

**1. Read (Seek)** — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

**2. Meditate (Find)** — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage.  
**God what are you saying to me through this?**

**3. Pray (Ask)** — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

**4. Contemplate (Taste)** — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] CCC 2205

[2] In Conversation with God 4, 91.1

[3] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, 22 November 1981, 59

[4] John Paul II, Address to families, 24 March 1984

[5] Conversations with Monsignor Escriva, 103

[6] CCC 2685

[7] In Conversation with God 4, 91.2

[8] John Paul II, Address to families, 24 March 1984

[9] John Paul II, Angelus in Otranto, 5 October 1980

[10] John Paul II, Homily, 12 October 1980

[11] John XXIII, Address, 29 September 1961

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# Quick Connect

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**What is God saying to you through this passage?** Page 4

## **Gospel Reading – Matthew 18:15-20 – Roman Missal**

If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, (amen,) I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

## **Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – Tuesday of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Week of Ordinary Time**

*From a sermon by Saint Bernard, abbot*

We read in the gospel that when the Lord was teaching his disciples and urged them to share in his passion by the mystery of eating his body, some said: This is a hard saying; and from that time they no longer followed him. When he asked the disciples whether they also wished to go away, they replied: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. I assure you, my brothers, that even to this day it is clear to some that the words which Jesus speaks are spirit and life, and for this reason they follow him. To others these words seem hard, and so they look elsewhere for some pathetic consolation. Yet wisdom cries out in the streets, in the broad and spacious way that leads to death, to call back those who take this path. Finally, he says: for forty years I have been close to this generation, and I said: They have always been fainthearted. You also read in another psalm: God has spoken once. Once, indeed, because for ever. His is a single, uninterrupted utterance, because it is continuous and unending. He calls upon sinners to return to their true spirit and rebukes them when their hearts have gone astray, for it is in the true heart that he dwells and there he speaks, fulfilling what he taught through the prophet: Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. You see, my brothers, how the prophet admonishes us for our advantage: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. You can read almost the same words in the gospel and in the prophet. For in the gospel the Lord says: My sheep hear my voice. And in the psalm blessed David says: You are his people (meaning, of

course, the Lord's) and the sheep of his pasture. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Hear also the prophet Habakkuk. Far from hiding the Lord's reprimands, he dwells on them with attentive and anxious care. He says: I will stand upon my watchtower and take up my post on the ramparts, keeping watch to see what he will say to me and what answer I will make to those who try to confute me. I beg you, my brothers, stand upon our watchtower, for now is the time for battle. Let all our dealings be in the heart, where Christ dwells, in right judgment and wise counsel, but in such a way as to place no confidence in those dealings, nor rely upon our fragile defenses.

### **A Family of Prayer – Lesson and Discussion**

*“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

There are many analogies for the Church. Saint Paul calls the Church a Body with many parts. The Church has two main parts, the head and the members. The head of the Body is Christ, the members are the faithful. Our Lord tells us, “when two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20). The members must not only be gathered together, but they must be gathered in the name of their head Jesus Christ. The physical head of the Church on earth is the Holy Father and thus the members must be in union with the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ.

The fundamental place where we gather from the beginning is within the family. The family is the domestic Church. Just as the bishops and faithful must be centered in a community of prayer, so too a husband and wife together with their children must be centered in a community of prayer. It is not enough that just one member of the family pray, this would be the equivalent to saying that it would be enough if only one bishop at a council was praying.

**Why does prayer start in the family?** The very essence of culture starts with the family unit; a husband, a wife, and children. “The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake in the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.”[1] Saint Angela Merici said, “Disorder in society is a result of disorder in the family.” Prayer helps bring order to a family especially in a time when every person of the family is being stretched here and there, and there is little time when a family is all-together. Starting one's life in prayer with the family helps foster prayer to parents, children, brothers and sisters. “Prayer fosters the supernatural vision that makes it possible for us to understand what is happening around us and in the family, and teaches us to see that nothing is foreign to the plans of God.”[2] To start with prayer shows who is at the supreme head of the family, God. When we put God at the head of the family we are able to

cherish the blessings and accept the struggles with persistence and fortitude. If we start all of this in the family, then we can begin to share this with our neighbor. To pray for family members helps us pray for others. To forgive a brother or sister helps us forgive a complete stranger. To place God, as the head of the family will in turn put God as the head in our lives. “The dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic Church can be achieved only with God's unceasing aid, which will surely be granted if it is humbly and trustingly petitioned for in prayer.”[3]

**Why should a family pray together?** Saint John Paul the Great wrote a letter specifically to families. In the letter, he makes it very clear, “The family that prays together stays together, a family that prays is a family that is saved. Act in such a way that your homes may be places of Christian faith and virtue through your praying together.”[4] Praying as a family on a daily basis helps “to ensure that God is not regarded as a stranger whom we go to visit in church once a week on Sunday. He will be seen and treated as He really is, not only in church, but also at home”.[5]

Praying as family also helps teach children their basic prayers. “The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the ‘domestic church’ where God's children learn to pray ‘as the Church’ and to persevere in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church's living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit.”[6] Learning the Our Father, Hail Mary, grace before meals, Angelus, and the Guardian Angel prayer are just but a few of the basic prayers that are taught to us by our family. “How many young people, now men and women, warmly remember the simple and exact explanation that their mother or an older brother or sister gave them of the real presence of Christ in the tabernacle”.[7] **When was a time when you saw a friend or family member express their faith so reverently that it had an impact on you?**

**What prayers should the family pray?** While of course any and all prayer with the family is good and should be encouraged, the Holy Rosary is one of the most powerful weapons against Satan who seeks to destroy the family. Saint John Paul II encouraged a family life of prayer, especially in the rosary even if it was just a decade.[8] The Rosary, along with the Angelus, as the Holy Father taught, “should be for every Christian and even more so for Christian families, a spiritual oasis during the day from which to get courage and confidence.”[9] How I wish that the beautiful custom of praying the family rosary would begin again.”[10] Remember, any form of prayer as a family whether it's personal prayers that a family chooses, or variation of prayers for different times of the year is completely fine, the importance is prayer. As mentioned before however, the rosary is our weapon and “is considered as a great public and universal prayer in the face of the ordinary and extraordinary needs of the Church, of nations, and of the entire world.”[11]