this week. The reading from Sirach exhorts children to honor their father and care for him in his old age. The second from 1 Samuel offers the example of Hannah and Samuel to show that all children are a gift from God, and it is the role of parents to form them to be returned to God as gift.
- There are two options for the Psalm this week. Psalm 128 speaks poetically about children as a blessing and Psalm 84 reflects that the house of God is a lovely dwelling place that all are invited to share.
- There are two options for the second reading this week. The reading from Colossians is a [household code of conduct](#) that paints an image of a peaceable life in the family and in God's household. The option from 1 John reminds us that we are all children of God in Christ, and heirs of His love, called to keep his commandment to love one another.
- The Gospel reading is the only account we have of Jesus' early life with his family. Looking from the outside, there was nothing extraordinary about the Holy Family's domestic life, yet this incident reveals Jesus' awareness of his mission from his youth (see CCC, [531 & 534](#)). Mary and Joseph are privileged to witness his growth in wisdom and stature, and by extension all parents are called to attentively promote their children's growth in faith and virtue for a lifetime.





Sample ideas for parish programs and activities:

- The Advent and Christmas seasons are usually filled with activities: novenas for Our Lady of Guadalupe, Simbang Gabi, and Las Posadas; prayers with the Advent Wreath; the Feast of Saint Nicholas; faith formation or school Christmas pageants; special Christmas Masses with children and at midnight; decorating the church; promoting a giving tree; Epiphany, and so forth.
- Incorporating *Radiate Love* into the activities of the season does not mean adding one more event to a busy calendar. Instead, take time to reflect on the activities already planned with these questions in mind:
 - What more can be done to ensure that each activity makes room for the full and active participation of children?
 - How are you equipping parents to fulfill their primary role in forming the faith of their children this season? Do they have the necessary tools, and are you encouraging them to participate in and unpack each experience with their kids?
- If you haven't already done so, begin planning ahead for the celebration of World Marriage Day 2025 in your parish or school, the week of February 9, 2025.





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

Catechists and parents should be encouraged to deepen their understanding of God’s plan for the growth of the human family through marriage and raising 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 call to form families and make disciples of their spouses and children.
 - Encourage them to make time this month to share and discuss the [monthly reflection and “Learn, Pray, Do” activities](#).
- Catechists: take some time to:
 - Learn about how having children–“the supreme gift of marriage”–is a hallmark of the married life, and how married couples are called to the mission of raising their children, thereby forming a “domestic church” (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn. [1652](#) to [1658](#) and the explanation [here](#)).
 - Learn about the primary duties of parents with respect to their children (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn. [2221](#) to [2231](#) and the explanation [here](#)).
- Incorporate a 5 to 10-minute reflection, discussion, or activity into one of the catechetical sessions this month, drawing from the materials and resources in this Radiate Love packet. Some options might include:
 - Select a few verses from the Gospel (Finding Jesus in the Temple, Lk 2:41-52) and do a [lectio divina](#) with the children. Pflaum’s [Gospel Weeklies](#) provides age-appropriate content you may find useful.
 - Use the [Saint of the Month](#) (The Holy Family) as a group conversation starter.
 - Offer gospel-themed coloring pages (i.e. [here](#) and [here](#)) for the younger kids.





For Parish Youth or Young Adult Ministry Leaders

The recommendations for PCLs and catechists also apply to parish youth ministry leaders. Although December 29 falls at a time when most ministries are on break, this month would be a great time to conduct a session on one or more of these topics:

- The goodness of having children from a Christian perspective, in contrast to a culture that sees them as an obstacle to personal fulfillment and happiness (see [this month's bulletin insert](#))
- The importance of taking parenthood seriously as a call from God to form the next generation as missionary disciples to continue the work of building the Kingdom of God. See the resources for catechist formation above for more insights.
- Family life as a path of holiness, [with the Holy Family as our model](#).

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** – Visit [For Your Marriage](#) and [Por Tu Matrimonio](#)
 - A Seven-Day Couple's Retreat – [Marriage: School of Life and Love](#)
 - [How Many Children Should We Have?](#)
 - [The Blessing of "Unanswered Prayers": An Adoption Story](#)
 - Explore ways to become a [Domestic Church](#), like the Holy Family
- USCCB Respect Life – [Seven Considerations While Navigating Infertility](#)

