

A suggestion for a family gathering, prayer time and discussion.

Setting the scene for the pace of liturgy/gathering

Before the liturgy you could invite children and parents alike to write a letter or poem of thanks to their parent or parents for all the years of care and nurturing they have been given. These could be put into a basket and brought up on the prayer space along during the service.

Symbols of family should be presented before service or liturgy e.g. knife, fork and plate symbolising that family is a place of nourishment.

Sticking plasters, bandages, etc – a family is a place of care and support.

Seeds and flowers reminding us that family is a place where we grow, bible to remind that Jesus' story of family is a story of love.

Parents or members of the family could also be invited to take part in the liturgy.



OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray. God our Father, we thank you for your great love; we thank you for our families. Open our hearts to listen to your word and to praise you with one voice. We make this prayer to you in Jesus' name. Amen

*Faith
Family
Love*

Today we come together as a community of faith to celebrate family life and to pray for all those welcome. The family is where we experience love and care, where we belong, where we learn to share and treat others with respect. Our families come in all shapes and sizes. The most important part of being family is the love and care we give to one another. God our Father loves us through the people we call family.

Today we share our hopes and dreams for our own families and the future of families throughout the world.

Gathering Candle Ritual:

On the prayer space there are four unlit candles. Place the Christ Candle candle in a prominent place as the four candles will be lit from this one.

R1: We welcome all who have come to share in this special prayer assembly with us. We gather to say thanks to God. We offer you the light of hope. Carry this light of hope in your heart and share God's love in everything you say and do.

R2: We offer you the light of love. Carry this light of love with you wherever you go and remember that there will always be a light burning for you at home.

R3: We offer you the light of joy. Carry this light of joy out into the world; through our relationships with family and friends, in our work and play and in our service to others.

R4: We offer you the light of faith. Carry this light of faith out into the world and remember to be part of the Christian community and be a light for all the world.

OR

We Gather: Lighting the Candle

Let's start our service today with a reminder

Wherever we come together,

God's is with us.

God's is here.

We come together to say sorry

We come together to say Thank you

We come together to ask for God's help

We come together to hear God's story

We come together to celebrate God's love.

Wherever we come together,

God's is with us.

God's is here.

And the candle that we have just lit reminds us that Jesus the light of the world is here.

We Say Sorry: Stone Confession

The response after each line is '**We are sorry**'

God loves us and forgives us when we are sorry for wrong things we have done.

For times this week when we have made others sad.

We are sorry.

For times this week when we have not helped others

We are sorry.

For the times we are small minded and not big hearted

We are sorry.

For the times we judge rich and poor people unfairly

We are sorry

For times we don't go out of our way to encounter you in new ways that will change and reshape us

We are sorry

Invite everyone to come up and place their stone into vase of water as a symbol of leaving these things with God and that he gives us a new clean start today.

Afterwards...

As we leave these things behind, may God forgive us , inspire us and strengthen us.

Amen

We Go Out

Wherever we are, whatever we do,

God is with us.

God is here.

May God bless us.

May we know that we are loved

May we know that we are cared for.

May we know God's hope.

God is with us,

giving us the power to do what needs to be done.

Amen

We bring our family:

REFLECTION

We are a family of faith, A family of love and compassion.

When we act with kindness, God's love shines in us.

When we share our time and talents, God's love shines in us.

When we let others play with us, God's love shines in us.

When we say good things about people, God's love shines in us.

When we stand up for one another, God's love shines in us.

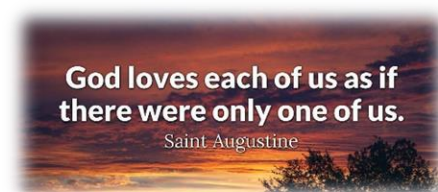
When we are kind to our brothers and sisters, God's love shines in us.

When we help our parents around the house, God's love shines in us.

When we set a good example for our brothers and sisters, God's love shines in us.

When we show respect to our parents and children, God's love shines in us.

When we love, we shine God's love to others!



Penitential Reflection:

Leader: Jesus said, 'If you are about to come before God to pray, and then remember that you have quarrelled with someone, first go away, settle your argument and make your peace with them.' (Mt 5:23–6) so we come before our loving Father aware of our need to say sorry...

If we have hurt anyone by our words or action. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

If we have ignored someone and made him or her feel unloved. Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

If we have been unforgiving and filled with anger. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

God of family, God of love, forgive us for those times when we have forgotten how much we are loved by you, and how important a part we, as children, play in in our families. Forgive us for the times we take our families for granted.

Amen.

Scripture Reading:

St Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:5-9; 11 - Our Joy is in God

We don't tell people about ourselves. But we tell people that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we tell them that we are your servants for Jesus. God once said, "Let light shine out of the darkness!" And this is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts to let us know that his own divine greatness is seen in the face of Christ. We have this treasure

from God, but we are only like clay jars that hold the treasure. This is to show that the amazing power we have is from God, not from us. We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We often don't know what to do, but we don't give up. We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed. We are alive,... for Christ is alive in us.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Refection

Begin after the reflection asking people to write down the names that come to mind when you ask the question 'Who is my family?' and ask them to place them in the prayer space along with any letters or poems of thanks to their parent or parents that they brought –

Then start a discussion around this – Ask people who they mentioned and why? Who did they leave out? – Ask them what it was like to write the letter or poem - ask the parents what it is like to get a letter or poem of thanks –

Maybe start a discussion in the current context – "What support do families want/need from our family of faith?" – Is there a few simple things/supports that we could put in place to support families in growing in faith?

A suggestion to end the reflection

A prayer for all mean parents

(You could have a number of readers here)

Dear God,

As a young child, I had the meanest parents in the whole world. They were really mean. When other kids ate lollies for breakfast, they made me eat cornflakes, or eggs and toast. When others had soft drink and lollies for lunch, I had to eat a vegemite or ham and cheese sandwich.

They insisted on knowing where we were going at all times. You would have thought we were a chain gang! They insisted they had to know who our friends were and what we were doing. Mum insisted that if we said we would be gone for an hour, we'd be gone for an hour, or else!! She was really mean!

I am ashamed to admit but Mum actually had the nerve to break the child labour laws. She made us work! We had to wash all the dishes, make our beds, learn to cook and all sorts of cruel things. I think she used to lie awake at night thinking up means things to do.

Our parents always insisted on us telling the truth; the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

By the time we were teenagers, they became much wiser, and our lives became even more unbearable. None of this tooting the horn of the car for us to come running; they embarrassed us immensely by making our dates and friends come to the door for us. I forgot to mention ... while my friends were dating at the mature age of 12 or 13, our old fashioned parents refused to let me date until I was older!

My parents were a complete failure as parents. None of us has ever been arrested, fired from our jobs or had our character questioned and, whom we do have to blame for the terrible way we've turned out ...You're right...God Bless them. Amen

Prayers of Intercession:

Leader: With love in our hearts, let us unite as one family to ask God for all our needs.

1. Loving God, the mistakes we make, both in and outside the home, can cause hurt to others. We ask that we become more aware of those mistakes, more open to learning from them so that we can avoid repeating them. Help us to see when we need to ask you and others for forgiveness. Let us trust that you are always offering us a chance to start again. Lord Hear Us. **Lord Graciously Hear Us.**

2. Loving God, it is so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and to miss that those around us need support. Help us to be sensitive to the help they need, and to offer it in the way that it is needed and without fuss. Lord Hear Us. ***Lord Graciously Hear Us.***
3. Loving God, help us to recognise and to share the gift of your love in small and large acts of kindness and care. May we be particularly sensitive to the needs of families and to those who are estranged from their families. Lord Hear Us. ***Lord Graciously Hear Us.***
4. Lord we pray for people who are driven from their homes, their families and their lands. May they find peace in their hearts and hope for the future. Lord Hear Us. ***Lord Graciously Hear Us.***
5. Lord, we pray for all the people who are special to us who have died. May we take comfort and hope in knowing that everyone who dies in Christ will rise to new life and be with him forever. Bless them and bless us until we are all together again. Lord Hear Us. ***Lord Graciously Hear Us.***

Leader: Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening, in the silence of our hearts let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

A few moments of silence.

And now, let us turn to God the Father with love and trust, using the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of love that you have poured out on us in Jesus, your Son. Help us to grow each day as his followers, with great love for one another, and great love for our families. May our growing love and kindness be a sign of your love at work in our lives. We make this prayer to you in Jesus' name. And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ***Amen***

***God, our Father, We are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son,
One family, in the Spirit of your love. Bless us with the joy of love.
Make us patient and kind, gentle and generous, welcoming to those in need.
Help us to live your forgiveness and peace.
Protect all families with your loving care, especially those for whom we now pray:***

[We pause and remember family members and others by name].

Loving God, in Jesus you call all Christian families, homes & communities to be signs of living faith, to sow seeds of your true love and mercy. By the light of the Holy Spirit, this Pentecost lead us to be thankful for the gift of faith, and by that gift may we grow in our relationship with Jesus, your Son. May we be confident witnesses to Christian hope, peace, love and joy to all we meet. Help us to grow each day as His followers, with great love for one another, and great love for our families. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Our Family
 Is a circle of strength;
 Founded on Faith, Joined in Love
 Kept by God, Together
forever