

Family Faith

SUMMER KIT

Cultivate family faith
all summer long!

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A Prayer of Summer Joy

Loving God,

we give you thanks for the beauty of summer.

*Let us join with other creatures in emerging from winter darkness
into the full light of the season.*

May love emerge in us as well,

giving rise to praise for you and for the gifts of your creation.

*Help us to weather the storms that hit without warning
and do damage to heart and soul.*

Turn our faces towards the sun

and let joy be the mantle we carry throughout this blessed time.

In your holy name, we pray.

Amen.



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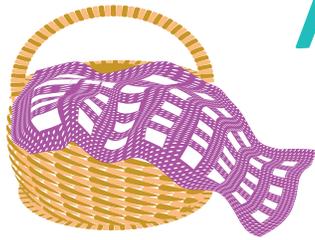
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Summertime

FAMILY ACTIVITIES



1 *Plan an Evening Picnic*

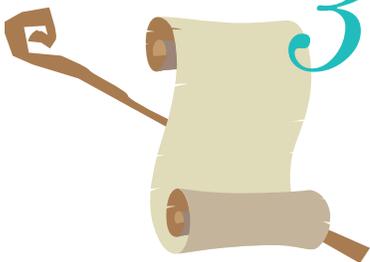
Choose a night with clear skies to enjoy the outdoors. While picnics can be fun in the middle of the day, summer evenings can provide reprieve from heat and sun. Grab a blanket, a picnic basket, and pack some sandwiches along with a cooler of lemonade. Enlist the help of each family member in gathering supplies and preparing a meal. To begin your picnic, pray together. Take the opportunity to thank God for the gift of healthy food, the beauty of Creation, and the joy of family. Bring along a children's Bible and share Scripture stories together after enjoying your meal.

2 *Keep a Nature Journal*

Children love making observations of the outdoors at any time of the year, but especially in summer. Start a journal for your child and decorate it with bright, cutout images from a magazine to personalize it. Then, invite your child to explore the outdoors with you. Look for interesting plants, insects, flowers, rocks, and animal life. Bring a magnifying glass and some colored pencils. Show your child how to make observations and draw pictures of what you see, using labels and notes. You will find that this activity not only keeps up academic skills over the summer but also sparks wonderful questions and engaging conversations with your child. Keep your Nature Journal with you as you travel to parks, beaches, and outdoor events throughout the summer and add to it whenever you can! Remark together on how beautiful and diverse Creation is!



3 *Outdoor Theatre*



Encourage your child to pick one of two favorite Bible stories to act out, such as the story of Jesus healing the blind man or the story of Jesus walking on water. Design a script so that all participants can play a role and have a few important lines to say. Using a bed sheet or tablecloth, create a stage area with curtains among the trees. Create costumes, props, and invitations. Invite your neighbors and family members over for an afternoon or evening of biblical theatre.

4 *Shell Sort*



Take a trip to the beach or shore and gather as many shells as you can. Bring them home with you. Then, on a rainy summer day when your children are looking for entertainment, rinse them off and sort them. You might decide to sort them by shape, size, color, type of shell, number of curved sides, or texture. Complete the project by painting the shells and giving them as gifts to the special people in your children's lives, along with a note or a prayer composed by your child.



Six Saints of Summer

Saint Peter the Apostle



Born: unknown
Died: c. 64 A.D.
Feast Day: June 29

Saint Peter, named Simon at birth, was a fisherman from the village of Bethsaida in Galilee. His brother Andrew was also a fisherman. One day as the brothers were mending their fishing nets, Jesus called out to them. Jesus said, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Both brothers left their nets to become disciples of Jesus. Peter was present during the major events of Jesus’ ministry.

After Jesus rose from the dead, Peter was one of the first to see him alive. Peter’s given name was Simon, but Jesus gave him the name “Peter.” The name means “rock.” Jesus entrusted Peter with a very special task. He appointed him the leader of the Church. Jesus said, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Peter received the Holy Spirit with the other disciples at Pentecost. The gifts of the Holy Spirit enabled him to carry out the mission of Jesus to witness to the Gospel. He encouraged the early Christians to spread the Gospel message to people of all nations. Peter listened to Jesus and learned that Jesus’ message was God loves us and wants us to love him and others. Saint Peter tried to share this message even when it was difficult to do.

Saint Elizabeth of Portugal



Born: Summer 1271
Died: July 4, 1336
Feast Day: July 4

Saint Elizabeth was related to kings, queens, emperors, and a saint! She was the daughter of the king and queen of Aragon, a land now part of Spain. One grandfather was the king of Sicily, and the other was an emperor. She was named after her great-aunt, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, another queen who was a saint. These connections did not guarantee that she would be a great queen or a saint. She became both.

Elizabeth married Dinis, the king of Portugal. The couple ruled wisely and well. They worked to improve the lives of their subjects. They provided education, justice, and protection for the people in their kingdom. Elizabeth supervised the building of hospitals, orphanages and churches. She also worked among the poor and sick, often feeding or caring for them. As a result, the people dearly loved their king and queen.

“God made me queen so that I may serve others.”

Saint Elizabeth of Portugal devoted her life to maintaining peace in her kingdom. She tried to change the minds and hearts of others by showing the joy she received from serving God. She saw her role as queen as an opportunity to share the love and care of God with others.

Saint Benedict of Nursia



*Born: Spring 480 A.D.
Died: Spring 547 A.D.
Feast Day: July 11*

Saint Benedict was born in Nursia, Italy in 480 A.D. He was born to a wealthy family and grew up in Rome. When he was done with his studies, he decided to leave the city and live a life devoted to prayer in the mountains of Subiaco. Here, Benedict met a monk named Romanus whose monastery was on a cliff over the cave in which Benedict was living. Benedict continued to live in solitude in the cave, but Romanus helped him by giving him food and clothing.

“He who labors as he prays lifts his heart to God with his hands.”

Although he rarely communicated with the outside world, the people of Subiaco respected him deeply. When the abbot, or leader of the monastery passed away, Benedict was the community’s first choice for a replacement. He accepted the position.

During his time at the monastery, many people began to hear about Benedict’s hospitality. People from all over Italy traveled to Subiaco so that Benedict could guide them. For these people, he built twelve monasteries and placed twelve monks in each of them. He remained in charge of all of them, but he lived in his own monastery in solitude. Some of these monasteries eventually became schools for children. Near the end of his life, he wrote a book known as his Rule, which is a list of precepts for monastic living in a community.

The Rule of Saint Benedict is the most popular Rule used by Christian communities today. He teaches important concepts in his Rule such as hospitality, charity, and the importance of prayer. While not everyone chooses a monastic life like Saint Benedict did, we can all learn from his example and devote ourselves to helping others.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha



*Born: 1656
Died: April 17, 1680
Feast Day: July 14*

Kateri Tekakwitha was born near the present-day town of Auriesville, New York. Her mother, an Algonquin, was a Christian. Her father, a leader among his people, the Mohawk, was not. When a smallpox epidemic struck her village, her family was killed. Kateri was adopted by her uncle, a Mohawk chief. Although he disapproved, he granted Kateri’s request to receive religious instruction from a Jesuit missionary.

After her baptism, Kateri was shunned by her village and she decided to travel to a Catholic mission near Montreal, in Canada. At the mission Kateri taught prayers to children and told them stories about the life of Jesus. She nursed the sick, gathered offerings for those in need, and helped the elderly with their daily chores.

“Who can tell me what is most pleasing to God that I may do it?”

When her life became hard, Kateri turned to God in prayer. She focused on helping others, sharing stories about Jesus, and doing everyday chores as acts of love.

Saint Ignatius Loyola



Born: 1491
Died: July 31, 1556
Feast Day: July 31

Ignatius Loyola was born in Guipúzcoa, in northern Spain. As a boy, he dreamed of becoming a famous soldier. As a soldier in the Spanish army, he was badly wounded. During his long and painful recovery he read a life of Jesus Christ and lives of the saints. These books inspired him to change his goals. He wanted to dedicate his life to Jesus. He devoted long hours to prayer and to caring for the sick. He wrote a book called *The Spiritual Exercises* to help people become more like Christ.

Ignatius decided to study for the priesthood. His life of prayer and simplicity influenced several of his fellow students. After they were ordained priests, they all made a special vow of obedience to the pope. They called themselves the Society of Jesus and received formal recognition as a religious order from Pope Paul III. The Society of Jesus soon came to be known as the Jesuits.

“Teach us to give and not to count the cost.”

Ignatius was elected as the Jesuits’ first general, or leader. He saw Jesuits start schools, lead retreats based on *The Spiritual Exercises*, and sail off to far away countries as missionaries. Today the Jesuits form the largest male religious order in the Catholic Church, and are present in almost every country in the world. The *Spiritual Exercises* that Ignatius wrote so many years ago remain popular today as a way to grow closer to Christ.

Saint Edith Stein



Born: October 12, 1891
Died: August 9, 1942
Feast Day: August 9

Edith was born in Breslau, Germany, the youngest of eleven children in a practicing Jewish family. In 1921, when she was thirty years old, Edith read the life story of Saint Teresa of Ávila. She finished the book in one night. She believed she had found the truth. She decided to become a Catholic. She was baptized in 1922. She later became a Carmelite sister and took the name Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She continued to study, teach, and write.

Meanwhile, the Nazis were coming into power in Germany. They were persecuting Jews. When it was no longer safe for Edith to stay in Germany, the Carmelite community moved her to Holland. The Nazis’ power continued to grow, and Edith was captured with her sister, Rosa. They were taken to a prison camp and killed a week later. Before Edith died, she tried to comfort the people with her, especially the children.

“If anyone comes to me, I want to lead them to Him.”

Edith is an example of courage in times of great difficulty and dedication to the truth found in Christ. She helped and cared for those around her. She was willing to die for and with the Jewish people. At the time of her arrest, she told her sister, Rosa, “Come, let us go for our people.”

FAMILY PRAYERS

SIGN OF THE CROSS

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



MORNING OFFERING

My God, I offer you today
all that I think and do and say,
uniting it with what was done
on earth, by Jesus Christ,
your Son.

GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts
which we are about to receive
from your goodness.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

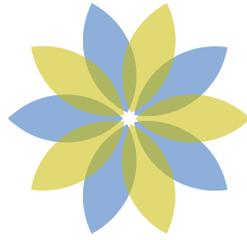


GRACE AFTER MEALS

We give you thanks, almighty God,
for these and all your gifts
which we have received through
Christ our Lord.
Amen

EVENING PRAYER

Dear God, before I sleep
I want to thank you for this day
so full of your kindness
and your joy.
I close my eyes to rest
safe in your loving care.



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Three Ideas for Practicing Gratitude at Home

Deacon Doctor Matt Halbach

- 1.** As a parent, do you ever notice during those peak moments of busyness, you tend to forget the great blessing your family is? No judgment here! I struggle with this a lot. To practice gratitude in those moments—because if I wait until later to reflect and pray about it, I will forget—I tell everyone to stop where they are and come together. It's family huddle time. Focus on the gift that each person is. Do not let this moment become a time to air grievances. Ask everyone to say one thing they like about each family member. (They can pass if they can't think of anything right away.) After everyone's had a turn, thank God for the gift of your family. This can be as simple as everyone saying together: "Thank you, God, for our family." But be creative!
- 2.** When you notice a family member expressing gratitude for something they have, remind him or her to thank God, too. Better yet, mention that you would like to thank God, too. Praying together, even if it is short and sweet, is very formative.
- 3.** Encourage your family to take time to list the people and things that they count as blessings. You can do this vocally or write them down and share them later. For shy family members, tell them to write their blessings down and keep them in a place that they will remember to use later for prayer. You can also encourage your family members to bring their lists to Mass on Sunday and privately thank God for each of their blessings.

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