

TRY PRAYER!

It Works!

Contest 2023

This year's theme, "**Open Wide the Doors of Your Home to Christ**" will help you and your family answer God's call to holiness by inviting Jesus and Mary into everything you do. Through family prayer, especially the Rosary, Mary will share her love for Jesus with your family and help you become a channel of His love and light in the world. Everyday life might seem ordinary, but God has an extraordinary mission for your family!



Family Rosary

HOLY CROSS
FAMILY MINISTRIES

FamilyRosary.org

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Open Wide the Doors of Your Home to Christ

Inspired by our founder, Venerable Patrick Peyton, the *Try Prayer! It Works!* Contest focuses on Father Peyton's message: "The family that prays together stays together." To strengthen family prayer in your home, we're sharing a family-faith experience that takes you and your family through a reflective, enriching journey.

Our goal is to bring the Church's teachings to life around the dinner table with discussion prompts, reflection questions, prayer ideas, and creativity. Together, welcome God and the Blessed Virgin Mary into your family life and let them inspire you in writing, drawing, filming, or painting.

Dear family, we encourage you to take time during or after dinner to complete these steps, contemplate the prompts, and finish in prayer together.

■ STEP 1: LIGHT A CANDLE

Begin by choosing someone to light a candle for the center of the table. Turn off any devices that might be distracting, such as cell phones, televisions, and computers. Enjoy a moment of silence with your family. Choose to focus on the presence of God among you. Once the room is settled, continue to the next step.

■ STEP 2: OPEN WITH PRAYER

Ask someone to open with a prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother. Use the prayer we provide below or create your own.

Dear Jesus, thank You for gathering us together. May Your Holy Spirit guide our conversation. We thank You especially for sharing Mary, Your Mother, with us so that she can be our Mother, too. Blessed Mother Mary, please pray that we may have the grace to open wide the doors of our home to Jesus, who wishes to make our family holy by His presence.

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

■ STEP 3: FAMILY REFLECTION

Once you've finished the opening prayer, choose a member of your family to read the following reflection on family life:

It's incredible that Jesus, the Son of God, chose to be born in a stable among the hills of Bethlehem. He could have been born in a king's palace, but He chose a poor family instead. What was important to Jesus was not wealth or comfort, but the warm, loving family that surrounded Him.

By choosing to be born into the family of Mary and Joseph, Jesus taught us that families have a very special place in the Heart of God. God created Adam and Eve as the first human family, and He has created every human being since then to be part of a family—even if no two families look the same.

Why does God care so much about families? Saint John Paul II, who was pope only a few years ago, told us that the family has a mission in God's plan. Superheroes and astronauts have missions, and families do, too! But the mission of the family, the pope said, can be described in a single word: "love."*

This mission is amazing! Why? In the Bible, Saint John, one of Jesus' closest friends, wrote that God is love (1 John 4:8). If God is love, and the family's mission is also love, then the family is meant to be

like God and to reveal who God is to the world. God creates each family for this special purpose.

But how can families fulfill their mission? By welcoming Jesus into everything they do. As Saint John Paul II often said: "Open wide the doors to Christ!"

If Jesus becomes part of our family, He will teach us to love as He loves. Then, the rest of the world will surely notice! This was also part of the mission that God intended for the family. He wanted other people to see fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters who had met Him in prayer, the sacraments, and in everyday family life. God knew that when the whole world saw how much these families loved each other, everyone would discover deep in their hearts that Saint John's words were true: God is Love.

In the discussion questions below, we'll explore the many ways we can open the doors of our homes and our hearts to Jesus.

■ STEP 4: FAMILY DISCUSSION

1. Consider how much God loves us and the many ways He shows us His love. Think about how God created us and how Jesus died for us on the cross. How can our family follow God's example in the way that we treat each other?
2. In family life, we discover that God desires to be a Father and close friend to each of us. As in other relationships, we have to talk to God if our friendship with Him is going to become stronger. Prayer is a conversation with God that makes this possible. Do we take time to pray together as a family? How can we help each other make prayer a more central part of our life together?
3. Fathers and mothers play very important roles in revealing God's love for each other and for their children. They do this especially by loving in difficult times as well as in good ones. What does this teach us about God's love? (Hint: Does God love us in good times? Does He love us in difficult times, even when we make mistakes or sin?)
4. The sacraments are incredible ways that God draws close to us to teach us who He is. Does our family receive the sacraments—especially

the Holy Eucharist and Confession—regularly? How can we allow the sacraments to transform our family more fully? (Hint: Do we remember that when we've received the Eucharist, we bring Jesus home with us? Do we reconcile with each other in addition to asking God's forgiveness in Confession?)

5. Consider the example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. What are some of the ways they fulfilled God's mission for the family?

■ STEP 5: GET CREATIVE

Decide as a family what your *Try Prayer! It Works!* Contest entry will look like. For example:

- a. Choose an ordinary family activity—such as working, talking, playing, or praying together—and write about how you can invite Jesus and Mary to be part of that activity.
- b. Interview a grandparent or someone else in your family about how faith and friendship with God got your family through a difficult time.
- c. Draw or paint a picture showing how your family becomes holy by welcoming Jesus into the activities you do each day.
- d. Create a short video of your family talking about the importance of prayer and the sacraments in family life.

Students in grades K-3 may select one of the pictures of Mary and color, paint, or decorate it. You may download the pages at FamilyRosary.org/TryPrayer. You are welcome to color/paint/decorate all of the pages, but only a single page will be accepted for the contest.

We encourage you and your family to brainstorm together as you design your project. Refer to the Contest Rules & Guidelines or visit FamilyRosary.org/TryPrayer for more information.

■ STEP 6: CLOSE WITH PRAYER

O Jesus, You are the Son of God. In being born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, You became part of a human family. You showed us that family life is made holy by Your presence and You invited us into the family of God.

Today, our family commits to opening wide our doors to You. We ask for the courage to seek Your forgiveness and healing in the Sacrament of Confession. We ask for a love of Your presence in the Holy Eucharist. Finally, we ask that the grace we receive in these sacraments might strengthen our love for each other and for everyone we meet.

Mother Mary, we entrust our family to your care. In becoming Jesus' Mother, you became our Mother, too. We ask you, therefore, to guide our family along the path of holiness, so that we might enjoy eternal life with God in Heaven. Amen.

CONTINUE THE JOURNEY:

If you are looking for other activities to engage your family, visit **FamilyRosary.org** for family prayer resources.

*For further reading on Saint John Paul II's vision of the family's mission, see *Familiaris Consortio* 17.

Thank you for taking the time to pray with your family! We encourage your family to have similar daily conversations to strengthen your faith. As Father Patrick Peyton said, "The family that prays together stays together." For more reflections and meditations, visit our blog at **Blog.FamilyRosary.org**.

We look forward to receiving your contest submission! You're always in our prayers at the Father Peyton Center in North Easton, Massachusetts, USA.

Blessings to you and your family,

Father Fred Jenga, C.S.C.
President, Holy Cross Family Ministries

AWARDS:

Each first-place winning entry will be awarded \$100.00 USD, and each sponsoring institution of the first-place winners will receive \$100.00 USD.

