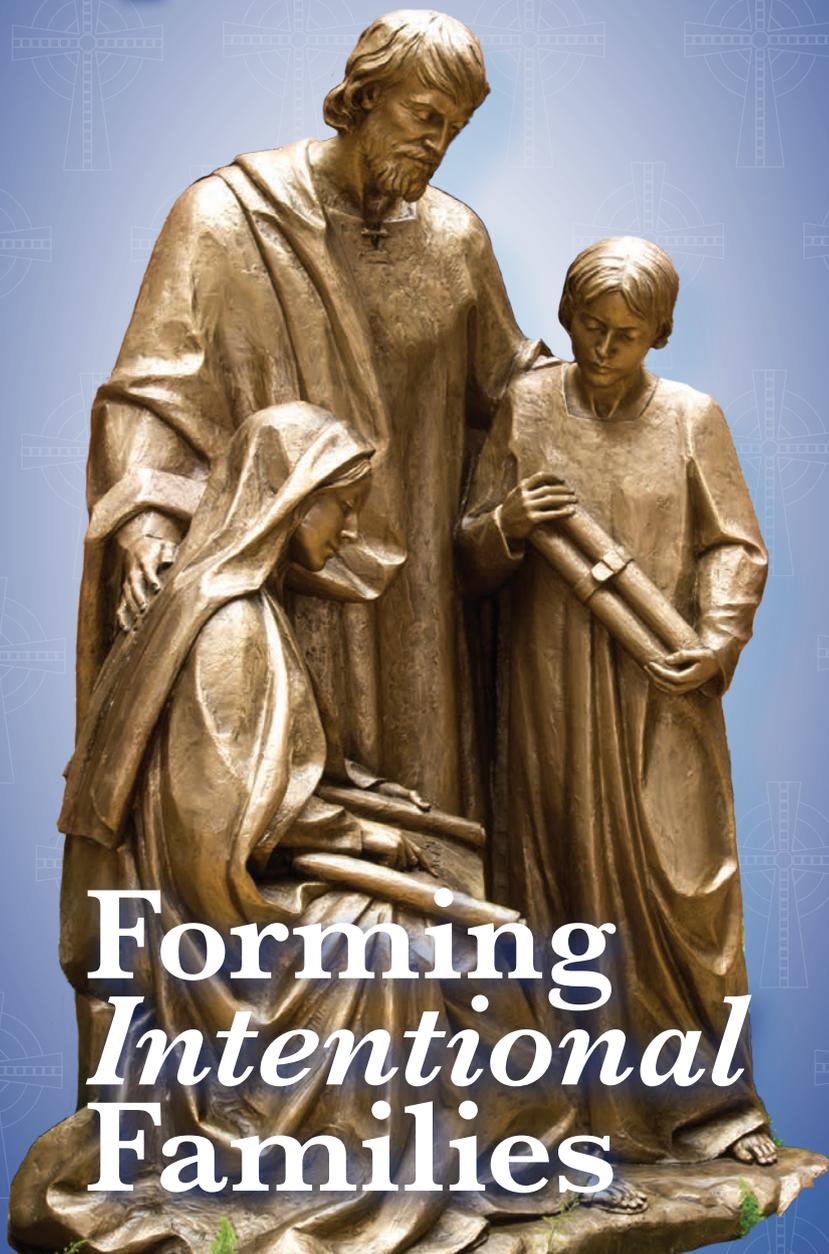




*St. Lawrence*  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



**Forming**  
*Intentional*  
**Families**

# Forming *Intentional* Families

## OUR MISSION

**WE THE \_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY,**

**AS MEMBERS OF**

**ST. LAURENCE CATHOLIC CHURCH,**

**ARE CENTERED IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST AND LIVE**

**TO GLORIFY GOD IN ALL WE DO.**



**ST. LAURENCE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

## **A STATEMENT ON FAMILIES**

**BY FR. DREW WOOD**

**PASTOR, ST. LAURENCE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**NOVEMBER 10, 2018**

It is incumbent upon husbands and wives, mothers and dads, and single parents to spend time in prayer, discernment, and dialogue about the kind of family they will be. Family and home does not automatically happen. The demands and pressures of modern life often dictate the pace and substance of family life, and the family seems helpless and simply reacts to this frantic pace.

The challenge for the family is not to succumb, but to be proactive and intentional about the kind of family they are choosing to be. After that, a response to modern society can be wisely, prudently, and intelligently made. The process of discernment is first and always receptive, prayerfully seeking God's direction and inspiration through the Church. Decisions about family life will of course never be too rigid or inflexible, always open to re-evaluation as life grows and changes. Every family will be different in its needs and aspirations. But proper discernment will always make room for family prayer, shared meals, shared faith dialogue, shared charity, and a certain discipline in family life that allows for these virtues to happen.

All parents must create a kind of moat around their home. Every effort will be made to keep evil outside: anger, rage, abuse, active addictions, and the dark side of modern technology. Within the home, the parents will nurture gentleness, affection, active listening, prayer, humor, fun, diligence, study, and some measure of solitude and meditation. Families will safeguard against the compulsion to over-commitment and will strive to say 'no' while saying 'yes' always to God.

Families are so precious and key to virtuous, joyful living. We want to seek mentors of all ages in the Church to help others with an array of wonderful ideas. Everything we do for the sake of the family will be for the glory of God. It isn't easy today. But prayer, courage, and intentionality will change the world and bring joy to the faces of our children and our Church. †

*Fr. Drew Wood*

## THE FAMILY AS DOMESTIC CHURCH

*“Catholic parents must learn to form their family as a domestic church, a church in the home as it were, where God is honored, his law is respected, prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example, and everyone shares the hopes, the problems and sufferings of everyone else. All this is not to advocate a return to some outdated style of living: It is to return to the roots of human development and human happiness!”*

*October 7, 1995 - excerpt from Pope Saint John Paul II address in NYC*

*“Society must strongly reaffirm the right of the child to grow up in a family in which, as far as possible, both parents are present. Fathers of families must accept their full share of responsibility for the lives and upbringing of their children. Both parents must spend time with their children. Both parents should be personally interested in their moral and religious education. Children need not only material support from their parents, but more importantly a secure, affectionate and morally correct family environment.”*

*October 7, 1995 - excerpt from Pope Saint John Paul II address in NYC*

- ✚ The home is sacred space. *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20*
- ✚ Protect your family from the evil influences of the world: pornography, relativism, materialism, individualism, rage, abuse, active addiction. *“Build a moat around your home”* to prevent unwanted access to your family.
- ✚ Worship the Lord in your home through prayer, study of Sacred Scripture, faith formation, and Sunday Mass.
- ✚ Set aside a place in your home for worship.

# THE 10 TENETS

**1. Set Family Priorities**

**2. Share Family Meals**

**3. Lead Family Prayer & Teach the Faith**

**4. Manage / Limit Media Intake**

**5. Control Pace of Life**

**6. Forgive Easily & Often / Ask for Forgiveness**

**7. Encourage Active Listening / Open & Honest Communication**

**8. Schedule Family Fun & Play Time**

**9. Teach / Model Responsibility & Accountability**

**10. Acknowledge & Share Our Gifts & Talents**

*All families are unique and precious.  
All are called to live out these tenets and the sacrificial  
love of Jesus according to their family situation.*

# 1

## SET FAMILY PRIORITIES

### ✝ **God always comes first.**

- He is the Creator; we are the created, made to adore and to be in personal relationship with Him.
- A God-centered life provides clarity of purpose and peace.

### ✝ **Husband and wife come second.**

- The first vocation of husband and wife is to the marital state, focusing their covenant love on one another.
- The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother; the best thing a mother can do for her children is to love their father.
- Couples willingly accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church.

### ✝ **Children come third.**

- Children reflect the Father's work of creation. (CCC 2205)
- Children participate in the self-giving love of the family.
- God, couple and child/children (natural or adopted) form the trinity of the family.

*“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”*

***Luke 10:27***

# 2

SHARE FAMILY MEALS

- † **Family time is sacred. Begin meals in prayer, thanking God for His blessings and for the food that you are about to share.**
- † **Sharing meals is more than just eating together. It is a time to retreat from the world's distractions, to share stories, and to be present to one another.**
- † **Families are encouraged to minimize eating “on the go” and to make it a family tradition to share at least one meal every day together without distractions, such as TV, radio, cell phones, and other technology.**

*“Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.”*

***Acts 2:46***

## LEAD FAMILY PRAYER & TEACH THE FAITH



- † Set aside time each day for family prayer, for intercessions, for thanksgivings and for reading of Sacred Scripture.
- † Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day as a family.
- † Have your children baptized and come as a family to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- † Equip yourselves by growing in and learning the Faith.
- † Every home should have a Catholic Bible and Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), as key sources for learning our Faith.
- † *Education in the Faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. (CCC 2226)*
- † *The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. (CCC 2221)*
- † *It is within the family where children are raised and formed as human beings. The parental role in this human formation is governed by love, a love which places itself "at the service of children to draw forth from them... the best that is in them" and which "finds its fullest expression precisely in the task of educating." The family is the "first school." (Compendium of Social Teaching, No. 239)*

*"...do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord."*

***Ephesians 6:4***

## MANAGE / LIMIT MEDIA INTAKE

# 4

- † Be proactive in setting the example for your children with your own media usage and restriction.
- † Be aware that the internet is particularly problematic because of the proliferation of pornography to which young children can inadvertently be exposed.
- † Discuss with and instruct your family on the benefits and risks associated with media usage.
- † Protect your family from anti-Christian influences that are promoted by secular media, including but not limited to TV, radio, podcasts, internet, apps.
- † Restrict access to pornography and other inappropriate websites using filters and parental controls.
- † Share passwords to proactively monitor your child's access to websites on any device.
- † Prayerfully discern the right age for your child to be given a cell phone.
- † Collect all cell phones at shared meal times and before bedtime.
- † Regularly fast from media intake.
- † Do not allow TV or computers in children's rooms.

*“Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil.”*

***Ephesians 6:11***

## CONTROL PACE OF LIFE

# 5

- † **Our time on Earth is precious. Live in the present moment and you will find Jesus there.**
- † **Modern society is driven to fill all available time with some activity, causing stress, depression, anxiety and burnout.**
- † **Our schedules are often booked solid with work, social activities, athletics, music lessons, extra classes, and other activities with no time to rest or even to eat a meal in an unhurried manner. Simplify your schedule and enjoy life together.**
- † **Allow enough time for sleep and exercise to promote good physical, mental and spiritual health.**
- † **Be wary of over-commitment. “No” can be a holy word.**

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.”*

***Matthew 6:25, 33-34***

## FORGIVE EASILY & OFTEN / ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

# 6

- † Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins. To share in His offer of Salvation, we too must forgive and recognize our own need for forgiveness.
- † Be the first to forgive. Be a model of humility and forgiveness for your family.
- † *“O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Luke 18:13*
- † Forgiveness is a decision of the will. It is a choice, not a feeling.
- † *“Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” Matthew 18: 21-22*
- † *“Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:24*
- † “Please forgive me,” expresses contrition and humility and is preferable to “I’m sorry.”

*“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.”*

*Luke 6:37*

# 7

**ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LISTENING /  
OPEN & HONEST COMMUNICATION**

- ✝ **“Whoever has ears ought to hear” (Mark 4:9 & 23, Matthew 11:15, Matthew 13:9, Revelation 2:29). Jesus proclaims these words nine times in the New Testament, reminding us of the importance of active listening.**
- ✝ **Family relationships are strengthened through healthy interactions with one another.**
- ✝ **To fully receive the other, we must give of ourselves through intentional listening.**
- ✝ **Active listening is being fully attentive and fully present to the words and body language of others in order to allow their communication to fully penetrate both your mind and heart.**
- ✝ **Only when barriers and facades are removed can communication truly be open and honest. It is then that love and compassion can flow freely.**
- ✝ **Entrust your hearts to one another without judgment.**

*“Know this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath....”*

*James 1:19*

## SCHEDULE FAMILY FUN & PLAY TIME



- ✝ Families are encouraged to spend fun time together away from technology and media while being joyfully and fully present to each other.
- ✝ Schedule a regular time for family fun.
- ✝ Be that FIRSST Family: Families Intentionally Reclaiming the Sanctity of Sundays Together.
- ✝ Have “Sunday Funday”.
- ✝ Play with your children. *“I regularly asked fathers if they played with their children, if they had the courage to have the love to waste time with their children. The majority would say: ‘But, I can’t because I have so much work to do...’ And the father was absent from that child that was growing up and didn’t play with him, he didn’t waste time with him.” – Pope Francis, January 2015*

*“Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*

***Matthew 19:14***

## TEACH / MODEL RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

# 9

- † Christian parents should be living examples of Jesus' teaching on our responsibility for others, our willingness to sacrifice for others, and our accountability for our actions.
- † *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.” Matthew 25:35-36*
- † Jesus commands us to put others first and to treat one another with love, mercy and compassion.
- † Give sacrificially. Jesus asks us to give of ourselves and to sacrifice for others as He did for us on the Cross. This message is countercultural for many in modern society who seek to satisfy personal wants and needs first.
- † Teach virtue through stories, Scripture and the lives of the saints. *“A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself.” (CCC 1804)*

*“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.”*

*Matthew 7:12*

# 10

## ACKNOWLEDGE & SHARE OUR GIFTS & TALENTS

- ✝ We are all called to be good stewards of our talents, time and treasure, all of which are gifts from God.
- ✝ Each of us has been entrusted with unique, God-given talents and spiritual gifts.
- ✝ Prayerfully discern what these charisms are and how we can use them for the Kingdom of God.
- ✝ *Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world. (CCC 799)*
- ✝ *“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” 1 Peter 4:10*
- ✝ Recognize that all is gift. To not share our time, talent and treasure would be like burying our gifts in the ground. (See Matthew 25:14-30)
- ✝ Parents should be role models of cheerful giving.

*“For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them.”*

***Romans 12:4-6***

# Forming *Intentional* Families

**T**he spark leading to this document occurred in a joint workshop of the St. Laurence Pastoral, Discipleship, and Finance Councils in July 2015. The group strongly agreed on the utmost importance of strengthening families in our parish and in society. The Pastoral Council subsequently formed several initiatives focused on family and on parents' roles in building a domestic church in their own homes.

This theme of family was further advanced during a ministry leadership workshop in August 2018. These parish leaders brainstormed a long list of ideas for strengthening parish families through prayer, faith formation, and discipline.

Then, in November, Father Drew wrote his heartfelt Statement on Families, which inspired the creation of this document and the 10 Tenets for Forming Intentional Families. Intentional means that we do more than just react to life. Instead we must create a vision, make purposeful choices, and then decisively take action to make our families all that God desires them to be.

We envision that this document will serve as a starting point for a cross-parish priority to form and strengthen parish families. It is our hope that these 10 Tenets will inspire our parishioners to be intentional about the kind of family they choose to be.

**St. Laurence Pastoral Council (April 2019)**  
St. Laurence Catholic Church, Sugar Land, Texas  
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston