

FAMILY

Adding Family to the Circle of Love

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At the Synod of Bishops held on the command of Pope Francis at the XIV Ordinary General Assembly in Vatican City June 23, 2015, our Holy Father stated that, “*The family is truly the ‘school of humanity’ which is much needed today.*” He called upon the Synod of Bishops to reflect upon the critical and invaluable reality of the family by “Listening so as to look at the reality of the family today; looking with renewed freshness and enthusiasm at the beauty, the role and the dignity of the family; and confronting the situation with an eye on the Lord Jesus to discern the ways in which the Church and society can renew their commitment to the family founded upon the marriage between a man and a woman.”

To understand the addition of **Family** to the *Circle of Love*, it is interesting to look at the evolution of *Circle of Love* and the **Tools of the Trade**. In 1968, National Regent Anna M. Baxter presented a *Sevenfold Program of Involvement* as the National Program for the Catholic Daughters. National Regent Winifred Trabeaux Boudreaux inaugurated *Heart Speaks to Heart* following the developments of Vatican II. National Regent Edna Jane Nolte updated that program to include Family Values and Protection of Family Life in 1991. Following that, National Regent Grace Rinaldi introduced the *Circle of Love* that included portions of the former programs and included issues relevant in society in the 1990’s. Under National Regent Libby Ramirez, a committee chaired by Past National Regent Claudia Bosch revised **Tools of the Trade, Second Edition** in 2010. As you can see, over the years a conscientious effort has been made to ensure that our programs and tools have remained current and relevant. The addition of the Family spoke is the latest effort to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our members.

Family can be broken down into three areas: immediate, extended, and inclusive. The immediate family is made up of the closest loved ones: wife, husband and children. Parents, grandparents may be included. The extended family is composed of the next closest loved ones, which include our brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

The inclusive family is friends, church members, local community members, organizational members, military, etc. Our family, be it immediate, extended, or inclusive, surround us at all times—teaching us life’s lessons, giving us the tools to make the right decisions or choices, investing in our well-being and comfort, and providing love.

Individuals relate to groups of people who provide them with emotional and spiritual connections as a family, even if they share no legal or genetic bonds. A church “family” has spiritual connections and shared values, even though the members are not formally related. A family unit may be created because of the loss of a close family member. Some who have a supportive family may consider an extensive network of friends as second family or as additions to their blood and legal families.

Each person has several families in a lifetime. Family is what you make it whether made of blood relatives, friends or a combination of these. A family can offer the support needed to thrive.

The following are suggested activities for Catholic Daughters in our Circle of Love area of Family.

A. Encourage families to work together in the home and take the time to enjoy each other's company.

1. Pray as a family unit before meals.
2. Eat together as a family at the table.
3. Discuss general topics of interest and family member's day.
4. Designate daily or weekly chores.
5. Select an activity the family can participate in together on a weekly or monthly basis.

B. Sponsor activities that involve families expanding knowledge of Catholic beliefs and by deepening faith within the family.

1. Attending Mass as a family.
2. Participate as a family in the various aspects of the Mass, such as altar servers, lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, ushers, or members of the choir.
3. Participate as a family in an outdoor Rosary or Stations of the Cross.
4. Organize a weekend family retreat.
5. Pray the Rosary together before bed at night.

C. Promote Volunteer and Service Projects to encourage family members to spend quality time together.

1. Visit convalescent homes and pray the Rosary with the sick and elderly.
2. Deliver meals to the homebound elderly or the homeless.
3. Collect personal hygiene items for a senior citizens' center or veterans' facility.
4. Collect baby items for pregnancy help center.
5. Serve as volunteers at the local Special Olympics.
6. Participate in the local Habitat for Humanity.
7. Collect and donate coats and gloves for underprivileged children.
8. Clean up litter in the park.

D. Family fun activities contribute to the creating of strong family bonds.

1. Organize a family picnic with games.
2. Recognize a "Family of the Year" with a dinner and certificate.
3. Sponsor a family night with other families for games and socializing.
4. Organize Christmas caroling at a nursing home, veterans' home, orphanage.
5. Sponsor an Easter egg hunt.
6. Attend Mass as a family and follow it with a breakfast.
7. Organize an outdoor Mass followed with a picnic.
8. Host family movie night.
9. Attend parish-sponsored activities.

Throughout the year, courts should strengthen family relations by interacting with one another in service and work of the family community. Families praying together, working together, and playing together fully encompass the **Circle of Love** program.