

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A HUSBAND & FATHER

“Take courage and *be a man*. Keep the mandate of the Lord, your God, following His ways and observing His statutes, commands, ordinances and decrees, that you may succeed in whatever you do.”

- 1 Kings 2:2-3

- I. **Develop an intimate**, personal relationship with Jesus, allowing Him to forgive you of your past, to talk to you, to heal you and to guide you. Then, trust the Holy Spirit in all things. Trust Him to provide everything you need, including financial help.
- II. **Get your priorities** in order: Jesus first, your wife second, your children third, your work fourth, etc. Develop a weekly schedule, blocking out quality time for the Lord, your wife, each child and the family as a whole. A husband’s most important time during any given day is the first five minutes when he gets home from work and the love and attention he shows his wife and children at that time. Remember that your human fatherhood is rooted in the Divine Fatherhood of Almighty God (cf. *Ephesians* 3:14-15; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2214).
- III. **Realize that you** are the “priest” of the home. It is your primary responsibility to oversee the TV and its influence, the internet and its influence, as well as the books and magazines that enter into your home. You must stand *firmly* against all evil influences, asking constantly for God’s strength and guidance to lead your family in living a pure, holy and non-violent lifestyle. *Esto vir!* (*Be a man!*). A father fosters moral virtue within his home first and foremost by example. Get into the habit of blessing your children – both alone and with your wife – before they go to sleep at night or before they leave the house in the morning.
- IV. **Make sure you** know what your children are being taught at school regarding morals and values. All teachers teach “in your place” as you and your wife are the primary educators of your children. If objectionable subjects or materials are being taught in the classroom, you must stand strong. The primary place for Christian morals and values to be taught and practiced is within the family home – *your* home, which you oversee. This is an awesome responsibility given both to you (as the “head” of your household) and to your wife (as the “heart” of your household). Realize that your headship is to be modeled after the headship of the *wise and prudent king who loves and rules over his kingdom and its inhabitants*. Your headship is *not* to be modeled after the headship of the *master who rules over his slaves*. You do not exist as the head of your family to have *your* needs met, but rather to have *your family’s* needs met. Your headship is not about *you being served*, but rather about *you serving*. Your headship is about sacrificial love and service. As head of the family, you are called to great responsibility. Many husbands and fathers want headship without the responsibility it demands. Dare to discipline with love and firmness. The wise and prudent king loves all of the subjects within his kingdom and wishes to see them prosper in the fullness of beauty and Truth. He desires to bring them all to the fullness of Truth and prosperity. Jesus Christ Himself is the Head of His Church; He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. St. Augustine calls the family the “domestic church.” *You* are the “head” and “king” and “lord” of this domestic church: “The place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance. In revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God (cf. *Ephesians* 3:14-15), a man is called upon to ensure the harmonious and united development of all the members of the family” (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* [*The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*], 25).
- V. **Pray with your** wife and regularly so. Try to keep a simple, but sincere spiritual journal and share it with her, even if your entries are just short, inspirational sentences. Trust the Lord to guide, purify and sanctify your relationship with your wife. She is the “heart” of the home. Reverence her as such. Love her with the same love and affection Christ has for His Church. *Remember that your sons will grow up to relate to women much in the same way that they saw you relate to your wife. Similarly, your daughters will learn from their father what to expect from men in a relationship.* Share with your wife her burdens, her sorrows and her joys. Ask the Lord for the strength to love her with the same love and purity with which He loves His Bride, the Church.
- VI. **Spend quality time** with each child. Treat each child in a unique and personal way. The power of a father’s affirming love is tremendously overwhelming and something truly wonderful. Children need it. They require it for their full and proper development. Let each child share his or her ideas, feelings, fears and problems with you. Do everything in your power to ensure that your child can always approach you in any matter. Be sure to share periodically with your wife your insights concerning each child. Discipline with firmness and love (again, your model here is that of the *wise and prudent king* who rules over the inhabitants of his kingdom with a firm, but great love and *not* of the *master who rules over his slaves*).

- VII. **Consecrate your home** to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Set up a “prayer corner” within the home in the room where the family most gathers. In this room should be an “altar-table.” On this table place a Bible, a good condensed version of the Lives of the Saints and a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. On or around this table also place images (statues, pictures or icons) of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The daily family Rosary is a powerful prayer. If your children are still small, pray only a decade of the Rosary and/or vary it daily with the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. A wonderful, fixed time for daily family prayer and spiritual reading (say, a total of just 15 or 20 minutes) is immediately after supper each evening. Included here could be the Readings from the Mass of the day; purchase a daily Roman missal for this. Again, remember that you are the priest of the home. As such, you are called to be a true leader. *A child will remember well into his adult life these early family practices of the Faith.* They will never be forgotten. A father must be the first Christian witness to his wife and children. This is *both* a duty and a responsibility. Also, be sure to foster the use of sacramentals among your family members. Sacramentals are “sacred signs which bear a certain resemblance to the Sacraments and by means of which spiritual effects are signified and obtained through the prayers of the Church” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Glossary). Examples of sacramentals include the Sign of the Cross, holy water, enrollment in the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, religious medals, blessings, pilgrimages, processions, the Stations of the Cross, sacred art, rosaries and the veneration of relics. While sacramentals do differ from the seven Sacraments, they are still very important in the life of a Catholic Christian. Also, promote visits to the Blessed Sacrament with your family members, for instance, when in town running errands.
- VIII. **Do not let** sports or outside activities become more important to you or to your children than Christ and family. Sports have become a false god in America today – especially on Sundays – and we tend to overemphasize them. Spend fun time at home. Do things together as a family. This calls for creativity, imagination and frequent planning in advance. Seek suggestions from your wife and older children in this regard.
- IX. **Pray that each** one of your children may answer the call to the vocation that Almighty God has chosen for him or her from all eternity. Never ask your children, “*What do you want to be?*” Rather, ask each child, “*What do you think God is calling you to be?*” Help them to discern their states-in-life, whether it be *singlehood*, the *married state* or *consecrated religious life*. Have this discussion often with your children, especially after they reach the age of 15.
- X. **Ensure the frequenting** of the Sacraments by your family members. The Sacrament of Confession should be partaken of at least monthly and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist should be partaken of at least weekly. You must make sure that your family’s sense of sin is never dulled. Take your family to Sunday Mass *precisely as a family*. Do not give your teenagers an option here. If you do, you are not fulfilling your vocation as a father. Foster among your family members a great love of the Holy Eucharist. Tithe regularly and devotedly. Do everything in your power (as the *wise and prudent king* of your home) to truly make Sunday the *Lord’s Day* and a day of family togetherness; that is, a day of prayer, relaxation and recreation. Again, this calls for creativity, imagination and frequent planning in advance. Seek input from your wife and older children in this regard. Remember, any good and wholesome recreation is really a “re-creation” of both body and soul.

(Inspired by and adapted from *Superabundant Family Love* by Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA)

PRAYER FOR OUR FAMILY

Heavenly Father, most good and gracious God, sustain our family in Your love. Make our family home a place where holiness and love abound. In our daily actions, help each one of us to learn to be more like Jesus. Aid our family to imitate the Holy Family of Nazareth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Help our family to learn from the good example of those families that especially please You in their way of life. May our family members learn to give good example always by living lives in true Christian faith, hope and love. Assist our family in learning to bear pain and suffering as Jesus did. Aid our family members, too, in overcoming difficulties and carrying their crosses. Help our family life to lead to Jesus Christ, the Source of all Truth and happiness. We ask this through Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. AMEN.

FAMILY PRAYER TO OUR BLESSED MOTHER, MARY

Holy Mary, Virgin Mother of God, we seek your patronage and we invoke you under your title “Queen of Families.” O Blessed Mother, you were conceived without sin. May every family choose you this day as the model for their household, along with St. Joseph, your most loving, chaste and caring spouse. Through your Immaculate Conception, preserve all families from every disaster, from all violence and from every misfortune. O Holy Virgin, bless and protect all families, strengthen them in trial and keep them from every evil. AMEN.

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