

# HAPPY, HEALTHY, & HOLY FAMILIES



A faith-filled family life resource from the [Office for Family Life Ministry](#). 

## new beginnings

Joanne DePasquale-Parent, Director, Office for Family Life Ministry

*"Mom, I'm ready for this,"* said my son as he left for a week-long, overnight orientation at his new high school. No phones. No contact with family, friends, or the outside world. The school did not "cut the cord" gently. Despite my many apprehensions, I took solace in my son's confidence, bravery, and strength as he embarked on this new adventure.

As I begin my newest adventure serving as Director of the Office for Family Life Ministry, I recall this life-giving moment with my son and remember his words, *"I'm ready for this."* Again, these words bring strength and courage amid the apprehensions of starting something new. I'm reminded that God does not call the equipped; He equips the called. The Word of God instructs us not to fear, for His presence is with us always. In Joshua 1:9, God says, *"I command you: be strong and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD, your God, is with you wherever you go."*

So, moving forward into the unknown of this new role, I trust in the Lord's presence and in His constant mercy. I am deeply grateful for the privilege of journeying alongside an amazing and talented team! Yamilka Genao, Jennifer Ferraioli, and John Kalinowski are great pastoral leaders who care deeply for the mission and ministry of this office. Together, we strive to help families fully flourish as agents of God's love in the world by providing training, support, and resources for those who are engaged, married, or single as they navigate the joys and challenges of family life. Please see the information below for some of our upcoming events and please keep our office close in your prayers.

## upcoming events (click on the event titles below for details)

- **Marriage Preparation Facilitator Training (in Spanish): PreCana** - April 5th
- **Marriage Preparation Facilitator Training (in Spanish): God's Plan** - April 12th
- **Catholic Mental Health Ministry Retreat** - April 12th
- **Training for Bereavement Facilitators (in Spanish)** - Wednesdays, April 23rd - June 4th
- **Mental Health Training Workshop (in Spanish)** - Thursdays, April 24th - June 5th
- **Family Mass for Child Loss** - May 1st
- **Sanctuary Course on Faith and Mental Health for Catholics** - May 5th
- **Anniversary Mass** - Couples celebrating 50, 25, or 5 years of Catholic marriage - June 1st

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## marriage preparation and enrichment

Jenn Ferraioli, Associate Director for Marriage Preparation

I love when Easter is later in April. The weather is usually nicer and the sun is a bit warmer. The distance between Christmas and Lent beginning is longer and flowers and plants are beginning to come alive. And, it means my birthday is right around the corner at the end of the month!

I actually love the season of Lent...I crave the quiet and reflection it allows. Life is busy and Lent gives us the opportunity to slow down. My husband and I try to find moments when we can grow in our faith together, not just by ourselves. We love attending Stations of the Cross at various churches, Parish Missions, and other Lenten activities. On Holy Thursday, we visit various churches for the Exposition of the Eucharist.

Click on the linked text below for ideas on how to make Holy Week and the Easter season special for you and your loved one. Whether you are engaged, newly married, or married for many years, now is a great time to create new and holy traditions for years to come.

- ***What Catholic couples can do during Holy Week***
- ***7 Easter Traditions To Celebrate All 7 Weeks Of Easter***

[Click here for a list of parishes near you to celebrate Holy Week and Easter!](#)

## family life

Yamilka Genao, Associate Director for Hispanic Family Life

As a teenager, Holy Week was one of my favorite times of year. I vividly remember preparing for the "Passion Play," watching my mom search for costumes, and helping with the rehearsals. My family would gather to pray the Stations of the Cross and enjoy "Habichuelas con Dulce." I fasted on Fridays and earned "consolation prizes" (ice cream) on Sundays if I stuck to it. I also recall staying up all night on Thursday with my parents, visiting altars of repose at different parishes, and comparing which church had the best one (ours, of course). These beautiful moments are deeply engraved in my heart, and they played a vital role in shaping my Christian life today. Celebrating Holy Week and Easter with my family not only brought me joy but also deepened my faith in the Lord.

As Catholic families, we can celebrate Holy Week and Easter with our children in many meaningful ways. We can attend Church services together, pray, participate in the Stations of the Cross, engage in family activities like arts and crafts or plays, hold family gatherings, and share cherished traditions such as meals and movies. Celebrating Holy Week as a family helps deepen our faith and strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Here are some ideas for celebrating this sacred time with your family: (click on the linked text below for more details)

- ***5 Triduum Traditions To Help Your Family Celebrate Holy Week***
- ***How We Celebrate Holy Week and Easter as a Young Family***
- ***14 Holy Week Traditions for Your Family***

## ministry of healing and loss

John Kalinowski, Coordinator, Healing & Loss Ministry

As we prepare to journey through Holy Week, we are invited to walk with Christ through His suffering, death, and resurrection. For those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, this sacred time can bring both sorrow and solace. The Passion of Christ reminds us that even in the depths of agonizing grief, we are never alone. Jesus, who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, understands our pain. He walks with us in our suffering, carrying our burdens with love and compassion. By lovingly walking with others in their grief, we honor the support we received during our own times of loss and help create a compassionate community.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks words of profound comfort: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live." (John 11:25-26). These words remind us that death is not the end, and that in Christ, we find the promise of eternal life. Though our hearts may ache, we are called to trust in the hope of the resurrection.

Psalm 34:18 reassures us, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and those who are crushed in spirit he saves." In our moments of deepest sorrow, God is near. He offers us His presence, His peace, and His promise that love never ends.

As we reflect on the mystery of Holy Week and look forward to the season of Easter, let's bring our grief to the foot of the cross. There, in the sacrifice of Christ, we find redemption. There, in His empty tomb, we find hope. And in His resurrection, we find the assurance that we will be reunited with those we love.

May this Holy Week and Easter be a time of healing, as we entrust our sorrows to Christ and allow His light to guide us forward in faith. Amen.

For further reading, click on the linked text below:

- ***In the Desert: Coping with Grief during Lent***
- ***Grief and Good Friday***
- ***Holy Saturday: a Lesson on Grief***
- ***Making Room for Grief at Easter***

