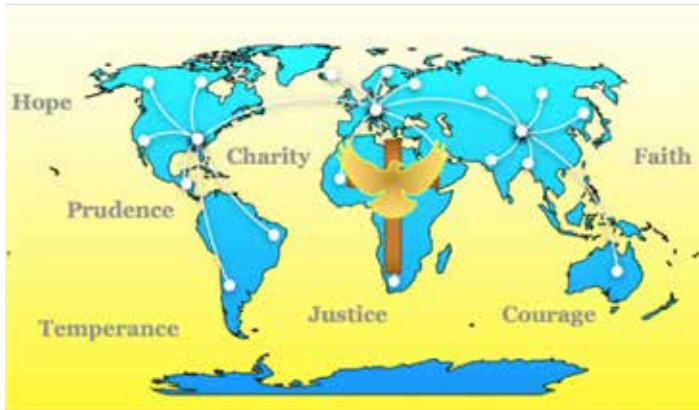


ENCOURAGING CATHOLICISM

Continuing the faith down the generations



I have been seeking to engage my wonderful family in spiritual matters for many years. We have 6 children, 15 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. My deepest wish is that we all meet in heaven, bathed in the love of Jesus Christ.

A sermon at a Walsingham Mass challenged me to consider what I have failed to do, as well as what I have done. Have I done enough to encourage our family to continue loving Jesus and practising our Catholic faith?

Our children were all baptised and educated by the Ursulines and Jesuits, and most of our grandchildren were baptised and attended Catholic primary schools. We went to Mass regularly with family, whenever they were willing.

Over the years, in common with many other Catholic families, we have noticed increasing apathy and a marked lapsing from the practice of our faith. This lapsing has been rampant across Catholic families, largely due to the temptations of the modern world, in particular the values of the 1960s sexual revolution underwritten by the pill, and proliferated by social and other media. God is felt to be less and less relevant!

I first raised this issue in confession at a Province 19 retreat at Notre Dame School, Cobham. I was advised to remain close friends with family members.

When I try to discuss religious issues with my family, they feel distinctly uncomfortable. Christianity is no longer taught as a way of life but is consigned in many schools to the silo of comparative religious studies. People often do not perceive a demonstrable need for harmony with God in their lives.

Some years ago, I engaged our family with my interest in the relationship between science and religion. The reaction was encouraging. Some grandchildren helped me to publish a booklet painting a picture of how the Holy Trinity reflects in quantum physics. The advances are highlighted in almost every aspect of scientific and social understanding that has developed since Galileo's telescopes and Janssen's and van Leeuwenhoek's microscopes. As a result, assisted by the latest super telescopes, microscopes and other systems, we can see up to near the edge of space, and down to the edge of matter. These discoveries should deepen our reverence for our creator God.

Basil

There is no other credible explanation for the intimate, open inter-operation of every particle in creation with all the others.

My wife, Tricia, and I are hugely proud of all our family, rejoicing in their generous love and achievements.

However, a small informal survey I have done of the level of their Mass attendance discloses a profoundly disturbing situation – between 80 and 90% of our children and grandchildren do not attend Mass. With some exceptions, this sad statistic applies widely, including in large, well established Catholic families. The parents, by and large, are faithful Mass attenders, but the younger generations are conspicuously absent.

What are the causes of this catastrophic decline in worship? What can be done to re-evangelise our nearest and dearest?

I have developed a grandfather's commentary on the *Our Father* as a means of opening up debate on religious issues. I put individual verses into spiritual frameworks, alongside modern scientific and social contexts, as an aid to prayer and understanding of the harmony that is gained

by our love for God.

My spiritual challenge as the father of our family is clear: I need to find a way of encouraging our family members to willingly embed themselves in a life of prayer, dedicated to the values that Jesus taught us.

As a key example, I have drawn a contrast between the 'good' internet, where our families can identify with Jesus and His values, loving God above all else and our neighbours as ourselves, and the 'bad' internet, where the talking snakes of modern marketing are promoting tsunamis of evil temptations and practices, which each one of us needs great spiritual strength to recognise and resist.

The *Our Father* pamphlet is designed to help us to achieve this.

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