Welcome to the Year of Family Prayer Bulletin.

Last year in November, the Diocese launched the Year of Family Prayer. We want to encourage families to pray together at home so that their faith in Jesus Christ may be deepened as they come to know the loving kindness of God.

Prayer Cards—We’ve just had another batch of cards printed for you to give out to families in your school and parish network, to new parents, for families celebrating Sacraments of Initiation, for grandparents and kindergarten children. Parent—teacher interviews and reports are coming up in June so you might take the opportunity to hand out some there as well. Another good idea is to hand out prayer cards to any visitors to your parish Masses. Your parish or school reception desk is a great place to display the prayer cards.

Prayer DVD—Prayer DVD – The Year of Family Prayer DVD is just about ready. There is still some editing to be done. It features short video clips of parents, families, grandparents, young adults and students chatting about their experiences of prayer and praying with their families.

Prayer Place Mats—We’re in the process of re-designing a new set of Prayer Place Mats. We have just about reached the end of our current stock of place mats and it’s time for a fresh new look and some new prayers.

Family Prayer Book – The Diocesan team has been busy collating prayers for an attractive Family Prayer book. The design and formatting are being undertaken at present. The prayers are suitable for all ages. Stay tuned for updates!

What’s Happening at Your Place?

In my travels around the Diocese I have heard about lots of wonderful activities that parishes have held to promote the Year of Family Prayer. There are many simple, yet effective, prayer ideas that families can do at home.

Whilst the Diocese provides prayer resources, it will be the parish and school communities themselves who know best how to reach out to the families in their local area.

Inside this newsletter, you can read about the way in which St Agatha’s Parish in Cranbourne is promoting family prayer.

What’s happening in your homes, parishes or schools? We’d love you to share your ideas, events and photos with us.

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‘We cannot think of a Church without joy. This is the joy of the Church: announcing to all the name of Jesus.’

Pope Francis, 12th December 2013
St Agatha’s Parish Launches Year of Family Prayer

St Agatha’s parish in Cranbourne is excited about the Year of Family Prayer currently underway in the Diocese of Sale.

It was formally launched in our parish on February 9th to coincide with St Agatha’s Feast Day on February 5th. The day included a multi-cultural lunch attended by several hundred people; nationalities represented included Samoa, The Philippines, Sierra Leone, Italy, the Netherlands, Nigeria, India, Sri Lanka, England and many others.

The celebration highlighted the wonderfully rich mosaic of family life that makes up our Catholic Community. At this celebration we also included a focus on the young people of our parish and the call to mission, with testimonies from one person who went on mission to Papua New Guinea; another who attended WYD in Rio de Janeiro, as well as another who committed to serving for more than twelve months with Hearts Home in India (an inter-na­tional Catholic non-profit organisation founded in 1990 to foster and spread a cul-ture of com­pas­sion which has 41 centres in 22 countries).

We are very conscious of the importance of linking prayer, mission and evangelisation: of bringing the Good News to all, especially our families and our young people.

As part of the ongoing focus on Family Prayer, at each weekend Mass we:

- incorporate a photo of a parish family praying together on our welcome and closing screens to encourage others to do the same in their own homes.
- pray together the Diocesan Prayer for Families.

The Prayer Cards are available for all those who attend our weekend Masses and they have also been sent to every family with children at all of our parish primary schools.

The parish is also planning a few other activities / events throughout the year to encourage family prayer:

- the production of a St Agatha’s Family Prayer Book with photos of families at prayer as well as favourite prayers that are used in the home;
- the arrangement of family reconciliation times with the provision of children’s ministry to encourage parents to attend the sacrament of reconciliation more regularly;
- Masses to pray especially for the vocation of marriage as well as Masses to pray especially for expectant mothers.

We look forward to helping our families grow in their relationship with the Lord Jesus and with each other.

John Duiker, Pastoral Associate,
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Great Books for Family Sharing


**The Bible for Young Children.** Marie Hélène Delval. Publisher: Eerdmans Books. This selection of Bible stories, retold in simple language for young readers, will introduce children to the Bible’s most important figure and their stories. Also available by the same author: *Images of God for Young Children*

**Issi’s Baptism.** Paul Clark. A different take on the meaning of baptism seen through the eyes of two family cars. When Luxurious Lucy brings someone to church for a baptism, Impossible Issi laughs at the idea. Read about what happens and how Issi begins to understand what Baptism means.

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Short Video Clips

**Short Videos on Family Prayer and Faith**

- How to Pray at Home [http://vimeo.com/92507410](http://vimeo.com/92507410)
- How to Have Caring Conversations at Home [http://vimeo.com/92500107](http://vimeo.com/92500107)
- How to Learn About the Bible at Home [http://vimeo.com/92497848](http://vimeo.com/92497848)

You can use these in a number of ways: at Sacrament Preparation meetings, at school: for parent gatherings and school assemblies, before Sunday Mass, at Prayer and Scripture groups.

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Apps for Your Mobile Device

There are lots of apps on prayer, Scripture and other aspects of faith. Here are some that you may wish to download. Some are free whilst others can be purchased for a small cost.

**iMass Explained—by Pauline Books & Media($1.29)** The prayers and responses of the Mass. Press on the coloured text and a small dialogue box with simple explanation of the phrase will appear. There are also reflections which can be used by adults.

**365 Prayers for Kids – A Daily Illustrated Prayer for your Family and School with Kids under 7.** By Barcelona Media (for iPhone and iPad) FREE. 365 simple prayers to help your children cultivate the habit of prayer. An easy way to talk about Jesus and God with your children.

**The Activity Bible of Kids over 7 – Bible Stories, Puzzles, Quiz etc.** By Barcelona Media (for iPhone and iPad) FREE. 42 bible stories with associated activities to help children learn more about the bible and its characters.
Prayer Ideas at Home

Barbara Bird, Librarian at St Joseph’s Primary School in Warragul, has offered some suggestions for simple prayer ideas that you can try at home with your family.

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

Trace the Sign of the Cross on:
The ears- that I might listen to God's voice and hear God's Word.
The eyes- that I may see God in everything.
The lips- that I may speak of God to others.
The heart- that I remember that I am loved by God.
The hands- that I may do good deeds throughout the day.
The feet- that I will follow Jesus and walk his ways.

Trace the Sign of the Cross on your child’s forehead at bedtime and finish with a blessing:
May God bless you and keep you safe. Amen.

Prayer Prompts-
As you go through your house say a prayer for the people in your family.
Pray for the people that send you an email or text.

Make Your Own Prayer
1. • Write a name for God.
   • Write something good about God.
   • Write something for which you want to thank God.
   • Amen.

2. • Write a name for God.
   • An action God does.
   • Something you want for our world
   • Ask God for help about your wish.
   • Amen.

3. • Write your favourite name for God
   • The best thing about your family
   • Something you want for your family
   • Ask God for help about your wish.
   • Amen.
O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful, look favourably on your servant Francis, whom you have set at the head of your Church as her shepherd; Grant, we pray, that by word and example he may be of service to those over whom he presides so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care, he may come to everlasting life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

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Prayer at Mealtimes

Here are some simple prayers which you can use at the family table.

1. Bless us, O Lord and these your gifts Which of your goodness, we receive through Christ our Lord, Amen.

2. Bless our family and friends. Bless our food. Come, O Lord and sit with us.

3. For all we eat, and all we wear, For daily bread and nightly care, We thank you, Father.

4. May God bless us and keep us, May God look on us with love, And may God bless the food that we are about to eat. Amen.

5. Loving God, we pray for those who are in lands where there is not enough food. We pray for children who never have enough to eat. Help us to be generous, help us to share. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen

6. For this food, For all things, For one another, We thank you, generous Lord. Amen.

7. For the food we have been given, we thank you, generous God. For the farmers, workers and cooks, we thank you, generous God. Help us to be generous in sharing our food with those who do not have enough food to eat. Amen.

8. Father in heaven, kind and good, We thank you for our daily food. We thank you for your love and care. Be with us now and hear our prayer. Amen.

Prayers 2–8: By Diocesan Pastoral Plan Resource Team.
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Pope Francis and his teaching

Pope Francis has written a beautiful pastoral letter Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel). It is his first Apostolic Exhortation and in it, he shares the joy of the Gospel and his vision of the New Evangelisation.

Read Pope Francis’ The Joy of the Gospel.
Read online as a Flip book http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/
or download the document http://www.xt3.com/library/view.php?id=15402

Read a couple of summaries of The Joy of the Gospel
1. From Focus http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/evangelii-gaudium-summary-pope-francis.html

Follow Pope Francis on Twitter @Pontifex
Grandparenting from the Inside

David M Thomas shares his experience of the gift of being a grandparent

There is no simple way to identify grandparents. Some are old and some are not. Some are fragile while some are sprite and energetic. Some are economically secure and others struggle. Some are active and dedicated Christians, some reside in the camp of agnostics and atheists. No one-size fits all. But there is one thing, I believe, that often unites all grandparents: the initial feeling of holding one's new grandchild, and that's what I want to focus on here. I add that while the feeling is fleeting, like most feelings, it makes an indelible mark on our memories and forms the foundation of a lifelong love affair between grandparent and child.

Let's reflect on three aspects of that feeling. I will speak personally here but I think my reaction is fairly commonplace. This feeling is also experienced in the birth (or adoption) of one's own, but there's something different with grandchildren. I think it has to do with distance. If I hold an object too close, it becomes blurry and unfocused. Grandchildren are distanced just right for a clearer view. First, when I hold my new grandchild, I feel like I am touching my own life extending into the distant future. I am not just a past or a present, but very tangibly, a blessed future. I dwell in a place where time stretches out to what seems an infinite horizon. As H. G. Wells put it so well, "The shape of things to come." My life is not just my own but it sits in something far greater and far more significant in the mystery of time. My grandchildren escort me ahead.

Second, because grandchildren come not from my own activity, they can be seen more fully as the gift they are. Life is always a gift from God. But as I grow older, I appreciate this more. This gifted aspect of life pours out of the tiny bodies of grandchildren into the hands and hearts of grandparents.

Finally, grandparent love is often very altruistic, benevolent, and caring. We can relate to the new life in our arms with a genuine freedom from the traps of self-interest, over-protectionism, or a need to control the child. In other words, grandparents may have more of a capacity to freely love grandchildren than even parents. A sign of this is when we truly play with them. They feel the freedom to be just themselves and so do we, a true embodiment of God's love for all of us. In a sense, grandparents become sacraments of God's abiding, deeply loving presence.

From Vibrant Faith@ Home

http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org/articles/articles-grand-parenting/item/grandparenting-from-the-inside

Prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.

St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)
Giving the Year of Family Prayer a Big Rap

Written by Alice Youlden for the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Week 2014. Alice is a Religious Education Officer (Primary Schools), at the Catholic Education Office Warragul.

http://www2.ceosale.catholic.edu.au/

Now this is the Year of Family Prayer, Praying to God shows we want to share Our lives, our loves ‘cause it gives us a lift, It’s great; it’s good it is such a gift.

It’s time (woo hoo) to pray (too right) with all of your family today (or tonight).

The Holy Family Icon shows a group of three, Mary and Joseph with Jesus on their knee. They are set in a circle showing endless love, With haloes and robes and important stuff.

Our heart it longs for the Great Almighty, It’s the way we’re created to be friends all righty. So it’s time to take stock to pray with your bro’, ‘Cause a friendship with God will help you all grow.

It’s time (woo hoo) to pray (too right) with all of your family today (or tonight).

You can pray on your knees, you can pray in your bed, You can pray in the garden or in the bike shed. The place doesn’t matter it’s the action that counts, Do I see you have a frown or a few little doubts?

Our God is great and he doesn’t give a hoot, If you pray standing up or in a car boot. So gather up the family, every shape and size, And pray to God as a daily exercise.

It’s time (woo hoo) to pray (too right) with all of your family today (or tonight).

You can pray with your dad, you can pray with your mum, You can pray with your sis’ or your gran if she’s glum. Invite your aunt and your uncle too, All of your family or just some will do.
Family Prayer Rap (cont.)

It’s **not** so hard and it **doesn't** take much time,  
To **pray** as a family isn’t **such** a crime.  
You can **say** a prayer together or a **separate** special word,  
As **long** as you do it, it is **not** absurd.

It’s **time** (woo hoo) to **pray** (too right)  
with **all** of your family **today** (or tonight).

We’ve been **praying** in our Church, it’s **part** of our tradition,  
‘Cause **Jesus** showed how we **need** it for our mission.  
We **need** to have a friendship with our **God** of love,  
To **help** us do good things, to give the **bad** a shove.

With our **family** by our side we can **pray** for our needs,  
Or say **thank** you to our God for **dogs** of all breeds.  
We can **sing** a song together or **even** meditate,  
Whatever we do, God will **think** it great.

It’s **time** (woo hoo) to **pray** (too right)  
with **all** of your family **today** (or tonight).

So **listen** to God and give **God** a chance,  
**God** is your friend and won’t **lead** you on a dance.  
**Listen** to God with an **open** mind,  
And **then** you’ll show love to **all** humankind.

It’s **time** (woo hoo) to **pray** (too right)  
with **all** of your family **today** (or tonight).

*N.B. the words in bold may help you with the beat.*
Prayer for Families

Loving God,
We thank you for the gift of families.
We ask your blessing on all families today and always.
Be with us in our daily life together.
Be our guide in times of challenge.
Be our strength in times of difficulty.
Be our joy in times of delight.
Help our families to grow stronger in your love
and show us how to love one another
as you have loved us.
May we welcome Jesus as the unseen guest in our home.
May we be His voice and hands,
respecting and caring for those we meet.
May we look to the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
as we strive to be the best family that we can be.

Most Holy Family of Nazareth, pray for us. Amen.