

God's Word Belongs in the Home Where We Live

A pastoral letter of Pastor Rolf Preus – March 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As we ponder Christ's passion during this holy season, it is good for us to consider our life of worship. God gives and we receive. Then we give and God receives. First God gives. Only after we have received from God the forgiveness of our sins may we give him anything at all. First God makes us his dear children by washing us in the blood of the Lamb. Then we can come to him as dear children come to their dear Father.

We go to church. That's a given. That's where God gives us his gospel and sacraments. That's where we give him our praise and thanksgiving. But is it only at the formal services with our congregation held in a church building on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings that this takes place? By no means! God's Word belongs in the home where we live. If the pure Word of God is what makes our congregation a Christian church, the pure Word of God will make our home a Christian home.



The Christian father is the pastor of his family. After giving Moses his Law, God said to him and through him to all Israel: "These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7) The Bible says nothing about Sunday schools, Christian Day schools, vacation

Bible schools, or any other kind of school established for religious instruction of the young. The Bible talks about families headed by fathers. St. Paul writes, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) Fathers should lead their families in daily worship. If the father is unable to do so or if there is no father, then the mother should do it.

What am I talking about? What is family worship? It is an abbreviated form of the public service of the congregation. It includes reading from the Bible, saying the liturgy, singing hymns, and praying prayers.

With older families or couples whose children are grown and gone from the home, the reading from the Bible can be directly from the Holy Scriptures. The New King James is a good translation that I recommend. For families with younger children, there are some good Bible story books for children available from Concordia Publishing House. I particularly recommend, [*A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*](#). It is very good.

We recite from memory the liturgy at church. I would guess that most of us know by heart the words of the Gloria in Excelsis, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei, both the Apostle's and the Nicene creeds, and the Lord's Prayer. For family devotions, I recommend saying at each devotion the Ten Commandments (without their meanings), the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. These are a solid foundation for our lives as Christians.

Good, doctrinally sound, Christ-centered hymns are a wonderful feature of family devotions. I was blessed with a father who loved the good Lutheran hymns and taught them to his family around the dinner table. I grew up knowing the best hymns in the hymnal – the great hymns of such authors as Martin Luther, Paul Gerhardt, Thomas



Kingo, etc. If you have a hard time deciding what hymns to sing, singing the hymn of the day from the previous Sunday service might be a good idea. I have several copies of

various Lutheran hymnals in my house. If you don't, I would recommend buying a few copies (depending on the size of your family) of the hymnal we are currently using: Lutheran Service Book. It is available from Concordia Publishing House.

We gather to pray. The greatest of prayers is the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught it to us and we pray it every time we gather for worship in his name. here are other fine prayers in the Catechism, such as Luther's morning and evening prayers.

There are also a number of good devotional books available. Trinity has an excellent library – the best I have seen at any congregation I have served. There are some fine books you can borrow, and decide if you would like to buy for yourselves.

Home devotions don't last more than ten minutes, unless you get into a theological conversation at the end and keep visiting around the table. I recommend having devotions after supper. If the phone rings during devotions, you either ignore it or answer it by saying, "We're having devotions now. Would you call back in ten minutes?" Here is a sample form for you to consider for your family worship:

- **Invocation: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen"**
- **Recitation of the Ten Commandments**
- **Recitation of the Creed**
- **Reading from the Bible/Bible story book**
- **Singing of hymn**
- **Closing with Lord's Prayer**

My dad died twenty years ago this past November. I thank God for a faithful Christian father who led the family devotions throughout my childhood. Bring God's Word into your homes. Place the hearing, learning, confessing, and singing of God's Word above every other pursuit in life. Do it! You won't regret it. If you have any practical (or impractical!) questions about home devotions, give me a call and bend my ear. I'll do what I can to help.

Your brother in Christ,
Pastor Preus