Family Day 2022 | Sunday, September 25

“Rise to the Occasion”

The purpose of Family Day is to provide the parishes of the Archdiocese of New Orleans an opportunity to gather their families and encourage them to renew friendships, form new ones, and to cultivate in an appreciation for the importance and goodness of family life.

This year, our Family Day theme is: “Rise to the Occasion.” The Church teaches that the laity, in their family and social lives, “work for the sanctification of the world from within as leaven... It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer” (Lumen Gentium 31, emphasis added). Too often, we can become overly preoccupied with the problems and difficulties of very large-scale issues that we have very little real power to change directly. Such preoccupations can and do lead many of us to feel frustrated, angry, and flat from despair. To “Rise to the Occasion” means to take responsibility for what is right in front of us. Like the small amount of yeast in a huge mass of flour, we make the whole dough rise and reach its full potential.

We “rise to the occasion” when we encourage each member of our family to be the man or woman God calls them to be. We ‘rise to the occasion’ when we contribute to our church parish’s life that needs our presence and participation. We ‘rise to the occasion’ when we continue to build community with charity as more opportunities to gather open up following the COVID pandemic. We ‘rise to the occasion’ when we show that love, justice, and peace are the response to the increasing division, violence, and threat of war that seemingly surrounds us.

On this Family Day, we call our families to “Rise to the Occasion”. We call them to gather together and strengthen their commitment to become good friends, kind neighbors, and generous benefactors to those who are nearby who need our attention, our compassion, and our friendship.
The enclosed resources are aids to assist your parish in planning for Family Day. Please use them as seems most helpful for your parish:

- Bulletin Insert Text
- Liturgical Helps for Family Day Celebration
- Suggestion for Prayers of the Faithful
- Family Blessing
Bulletin Insert text for Family Day  
September 25, 2022  

“Rise to the Occasion!”

Happy Family Day! Every year on this fourth Sunday of September, parishes across the Archdiocese of New Orleans celebrate Family Day in many different ways. It’s a time for us to give thanks for the beauty and goodness of family life and the call of God to love one another as brothers and sisters of the same heavenly Father.

This year, we invite you to “Rise to the Occasion!” Has the news cycle and effects of the last few years left you and your family feeling flat? It may seem like we can’t do a thing to make any real difference. As yeast acts in a dough to help it expand, if we can practice ‘Rising to the Occasion’, meeting those challenges right in before us and within our reach with greater courage and hope, we become more focused on what we can do rather than what we can’t. We grow in hope when we know we can rely on our friends and relatives, each with their unique combinations of gifts and talents, and our joy doubles when we are able to help another carry their burdens.

What is one thing we CAN DO in our family to ‘rise to the occasion’ to improve our relationship with one another?
What is one thing our family CAN DO to build a culture of true friendship in our parish or our neighborhood?

May God, our Heavenly Father, strengthen us through the Holy Spirit to ‘rise to the occasion’ and “pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness [and] compete well for the faith.” (1Tm 6:11–12)

Click here to access and download a ¼ page full-color graphic of this for your bulletin.
Homily Suggestion for Family Day  
Sunday, September 25, 2022

Reading 1 Am 6:1a,4–7
Responsorial Psalm Ps 146:7,8–9, 9–10
Reading 2 1Tm 6:11–16
Gospel Lk 16:19–31

A friend of mine once shared with me that he and his wife have a system to help them not forget to bring the items they need with them when they leave the house. What they do is place those items right by the front door so that they have to pick it up in order to open the door and walk to their cars. Those items or people that are right in front of us should be able to capture our attention and move us to action.

In that light, it would seem that the rich man Jesus identifies in today’s Gospel reading should have responded to the needs of poor, sore-covered Lazarus who was lying by his door – and yet he did not! Why the rich man failed to respond to Lazarus’s need we can’t exactly say. Perhaps he was just a cruel and selfish man, though that seems less likely since even in the pit the rich man knew to rise his eyes to heaven. He doesn’t argue with Abraham about the justice of his own terrible circumstance, but he does plead and even argue with Abraham for the sake of his brothers at home. Perhaps he was a man with many heavy responsibilities, as wealthy and powerful people often are, and his mind and his heart were engaged in the bigger problems of the world. Perhaps he just didn’t have time for Lazarus. It’s hard to say.

What the parable does tell us, however, is that the rich man knew Lazarus by name. It tells us that the rich man did not fail to notice Lazarus’ poverty and need. Lazarus lived right at the rich man’s door – part of his everyday life. In the pit, the rich man recognizes Lazarus, calls him by name, and remembers what Lazarus’ life was like in the world. The rich man noticed Lazarus, he knew who he was and what his needs were. He just didn’t respond.
Today, all across the Archdiocese of New Orleans, parishes are celebrating Family Day. The archdiocese invites us to “Rise to the Occasion” as the theme for this year. What does it mean to “Rise to the Occasion” as a family? It means to do what you can do to make a situation better as soon as you can do it. It means to practice shortening the delay between the good intention and the good action as much as we possibly can. When we encounter the moment to do something good, we act on that moment and not let it pass. Like the yeast that helps a dough rise to its potential, the work families put in – or don’t put in – to respond to the daily challenges and demands of life help that family or community reach its full potential. Even very small acts of kindness and generosity add up and have a big impact on the cultures within our homes and communities.

It is not easy to ‘Rise to the Occasion’ all of the time. Sometimes, the occasion is complicated and it is not exactly clear what we should do or which things are more important than others. Sometimes, the circumstances require a sacrifice or a risk we are not sure we can afford. The Gospel passage today doesn’t tell us exactly what the Rich Man should have done for Lazarus; only that the opportunity to raise to the occasion was within reach for the rich man; right at his front door.

Why didn’t he respond? Why don’t we when the occasion arises to do something good? It’s not easy to say. One thing we can recognize is that, in today’s information and technology-rich environment, we can become overly preoccupied with the large-scale problems of the world: national or international politics, for example, or powerful currents in contemporary culture. It can feel like there are so many problems, and that those problems are so overwhelming, that we sense there is practically nothing we can do about them. Though we are privileged to live in a society where can participate in its political and cultural life, this feeling of futility can leave us feeling perpetually frustrated, angry, and even bring us to despair.

Today’s readings provide the antidote to this poisonous preoccupation with things “beyond our paycheck.” God does not expect us to fix all the world’s problems. Even Jesus didn’t fix all the problems of the world. Rather, by
pouring himself out for us on the Cross, he redeemed the world. We did not deserve His love, but he Loves us anyway. In a similar way, God places situations and people right in front of us – right at our front doors – and calls us to love and do good for them just as Jesus loves and does good for us.

Perhaps, like the Rich Man, we have allowed our attention to be being taken up by worries that, in the grand scheme of things, are less important for us. Each one of us, right here in our own family and parish community, is bearing a heavy cross of one kind or another, and like Lazarus, we all have our poverties and our wounds. What that means, thought, is that we all have a Lazarus nearby that we can help. The opportunity do what we can is at our door and within our capacities. The occasion is here; will we rise to it?

Who in your life, among the people you know, in your own family, or among your friends or acquaintances, is waiting for you to reach out with a kind word or a loving gesture? Who in your life do you need to make another attempt to reconcile with? Who can you offer friendship to? Who is lonely or in despair that can you spend time with and console? Who around you is suffering? Whose suffering you can relieve in some way?

If we all learn to better pay attention to what is right at our door, we will find no lack of opportunities to respond to life’s challenges in ways that are within the power God grants us to do. It might not be easy, and it might take some careful thought and creative action. It might event require a true sacrifice. But it will be possible for us. It is God who is calling us, and it is God who is helping us to respond. Through the invitation of the Father, the enriching Body and Blood of the Son, and the courage of the Spirit, may God bless our families of various sizes, vocations, gifts, and talents, to be willing to ‘Rise to the Occasion’.
Suggested Prayers of the Faithful:

• For the Church, that she may stand firm in her commitments to care for the poor and marginalized families in our world and our own local community, let us pray to the Lord.

• For government leaders, that they may govern with the rights and needs of families and both rich and poor in mind, let us pray to the Lord.

• For our parish community, that, through the time, talent and treasure we offer, we may “rise to the occasion” and answer the call to witness to the Gospel today, let us pray to the Lord.

• For families and individuals discerning their vocations to family life, religious life, or single life, that we may look to the Holy Family as a model of complete and total surrender to the will of God the Father, let us pray to the Lord.

• For all who seek healing, especially families with divisions and sorrows, that they receive the restorative touch of the Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
Family Blessing:

We bless your name, O Lord, 
for sending your own incarnate Son 
to become part of a family, 
so that, as he lived within its sufferings and its joys, 
he would be present and provide newness of life 
to all families.

We ask you, Lord, 
to protect and watch over these families, 
so that in the strength of your grace 
and in the depth of your mercy 
their members may enjoy prosperity, 
possess the priceless gift of your peace, 
and as the Church alive in the home, 
rise to the occasion and announce the Gospel with our lives. 
We ask this through Christ our Lord. 
Amen. 
[adapted from the Book of Blessings]