



Supporting one another with tenderness and love

Daily Prayer

Prayer Intention: For single parents

God of love and tenderness, we pray for single parents, that you may be their guide, their protector, and their safe refuge.

Grant them the grace to provide for the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of their children.

In your loving mercy comfort all single parents in times of need and bring healing to their unique suffering.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Daily Activity for Families:

Single parents can often struggle with feeling isolated or marginalized. If you know someone who is a single parent in your community or church, consider extending yourself to them and their children. You can reach out to them to introduce yourself and get to know them. Other ideas could be dropping off a meal, offering babysitting for an hour, or inviting them over for dinner.

Daily Activity for the Parish:

In your parish community, is there an opportunity to establish a network of single parents and their children with others in similar situations? Monthly prayer events or online scripture studies can be a good way to bring single parents together with each other, as well as other families.

St. Margaret of Cortona

Saint Margaret of Cortona was a single mother to her son after his father was murdered. Saint Margaret transformed her life into one of purity, prayer, and penance. She devoted her life to working with the sick and the poor.

More information on Saint Margaret of Cortona, read here: bit.ly/StMargaretofCortona



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Today's prayer intention and family activity was developed in collaboration with Momentum, a ministry supporting Catholic single mothers. Visit Momentum's website here: www.momentummothers.org



Promoting mental wellness for every person

Daily Prayer

Prayer Intention: For those living with mental health challenges, including mental illnesses.

Loving Jesus, you walk with us along the valleys and peaks of life. Be near to those living with mental health challenges, including mental illnesses. May they hear the still, small voice of calm whisper through the silence, "You are loved. You are not alone."

Strengthen and sustain caregivers and others who accompany those living with mental health challenges, including mental illnesses. May the joy of your Resurrection offer lasting hope and healing, as we await the coming of your kingdom where you live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Daily Activity for Families:

As a family, take time to check in on your individual mental health and share it with each other while practicing active listening. If you were to describe how you are feeling as a colour, what would it be and why? Recognizing that it's okay not to be okay, are you experiencing a season of flourishing or of languishing? Can you care for your mental health together today? Perhaps go for a walk, have a kitchen dance party, make a visit to a Eucharistic chapel, bake your favourite muffins, or take a holy nap!

Daily Activity for the Parish:

In your parish community, is there an opportunity to organize an outreach program or event to promote the wellbeing of every person? Wellbeing is about supporting the mental, physical, and spiritual health of persons and families. What are some creative ways your parish community can promote wellbeing? Some examples could include a time of Eucharistic Adoration followed by a time of hospitality and fellowship. For an example ministry, see more information below about *Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries*.

St. Edith Stein

Many saints have documented experiences of languishing mental health. Others have written of living with severe mental illness. St. Edith Stein shares that she experienced a period of suicidal ideation in her young life. The saint, known today as an extraordinary philosopher, devout Carmelite nun, and courageous martyr, tells of her struggle when "life seemed unbearable." For St. Edith, her journey of recovery included drawing close to the Saints as she sought accompaniment in her time of despair. Her personal struggle later propelled her to walk alongside others experiencing mental health challenges. She desired to extend empathy, particularly to those facing stigma. St. Edith, pray for us.

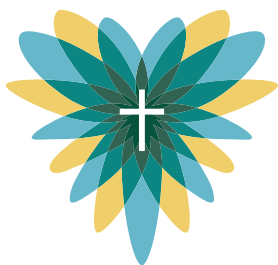
For more information on St. Edith Stein, read here:

www.bit.ly/StEdithStein



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Today's prayer intention and family activity was developed in collaboration with Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries, a ministry equipping the church to support mental health and wellbeing. Visit Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries here: www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org/catholics



Journeying with those living their marriage covenant

Daily Prayer

Prayer Intention:

For marriage accompaniment and enrichment

Heavenly Father,

I thank you for the gift of my spouse and for the gift of each one of our children.

You know our hearts and our needs.

You know we desire to live faithfully our promises to you and to each other.

We oftentimes find ourselves hurting each other and creating wounds in each other's heart that we never wanted to cause.

We recognize the gaps in our family caused by selfishness that have made us live distantly from you and each other.

We want to invite you to fill our hearts with your presence and make us a family united in you.

Inspired by the example of the Holy Family may our family always be a living gospel, giving witness to your love in our world.

Amen.

St. Joseph

St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is widely invoked as the intercessor for married couples and happy marriages. He is the Patron of the Universal Church and Patron Saint of Canada. He is also an intercessor for husbands, fathers, and workers, among many others. St. Joseph is a model for all spouses through his witness of love and dedication to his family during challenging times especially.



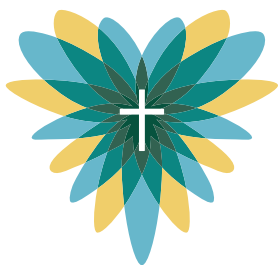
For more information on St. Joseph, patron of happy marriages, read here: www.bit.ly/StJosephMarriage



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Journeying with those living their marriage covenant

Daily Activity for the Parish:

In your parish community, is there an opportunity to connect with couples preparing for marriage with couples who have been married for a number of years?

What can the parish community facilitate to celebrate and recognize couples who have been married one year, or two years?

An example is to host a special Mass for couples celebrating one year of marriage alongside milestone anniversaries like 10, 25, or 35 years of marriage. Host a special reception following Mass!



Daily Activity for Families:

Daily Examen for couples:

GRACE Prayer Card

GRATITUDE – Begin by placing yourselves in the presence of God and thanking Him for the blessings of the day. Be specific.

REQUEST – Ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to see yourselves and your beloved as God sees you.

ACTIONS & ATTITUDES – Share how each of you have acted towards or against your chosen virtue today.

CHART YOUR COURSE – If you have found peace in your actions and attitudes, commit to staying on course. If you find that you have failed, commit to doing something differently tomorrow.

ENTREAT GOD – Ask for both God's grace to follow through joyfully on your plan, and for the gift of encouragement as you support your beloved along the way.

The Examen is a technique of prayer developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola which has been a part of the Church's rich prayer tradition for centuries. It allows individuals and couples the time to reflect on the events of the day and discern God's presence. This version with the GRACE acronym was developed by Fr. Joseph Koterski, SJ (1953-2021). It has been adapted to provide a formula for couples to work on their chosen virtues daily. This can be completed in 5-10 minutes, preferably at the end of the day.

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Today's prayer intention and family activity was developed in collaboration with Witness to Love, a Catholic marriage mentoring and preparation program. Visit Witness to Love's website here: www.witnesstolove.org



Opening creative spaces in our faith communities for persons with disabilities

Daily Prayer

Prayer Intention:
For persons with disabilities and their families

Father in heaven,
you created us in your divine image.

May every person living with a disability experience true belonging in a loving community.

Guide us to pursue our call to work for justice and fullness of life for all persons with disabilities.

Graciously help us to open new and creative spaces to invite all persons to participate meaningfully in parish and community life.

Help us to contribute to the Church and, together, be a sign of the unity of the Body of Christ.

Amen.

St. Margaret of Castello

St. Margaret of Castello was born to a wealthy family in Florence, Italy in 1287. She had several congenital disabilities including blindness and curvature of the spine and never grew beyond 4 feet tall. Her parents, ashamed of her disabilities, locked her away as a very young child in a room by the family chapel. They later brought her to a Franciscan Shrine, expecting miraculous healing but abandoned her when that was not forthcoming. She was eventually taken in by nuns and later adopted and went on to live a life of prayer, penance and service to God. Throughout her life, she accepted her physical challenges without complaint, serving as a witness of love, perseverance and faith to others. She died at 33 years of age and was canonized by Pope Francis in 2021.



For more information on St. Margaret of Castello, read here: www.bit.ly/StMargaretCastello



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Opening creative spaces in our faith communities for persons with disabilities

Daily Activity for the Parish:

In your parish community, can you identify ways to open creative spaces for persons with disabilities to foster a sense of belonging for everyone? For some practical ideas in your parish, explore "[Beyond the Ramp: A Parish Guide to Welcoming Persons with Disabilities](#)", written by Connie Price.

Additional Resources:

1. David Rizzo, [Faith, Family and Children with Special Needs](#)
2. Megan Gannon, [Special Saints for Special People: Stories of Saints with Disabilities](#)
3. For Catechists, teachers, parents, families:
Loyola Press Resources for Special Needs Ministry: [Special Needs | Loyola Press](#)

Daily Activity for Families:

On 3 December 2022, in his message for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Pope Francis spoke about a "magisterium of fragility ... a charisma by which you—dear sisters and brothers with disabilities—can enrich the Church. Your presence 'may help transform the actual situations in which we live, making them more human and more welcoming. Without vulnerability, without limits, without obstacles to overcome, there would be no true humanity.'"

As a family, watch together the 4-minute video below. You will get to know a priest from Australia who was born legally blind and is a witness to a joyful faith lived within human fragility and limits.

"We" not "they," disability in the life of the Church
www.bit.ly/lamChurch

Discussion Questions for Families

What surprised you about Fr. Justin Glyn, SJ?

In your own life, do you live with certain limitations or vulnerabilities? How does your faith help you with these experiences?

After hearing Fr. Justin's story, do you have any ideas about how to open creative spaces to promote the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in your faith community?



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Accompanying those who are sick and dying

Daily Prayer

Prayer Intention:

For an increase of good palliative care and end-of-life care

Compassionate and healing God, We pray for all those who are sick and those nearing the end of this earthly life.

Draw near to them and extend your consoling presence. Bless them with family and friends to care for and accompany them, skilled caregivers to ease their suffering and lessen their burden, and volunteers to lend a listening ear and steady presence.

May your loving embrace be a light to their lives. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Daily Activity for the Parish:

In your parish community, have you launched the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' [Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care?](#)

The open access program includes a facilitator's guide and four modules that are easy to follow and offer high-quality medical and theological information on palliative care. It is so important to talk about end-of-life care today—don't delay in opening these conversations in your parish community.

St. Marguerite d'Youville

St. Marie-Marguerite d'Youville, née Dufrost de Lajemmerais (1701-1771). D'Youville was the founder of the Sisters of Charity of the Hôpital Général de Montréal, also known as the Grey Nuns. She was the first Canadian-born saint, canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1990.

For more information on St. Marguerite d'Youville, read here:

- www.bit.ly/StMarguerite
- www.bit.ly/StMargueriteResources



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Accompanying those who are sick and dying

Daily Activity for Families:

Start a conversation in your family about what's most important to you at the end of life. Health care and end-of-life planning conversations are a powerful entryway to connect meaningfully about life and death.

Note: This activity is most appropriate between young adults, parents and grandparents; however, mature teenagers may also find these types of conversations helpful.

Conversation guide about healthcare and eventual end of life care

Step 1 – Set a Comfortable Context

Who should be present for this conversation? When is a good and appropriate time to propose the idea, such as after a family dinner or during a walk? Can you provide some advanced notice and timing for those family members to feel comfortable with the idea? It may be helpful to put people at ease (offer a disclaimer) – something like “I know it seems morbid or strange, but I want to know what’s important to you.”

Step 2 – What Matters Most to You?

Read out loud each question and allow everyone to silently reflect and/or jot down some thoughts

- What does a good day look like to you?
- How does your faith support you day to day?
- What matters to you most through to the end of life?

Open up the conversation and allow everyone some time to speak. Respect those who do not wish to speak at that moment.

Step 3 – What is a priority for you at the end of life?

Read out loud each question and allow everyone to silently reflect and/or jot down some thoughts

- At the end of life, would you rather be at home, hospice or hospital? Does it matter to you?
- What are your fears related to the dying process?
- Do you feel like you have a good understanding about the benefits of palliative care?
- Are there specific things you require at the end of life, especially in relation to your faith? For example, would you value a visit from a priest for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick? Would you want someone to read scripture to you or read out loud your favorite prayer?

Step 4 – Next Steps

After the initial conversations, it may be opportune to discuss advance care planning to make your specific healthcare wishes known.

More practical resources can be found in the appendices of [Horizons of Hope](#).



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Offering compassion for those grieving the loss of children

Daily Prayer

Prayer Intention:
Offering compassion for those grieving the loss of little ones

O loving God, out of the depths, we cry to you. Your Spirit intercedes for us even when we do not know how to pray.

Come near to those who mourn the loss of a preborn infant or child, for you know our hearts and share our tears especially in times of grief and sorrow. Guide us with your grace to recognize you are always with us, even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Almighty God, who knew us and formed us in the womb, we ask that you enfold every grieving heart and every child in heaven into your tender loving care; by your Spirit, we ask for your kindness and grace. Amen.

Daily Activity for the Parish:

In your parish community, can you find ways to gently raise awareness and support for those grieving the loss of preborn and born children? Sometimes the best people to lead these outreach programs and initiatives are those who have also experienced the grief of losing a child. Consider working closely with these parents and families and seeking guidance from them in your pastoral approaches and ideas.

Saints Zélie and Louis Martin

Saints Zélie and Louis Martin witnessed living holiness in the midst of grieving the loss of their infants and children.

In Saints to Know & Novenas to Pray for Miscarriage and Infant Loss, it outlines that in regard to St. Zélie: Four of her and Louis Martin's nine children died very young. She wrote about her losses and expressed no regret in having her children, even though she suffered much sorrow, sharing that "we shall find our little ones again up above."

St. Therese of Lisieux attributed many graces to her siblings' prayers in heaven.



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Offering compassion for those grieving the loss of children

Daily Activity for Families:

Create a 'Rooted in Love' Memory Garden

Start with talking about how each family member feels about having a memory garden to honour their sibling. Young children can help plan and draw what it might look like. Choose a special tree and plant it together as a family and create a garden so everyone can contribute and participate.

You can symbolize the family unit with pots or other objects such as DIY stepping stones for each family member. Hummingbird feeders and wooden hand-painted bird feeders can attract feathered friends to visit. Be creative and decorate pots, stones etc. with pens or paint. Use ribbons to represent memories, laminate drawings or pictures and hang them off branches.

Make it your own! You may wish to include a statue of the Holy Family and/or design a Rosary garden using painted rocks. Add a prayer bench and table to read, journal or meditate with a candle. It can be healing to sit around a firepit and pray together.

Here are ideas on how families can decorate the tree together;

Advent

Jesse Tree Symbols and/or a numbered bag for each day of Advent with a surprise such as mini pieces to create a small nativity scene to display under the tree

Christmas

Have children create their own decorations using clear ornaments and add mini outdoor lights

Valentine's Day

Hang hearts and notes of love and gratitude for family members to find

Lent/Easter

Use Easter eggs with scripture verses inside for each day of Lent, have an Easter egg hunt

Birthdays

Add streamers, have a picnic in the yard that includes birthday cake

Additionally, the same plant/tree can also be sent to extended family members so they can also be part of honouring the lost child. Flower seeds can also be sent to those who are farther away. It's a beautiful way to remember loved ones and also create a new life and memories together. How meaningful would it be to exchange pictures of the memory gardens each Christmas?



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Today's prayer intention and family activity was developed in collaboration with Elizabeth Ministry BC, which offers faith-based, peer support after loss of a baby during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy and toddlerhood. Visit Elizabeth Ministry BC's website here: www.elizabethministrybc.ca