

**Saint Elizabeth Roman Catholic Church**  
**Upper Uwchlan Township, PA**  
**2014 FORTY HOURS DEVOTIONS: TMM HOMILIES**

**Tuesday Evening:** *The Human family - Living as a Domestic Church*

*Introduction:* Sunday evening, we began our three-part reflection on the *theme of family* with a consideration of the Holy Family as a model for family life. Yesterday we explored our baptismal identity as members of the Church, a family of faith on a mission of love. Tonight we conclude our *Forty Hours Devotions* with some reflections upon the *Human Family- Living as a Domestic Church*.

At the beginning of the Level II Pre-Jordan program, the presenting team invites the parent participants to reflect upon the Church's vision of marriage and family life as a genuine vocation, a calling from God to live out one's commitment to Christ in the pattern of relationships shared between spouses, between parents and children, and among brothers and sisters. This vocation is distinct from, yet equal to the vocations of priests, deacons and religious members of the Church.

The term ***domestic church*** is used to express this dynamic of relationships within the Christian family. The Christian home is a "little church" where God dwells in the hearts of all who live in the home. The Church reaffirms the presence and supportive grace of God at work within the family. Because parents have a critical impact as teachers and role models for their children, parents are envisioned as "pastors of their own domestic church." The same faith, values and personal strengths one might seek in the local pastor (present company excluded, of course), are rightly expected of parents, too!

In their role as "pastors," parents are responsible to integrate their beliefs and values into the everyday life of the family and to guide their children in learning how to recognize God in the midst of everyday life. All the members of the domestic church are called to respond to one another with love, patience, honesty, perseverance, integrity, faithfulness and generosity.

In tonight's reading from the *Letter to the Romans*, Saint Paul describes the lifestyle of the domestic church of the family: "Let your love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."

Again in his *Letter to the Philippians*, Saint Paul challenges all Christian families to a Christ-like lifestyle: “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but each one attending to the interests of the other.”

In sum, the *domestic church of the family* is the primary place where the values and relationships of the Holy Family and the mission of the family of faith that is the Church are lived out in concrete, everyday circumstances. This is the vocation of marriage and family life!

Those of you of a certain age may recall the great Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team of 1979, with its distinctive theme song: “*We are Family*.” Can you hear Sister Sledge singing: “we are family; my brothers and my sisters and me...?” When people ask about my family, I naturally tend to respond: “There are seven of us—five girls and two boys”. Or as my father was sometimes heard to say: “I have five daughters and two children!” In describing your family, you might also identify grandparents, in-laws and out-laws, and an extended family of aunts, uncles and cousins. But this is not the whole story!

In reality, the family to which we belong includes many more than one’s immediate blood relatives, and many more than the 1.2 billion Christian believers in the Universal Church. In the truest sense of all, we belong to a human family that includes everyone who shares life on planet earth with us.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution the Church in the Modern World, we read: “It is the will of God the Father that we should recognize Christ our brother in the persons of all men and love them with an effective love, in word and deed, thus bearing witness to the truth; and it is his will that we should share with them the mystery of his heavenly love” (CS, #93). So all of us are charged with a responsibility to serve the human family which has been called to become in Christ Jesus the family of the children of God” (GC #92).

In its inspiring opening words, *Gaudium et Spes* proclaims: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts... That is why Christians cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history” (GS, #1).

Yes, tonight we might rightly sing: “We are family- all my brothers and my sisters and me!” As we sit quietly before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I encourage you to reflect upon both the *domestic church* of your own household and the *entire human family* for which each of us shares responsibility for the well-being of all our brothers and sisters. Sustained by the Holy Eucharist, may we recognize more clearly and care more dearly for Christ in the least of God’s people, for whatsoever we do to them we do unto Christ Himself!