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Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. - ELW, Baptismal Service

From these words spoken over the newly baptized, we understand that this water mark shapes our identity. How can we as the family of God, both in the congregation and at home, reflect this identity? Here are some very easy, daily, practical ways to infuse all of life with little family liturgies, naming the presence of God.

Wait, wait, wait ... but, isn't liturgy the formal, repeated elements of our worship service? Yes, it is the familiar patterns of worship, helping us connect with the God who is always present, with our faith family that worships together, with our beliefs and confessions and stories that hold us together.

Yes, and liturgy can describe the repeated elements of family life, everyday life together. Like what? Let me share some of the things we do in my family:

#### **BEDTIME ROUTINE**

From the moment a child arrives in a family, we create rhythms in our lives together, leading to the final "good night." In addition to the necessary tasks and favorite activities, this is a perfect time for a story, a song, and a prayer, all naming God's presence in life together.

#### **GREETING ONE ANOTHER**

Of course, we say "hi" and "good morning" and "welcome home" to one another. It was our oldest grandson at age 2 1/2, who started a personal liturgy with me. His family had given me a mother-of-pearl cross necklace that Christmas. When he arrived for Sunday family dinner, he'd jump up in my arms and hold onto the cross, asking, "What is this, Nana?" "What is it, Hayden?" I'd reply. "A cross, Nana," he'd say. "Why do you wear it?" he'd inquire. "Because it reminds us all that we love Jesus!" "Okay, Nana. Now, put me down. It's time to play."

Sometimes the greeting is a word or a smile or a wave or a touch. All announce, "I love you and I'm so glad to see you."

### **SAYING GOODBYE**

It was my young adult children who pointed out to me that, as a family, we always add "Love you" to our goodbyes, in person, on the phone, by text, or in email.

They linked it to my conversation with my mother, the night before she died unexpectedly at age 56. Although I was in a rush to get out of the house when she called, I put down what I was carrying and really leaned into the conversation, which ended with each of us telling the other how much we loved being family. My mother lived in town. I was planning to see her the next morning. Forty-one years later, I am still so grateful for the way we said our final goodbye.

### **CELEBRATING**

Birthdays are important in my family. We begin the night before the birthday, retelling the story of the day the birthday child was born. This storytelling has continued into adulthood for our kids. It is a way of saying that their addition to our family and to God's family is important and worthy of celebrating.

Forty-two years ago, a friend gave us a Red Plate, inscribed with "You are special today!" We use it to celebrate every birthday, anniversary, graduation, new job, and new home, as well as a myriad of accomplishments.

Cake candles are a favorite tradition, thanks to the inspiration of my friend Lyle Griner. Everyone at the table, except for the birthday person, is given a birthday candle. When the cake is passed, each person adds their candle and a declaration of one thing they thank God for about the birthday person. (Warning: you may need kleenex and some who attend may ask to celebrate their birthday at your table! Both have happened at our home.)

## **CREATING CONNECTIONS**

Family dinner or a bedtime snack can be a wonderful opportunity to step out of the rush of daily life and to be fully present with one another and with God, who is always with us.

We eat by candlelight, which has nothing to do with the quality of the food on the table. It is a reminder that we gather around the presence of the One who declared, "I am the light of the world." Candlelight gentles the conversation and invites all to lean in and listen to one another.

At our son's table, the youngest boy leans toward his father and inquires, "Dad, tell us about your day." So begins their daily litany of what the day has held for each person. It is a touching way to be truly connected to what otherwise might have passed unremarked.

Sharing "high's and low's" or "blessings and bruises" are other ways of sharing our lives.

Aunt Kathryn takes her nephews and nieces for a "God walk" when we are on vacation together. They head out together, until one stops, pointing out something God created that gives them special joy. What a great way to name God sightings.

## **BLESSINGS**

How odd that in contemporary life, we squander the rich gift of blessings. Too often, it is reserved as a response to a sneeze!

Let's reclaim blessings as a way of connecting with one another and naming God's presence in our shared lives. When we are blessed to tuck our grandchildren, who now range in age from five to thirteen, into bed, we use the words of the baptismal blessing, We make the sign of the cross on each forehead, naming each with their first and middle name, "child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." Amen!

*Contact today to schedule for fall!*

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This is the perfect opportunity to call or email Marilyn

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