



Secretariat for Catholic Formation

Office of Family & Respect Life

Infant Baptism and Renewing Your Catholic Family Life

Baptism for one of its members marks a great new beginning for a family. The newly baptized child has experienced a significant and permanent life event, and it is appropriate for this important reality to affect the whole family's pattern of life.

Even with infants, parents and godparents must be active in providing a firm foundation for the gifts of faith, hope, and love now being poured out on the child. Indeed, Catholic families are called to a particularly beautiful way of life. "In a world often alien and even hostile to the faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1656).

The Church has long referred to the family as the *domestic church* because it is in the context of the family that "one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous—even repeated—forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life" (CCC, no. 1657). Whether it's with your first or fifth child, as you prepare for and celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism, this is an excellent time to consider anew, *how do we honor our responsibility to live as domestic church, to richly live the Catholic faith as a family?*

Don't worry – it's not as hard as you might think! St. John Paul II's powerful document, *Familiaris Consortio*, (The Family in the Modern World), offers a helpful framework by proposing four "tasks" for all Catholic families to work on.

Task 1: Form a Community of Persons. The Christian family is meant to be a "communion of persons" modeled after the Blessed Trinity, built on healthy, loving relationships, in which each wills the good of the others. Forming a little community involves strong communication, mutual understanding, and creating a loving atmosphere conducive to growth.

Task 2: Serve Life. Married couples remain open to the gift of new life from God and are the "first and foremost" educators of any children with which they may be blessed. The Christian family demonstrates God's wonderful plan for human sexuality, fertility and the joy that flows from openness to life.

Task 3: Participate in Society. The family unit is not an island and is always set in relation with the larger human family and a local community. Acts of public service, charity, and civic engagement are also key aspects of family life.

Task 4: Share in the Mission of Church. The family reflects the life and mission of the Church, which is why it is referred to as domestic church. Present to society in a unique way, the family has an irreplaceable role in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, within and beyond the home. In this way, the family helps the Church to evangelize and transform the world.

The baptism of a child is a moment of great grace. Equipped with a better understanding of these four tasks puts you on your way to living the faith with greater joy and authenticity, enabling you to better receive and share the great gifts your family enjoys.

For more information about living the faith as a family, please visit www.catholicnh.org/family.