

Ways To Build The Domestic Church

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1. Seek to strengthen your relationship with God who is the source of your marital love. Whatever you would like to achieve in terms of marriage and family life, you will need to depend on His grace. Remember that He is always there for you and the struggle is not about finding Him, but to get yourself into His Presence. If you find it difficult to get into a habit of a daily prayer, try the following:
Praying with a devotional magazine based on the daily mass readings.
Try an online daily prayer guide. You might visit <http://sacredspace.ie>
2. Whenever you receive communion, allow Christ to fill you up with His love for your spouse. In receiving communion, you receive the very body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ and are drawn into His Trinitarian communion of love and life. Your marital oneness is to be an icon of Christ's love for the whole Church; thus your marital love will be nurtured by the Eucharistic gift of Christ.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to see your spouse as Jesus would see her or him.
4. Do not let the sun go down on your anger, which is a biblical exhortation from Eph 4:26. Learn to deal with issues in your relationship promptly through releasing forgiveness and frequent the sacrament of reconciliation. Remember forgiveness is one of the most important principles for building a strong marriage.
5. Love is not concerned with what one can get from a relationship, but preoccupied with benefiting the beloved and often expressed through a sacrifice. One of enemies of marriage is self-centeredness, which can be manifested in different forms. Make a habit of putting your spouse first; find ways to express love and appreciation to your spouse on a daily basis.
6. Conflicts, whether small or big, are bound to be experienced in a relationship. Learning to know how to deal with them in a marriage will be a lifelong task in life. Seek to identify real issues in a conflict and deal with them with a firm commitment to love and honor your spouse no matter what.
7. Remember you are a role model for your children. How you value your marriage, your spouse, and your children will have a far-reaching influence on your family tree. If you are a father, make a commitment to spend extra time with your children and take the lead in their spiritual formation. Understand that what the fathers do or fail to do impacts the lives of children. Children practice mom's religion with dad's fervor.
8. Make an effort to grow in the awareness of the presence of God in your personal life, marriage and family. Make a meal time sacred; at least once a day all the family gather

around a meal table, honoring each other as well as the Lord's presence. This is where the family comes to transmit wisdom, share expectations, confess, forgive and bless each other. Doesn't it remind you of the spiritual meal that you receive at the Lord's table?

9. Seek and participate in initiatives to renew, revitalize, and rebuild marriage and family life. Join a small faith sharing group in the parish. Rubbing shoulders with those who take God's call to marriage and family seriously will help you grow. Try to learn about the issues that plague marriage; learn to know why the Church teaches what it teaches.
10. Hold marriage in high esteem in your mind and speech. Speak about the positive aspects of your marriage - to your children, your friends, and your spouse. Most of all continually grow in your own marriage relationship.
Make sure that you will plan a time to spend as a couple regularly. Only when your spousal love is cultivated, your children will have a secure source for the love they need. Keep filling up their love tank with what overflows from your spousal love. When in difficulty, open yourself for help within the faith community. Open sharing of your struggles and challenges as well as joys coming from your marriage and family life in the atmosphere of trust and accountability will strengthen you and your marriage.
11. Adhere to the definition of divorce according to God's mind and scripture. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Mt 19:5-6).
12. Take the leadership in educating your children on God's intention for sexuality and the perils of promiscuity. Teach them about the Theology of the Body. Look for opportunities to point out the lies media tell us about sexuality and reinforce truth instead. If you come across troubling portrayals on television programs, point out the problems to your children and train them to critique the culture they are living in. This is what it means to be "in the world, but not of the world" (John 17). Be ready to walk your talk always.
13. You are sent to the world to bring life to the world; at the end of every mass you hear the priest say, "Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord"; you are sent to the world to bring Christ's life to the world. It is important to seek ways to keep the lamp burning in your family; establishing a time of daily prayer, receiving Communion and sharing the word of God together as a family will be ways of doing so. Mother Theresa says that "to keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it." Sharing the light with others is also important; look for ways to be part of the mission of the Church. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:14-16).

