

If one member suffers, all suffer together;
if one member is honored, all rejoice together
(1 Cor 12:26)

As a family with Jesus in your midst, you are called to reconcile when you cause each other suffering. Coming together and being healed by that forgiveness is one of the most amazing graces you possess. The more you use this grace, the more you experience the presence and love of Christ in your family.

Focus on Family Relationships

Over the next few weeks, we will examine positive and negative points you might recognize as part of your family life. The negative points (in the right-hand columns) will be ways in which you are capable of weakening your family body; ways of causing suffering and alienation. The positive elements (in the left-hand columns) will be ways in which you strengthen your family body- ways of deepening your closeness and joy.

These lists can be used in various ways. You can keep it just as it is, or you can use it to make up your own list. However you use your list, be sure to keep a balance between the positive and negative points. If you use only the negative points, you might get the impression that you do not love your family very much. But that just is not true. The fact is that you are much more loving than unloving. If you find it easier to spot negative elements in your own conduct, this means that you are not as loving toward *yourself* as you could be.

As you examine these points, focus on your relationships within your family by writing (or thinking of) a family member's name. Be selective; zero in on the points that apply, and skip the rest.

Pray to the Holy Spirit for a spirit of love and forgiveness. Then, silently go down your list point by point. Go back over the positive points you noted. Thank God for the love you have been given because this is evidence of His loving presence in your own being. Go back over the negative points you noted. Ask for forgiveness. And ask for help to ask forgiveness of someone whose name you noted after one of the negative points.

Come together as a family, pray the our Father. Then, go to the person you are asking forgiveness of. Apologize and say, "Please forgive me." Give a sign of friendship-embrace, shake hands. Remember family forgiveness is not the Sacrament of Penance, and is not a substitute for it. The two go together beautifully!

Sharing *versus* Selfishness

- ___by being generous with my time.
- ___by volunteering to help out.
- ___by sharing my toys, clothes...
- ___by gladly doing it his/her way.
- ___by saying, "Let's do it together."
- ___by saying "Let's try it your way."
- ___by being stingy with my time..
- ___by avoiding a chance to help out.
- ___by being selfish with my toys...
- ___by insisting that it be done my way.
- ___by saying, "It's your job, your turn."
- ___by saying, "Don't do it that way."