

<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/041716.cfm>

Please share with your children before you go to Mass this Sunday – It's a link to the Sunday Mass readings.

Read together in order to help organize your thoughts/prayers before you attend Mass!!!!

The link to the full text of the Pope's new document (The Joy of Love) is found here in English "[On Love in the Family](#)"

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/marriage-and-family/other-topics/bishop-barron-q-a-on-amor-laetitia-the-joy-of-love.html>

**First Communion Parents:** On Sunday April 24th we will host a First Communion preparation meeting for parents and students during the regularly scheduled Sunday class time. It will be a slightly different format than usual. You will spend some time with your children and then some time watching a short video. We will start in the cafeteria at 10:30 AM. Feel free to bring a snack or refreshment to share!

...your kids can do random acts of mercy any time; and would like to be encouraged by your example – so share some experiences with them!  
Challenge them to do things for others because of the dignity of each person – and not for a new toy they really don't need!

Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible continues this Sunday at 10:45 in the cafeteria: All parents are welcome!

Hospitality Sunday Get-Together will be May 1<sup>st</sup> for k and first grade parents (moved from April 24<sup>th</sup>)

Dear Parents:

Good afternoon and I hope you are soaking in the beautiful spring weather!

Below I have copied two of the 325 paragraphs in Pope Francis' most recent letter that he wrote to all of us about the "Joy of the Family" last week. I hope that you will have an opportunity to read some of the paragraphs from this document over the next few weeks. Highlighted below are some of his thoughts regarding the important inherent characteristics of a marriage.

**Paragraph #72.** The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since "their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church. The married couple are therefore a permanent reminder for the Church of what took place on the cross; they are for one another and for their children witnesses of the salvation in which they share through the sacrament".<sup>64</sup> Marriage is a vocation, inasmuch as it is a response to a specific call to experience conjugal love as an imperfect sign of the love

between Christ and the Church. Consequently, the decision to marry and to have a family ought to be the fruit of a process of vocational discernment.

**Paragraph #73.** “Mutual self-giving in the sacrament of matrimony is grounded in the grace of baptism, which establishes the foundational covenant of every person with Christ in the Church. In accepting each other, and with Christ’s grace, the engaged couple promise each other total self-giving, faithfulness and openness to new life. The couple recognizes these elements as constitutive of marriage, gifts offered to them by God, and take seriously their mutual commitment, in God’s name and in the presence of the Church. Faith thus makes it possible for them to assume the goods of marriage as commitments that can be better kept through the help of the grace of the sacrament... Consequently, ***the Church looks to married couples as the heart of the entire family***, which, in turn, looks to Jesus”.<sup>65</sup> The sacrament is not a “thing” or a “power”, for in it Christ himself “now encounters Christian spouses... He dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another’s burdens”.<sup>66</sup>

I look forward to seeing both you and your children this Sunday!

God bless,

Tony

# Discipleship

Last Fall I introduced the concept of the Year of Mercy convoked by Pope Francis. He called for this special moment of grace because he believes that we, the Church and society need to be more open to mercy and that we need to share this aspect of faith with others.

<https://youtu.be/ZcXX9A2W3jQ>

Two 3 minute videos on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

<https://youtu.be/IYv4BUwytA0>

In order to bring to your child more of an awareness of the importance of the daily practice of mercy we will give each child a wrist band this Sunday that will say on it “Random Acts of Mercy” – in other words this will serve as a reminder that they should be merciful towards others at various times of the day, week and month and throughout this special Jubilee Year.

Above is a list of the traditional Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Obviously some are more accessible than others for your children. Try and encourage what seems reasonable. They don’t have to do all of them. We are just trying to raise the consciousness in our Parish family in this area of faith development!

God bless,

Tony MacDonnell  
Religious Education Director  
(914) 668-9815  
[amacdonnell@arcol.org](mailto:amacdonnell@arcol.org)

## *Areas of Interest and Upcoming Events*

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/marriage-and-family/other-topics/bishop-barron-q-a-on-amoris-laetitia-the-joy-of-love.html>

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/08/europe/vatican-pope-family/index.html>

2 minute video overview of Pope Francis brand new document – “Love in the Family”

<http://aleteia.org/2016/03/30/watch-pope-francis-if-you-fall-get-up-get-up/>

**Pope Francis’ 44 second video – If you fall get up, get up!!**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liWjpDmpAgM&ebc=ANyPxKr8ouO7he22d83ZyvIRJoeKQDCzq9op63gs1oKO4cePdzySiC71n366lwgSKXhx-Zrn\\_DVSxTVckPHQZBG-PjkERXIFCg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liWjpDmpAgM&ebc=ANyPxKr8ouO7he22d83ZyvIRJoeKQDCzq9op63gs1oKO4cePdzySiC71n366lwgSKXhx-Zrn_DVSxTVckPHQZBG-PjkERXIFCg)

Divine Mercy is always celebrated the first Sunday after Easter. Here is a short explanation of this new devotion that has grown dramatically in the Church in recent times!

<http://petersboat.net/2016/03/17/march-madness-spiritual-and-religious-2/>

Short 3 minute video by a young New York priest on how spirituality and religion work together

- Here is a good Lenten reflection link from a friend of mine who is a seminarian in the Archdiocese of New York: Eric Wandrey: <http://godlights.me/2016/02/04/an-idea-for-lent-more-leisure/>

Video about Lent in two minutes <http://bustedhalo.com/video/ash-wednesday-in-two-minutes>

<http://godlights.me/2016/01/13/david-bowie-shakespeare-death-and-hope/>.

The Holy Doors associated with the Jubilee Year of Mercy officially opened in our Archdiocese on Sunday Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> at St Patrick's Cathedral and at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral in Lower East Manhattan.

<http://archny.org/mercy>

<https://youtu.be/ZcXX9A2W3jQ>

Two 3 minute videos on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

<https://youtu.be/IYv4BUwytA0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtBsl3j0YRQ>

David Steindl-Rast: Want to be happy? Be grateful

Published on Nov 27, 2013

The one thing all humans have in common is that each of us wants to be happy, says Brother David Steindl-Rast, a monk and interfaith scholar. And happiness, he suggests, is born from gratitude.

An inspiring lesson in slowing down, looking where you're going, and above all, being grateful.

Catholic Underground in Manhattan, <http://catholicunderground.net/> (First Saturday of month)

Children's Choir sign up - please reach out to me if you have any questions ([amacdonnell@arcol.org](mailto:amacdonnell@arcol.org)) meets at 8:50 am in the choir loft.

Pflaum Publishing is the main program our teachers use for your child's Sunday lesson.

The two exceptions are the classes on the Sacraments: First Communion and Confirmation.

All parents, no matter the grade will find that the link below is a complimentary resource for

the work we do with all of the parish children.

[http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/new\\_page/parent\\_guide.php](http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/new_page/parent_guide.php)

[http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/new\\_page/index.php](http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/new_page/index.php)

This part of the Pflaum website also gives you access to more resources to reinforce the weekly lessons done by the Catechist.

<https://youtu.be/ZcXX9A2W3jQ>

Two 3 minute videos on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

<https://youtu.be/IYv4BUwytA0>

<http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2015/11/05/kids-technology-addiction/>

Short Article: My kid, the Ipad Junkie

<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/>

All of Pope Francis' US talks are found on this website with YouTube channel links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jx447QYpwF8>

(4 minute video about how to be aware of the reality that God is acting in your life... so that you can hear his voice)

Fr. Albert Haase's short video link will give you some insight about how we can become aware of God's presence in our daily life.

<http://www.aleteia.org/en/religion/article/afraid-to-celebrate-halloween-dont-worry-its-very-christian-5862367938215936>

Short article on some Christian links with Halloween

<http://www.aleteia.org/en/religion/video/video-jesuit-priest-talks-about-real-life-exorcism-5832751722790912>

A Jesuit priest reflects (3minutes & 45 seconds) on the actual person possessed in the movie the Exorcist

### **Reminder about a basic "God Plan" for the New Year:**

So what's your plan for the New Year? It's that time of year when we make new diet plans, exercise plans, spring vacation plans and maybe a new house budget. How about a God plan? I know you are intentional about all of the areas above, otherwise nothing new would ever happen in your family. I would like to invite you to consider putting some New Year's energy into a God plan. God waits patiently for us to take steps towards Him in response to the many graces he presents to us in our daily lives. Grace is all around us; assuring us that one of the characteristics of God is his omnipresence(He is everywhere). In other words we are never not in the presence of God. The challenge to each of us is to recognize these ongoing daily encounters and their meaning for our lives and families!

Here are a few simple steps I personally use each day. They may help you and your children become

more aware of God's presence in your daily life:

1. Morning: when you get up encourage yourself and your children to say hello to God and to be grateful for something or someone! Encourage yourself and children to say something complimentary to others before they go to school – build up a habit of thinking positively of others!
2. Gospel for the day: Usccb.org it takes a minute to read the daily Gospel. Here's an online link. <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/011716.cfm>
3. At night thank God again for your day, food, good results at work, a moment of fellowship etc. Review your various encounters with others and any insights you had during the day. Take a look at the next day's Gospel passage (will just take a minute). This could be done on your own and/or with your children.
4. Next day – Repeat.
5. Bonus points: consider reading a Catholic book (a little at a time) or joining or beginning a discussion group focused on some aspect of the faith or spirituality. I am happy to offer suggestions for resources. I am just an email away: [amacdonnell@arcol.org](mailto:amacdonnell@arcol.org)

The fruit of regular daily reflection is: "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness" **Galatians 5:22**