

Unit 1 "God and Me" Lesson 4
God Gave Me My Family

Objective: The students will be able to state that God made families to share love.

For the Catechist

The family is the child's mooring in life. It provides not only physical care and nurture but also emotional and spiritual nurture. Despite its foundational importance, upon being asked what is most important to them, children may not answer "my family." They take their family for granted, as a "given," unless they have had an unfortunate experience or loss of family.

Who loves you? All children may not be so fortunate to have parents who show loving care and concern for them. Be especially sensitive to your children's family situations in this lesson. Someone cares for each child, even if that someone is a foster parent or social worker. Also, some children may be able to understand parental care and healthy families from their experiences with their friends' families.

The importance of recognizing family. It is important for the students to appreciate family. As with all God's gifts, we need to be mindful of the need to say "thank you." Additionally, in Eastern understanding, church and family have a reciprocal and complementary relationship. The family has been called "the domestic church." It is in the family that we first worship God. Furthermore, our model for understanding "Church" in the formal sense is family—our church is a family. In the following grade of this series, the concept of church as family will be developed.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Praying as a Family

"Family prayer should include prayer for one another as well as prayer together. Husbands and wives should pray for the health and salvation of their partners and also that they may continue to accomplish the tasks the Lord has called them to, according to the individual vocation of each one" (DC 25).

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "To You, O Lord."

Introduction: Discussion of happy family times **Need:** Box with ribbon on top, photo of your family inside

Read Text Aloud: Hold text up for students to see as you read each page aloud. After each page, use the questions in the shaded box at the bottom of that page to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- **Basic:** "The First Family"
- **Group:** "God Made Families" Game
- **Craft:** "God Made Families" Hanging Craft

Closing: The Sign of the Cross

Come Bless the Lord Icon:

- Packet I:
- Packet II:

“Besides the personal communion of each believer with the Lord, which Christ Himself said should be in private (Mt 6:6), daily prayer in the Church has from the beginning included **communal prayer**. Our present divine services developed in this way. In the domestic church, too, there should be a time for daily communal prayer. The evening meal is perhaps the most appropriate time for it” (DC 24).

The Power of Family Prayer

“When we pray together as a family, we are affirming that we are one entity before God who directs our life together. In return He strengthens our faith and commitment and binds us more closely together with the result that true forgiveness more readily can take place after a misunderstanding. Thus the nineteenth century Russian Elder Macarius of Optina once wrote to a correspondent, ‘The joint prayer of husband and wife is a great force. That may be one of the reasons why the enemy is trying to get both of you to break this excellent habit’” (DC 25).

Children and Family Prayer Time

“When there are children in the family, these common prayer times can be occasions for them to try out the prayers they may be learning either at home or in the church school, the troparia of feasts or the like. You may wish to end the family’s evening prayer time by singing a hymn or reciting a prayer together until it becomes part of them. You will achieve more by such regular evening prayer times, if they are kept within the children’s attention span, than the infrequent church school sessions the children may attend” (DC 25).

Sharing Your Experience

“The best way for parents to introduce their children to prayer is to share with them their own experience of prayer. If they see you praying over them from their earliest days, they will naturally sense prayer as a normal part of living which, in the heavenly realm, it is” (DC 25).

Fostering Prayer

“Children love to have the undivided attention of their parents. When they know that you will give them that attention at their evening prayer time, they will anticipate the experience all the more. It will take only a few moments to read a short bible story, recite a formal prayer together and then allow the child to pray in his own words (‘God bless...’ or ‘Thank You, God...’). Likewise a moment before breakfast to go to the icon corner, make the sign of the cross and ask God’s blessings on the day will help make even the youngest child aware of the presence of God” (DC 25).

Intercessions for Children

“Finally, parents’ ongoing intercession for their children’s continued growth in the Spirit is a hallmark of the prayer life of the domestic church. This is not meant to be the shopping list style of prayer where we tell God what we want our children to become. The best prayer a parent can offer is that God, who has brought these children to the rebirth of baptism, may complete what He has begun in them and lead them on to full sharing in the joys of the heavenly realm” (DC 25).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's talk about praying to God. The first thing we do is stand quietly. Let's try it. Let's stand quietly before the icon. [Gather the children before the icon.] Next, we hold our hands palms up. Let's try it; this is our prayer position. When we hold our hands open, we are telling God, "I am giving myself to you." That's how we'll pray right now—hands open, together, and palms up. When we pray, we give ourselves to God. [Move hands upward and outward toward icon as you say] "To You, O Lord." We also are ready to receive what God gives us. [Move hands back to self.] Let's all say together, "To You, O Lord." Now let's try it as our prayer. Let's be quiet for a moment and look at how beautiful our icon is. [Say prayer with children.]

Introduction

Today we will learn a little more about our wonderful God. Before we begin, let's remember what we've learned already. Who made you and loves you? (God) God wants us to talk with Him like a friend. How do we talk to God? (By praying) Does God care about how we feel? (Yes)

[Place box in front of you.] We've learned that we talk to God in prayer because God gave us His friendship. For our next lessons, we'll talk about other special gifts God has given us. Can you think of a special gift God has given you? [Allow responses.] In this box I have a picture of a special gift God gave to me. [Allow children to guess what is inside box.] It is the gift of my family. [Show photo of your family.] These people love me. God made families to share love. Let me say that again. God made families to share love. Why did God make families? (To share love) Each of us is loved by someone or many people. These people are our family. They are God's gift to us. What are some fun things you enjoy doing with the people who love you? [Allow responses.] God made families to share love.

Reading of Text

Hold text so that children can see the page as you read it to them. Read slowly and draw their attention to the illustrations. After reading each page, use the questions below (given also on the bottom of the student text) to review what you have read.

Page 1

- Some families are big and some are small. Some have a mom and dad, and some have an aunt, uncle or grandparent to care for the children. Some children have two families.
- There is something the same in all families. Do you know what it is? (Families share love.)

Page 2

- *Who is in your family? [Allow responses.]*
- *Let's talk about how families share love with one another. One way we share love is by taking care of someone. [Allow responses.] Do you help take care of others in you family? Tell me how. Do you help take care of your home? How do you do that? How else do you let your family know you love them?*

Page 3

- *Has Father ever come to bless your home? What do you remember about it? [Allow responses.]*
- *We also have a church family. All of us at this church share love. We have two families—one at home and one at church.*

Activity Tracks

Basic: The First Family

The basic activity is the fourth page of each student text. It is a paraphrase of the Bible story that tells about Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel. Read the title and the story to the children. They may finish the dot-to-dot areas and color the illustration. Questions to reinforce the reading:

- What are the names of the first people God made? (Adam and Eve)
- What are the names of their sons? (Cain and Abel)

Group: "God Made Families" Game

We can play a game to help us remember that families share love. Do you know the game "London Bridge"? This is like that game; but instead of singing "London bridge is falling down," we'll sing:

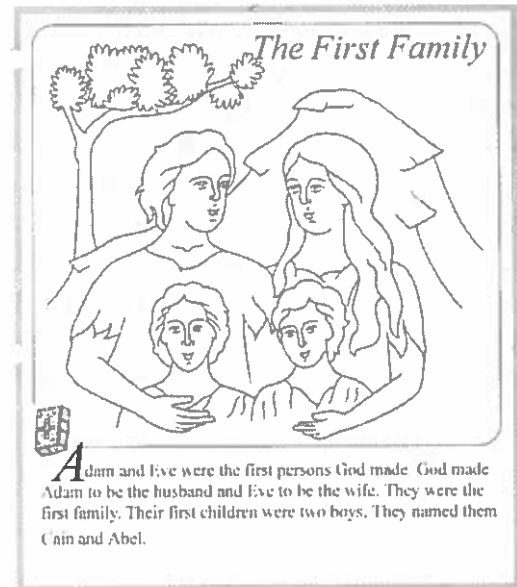
*God made families to share love,
To share love, to share love.
God made families to share love.
Name someone in your family.*

When we get to the end of the song, the person we catch will name someone in his or her family. Then we'll begin again.

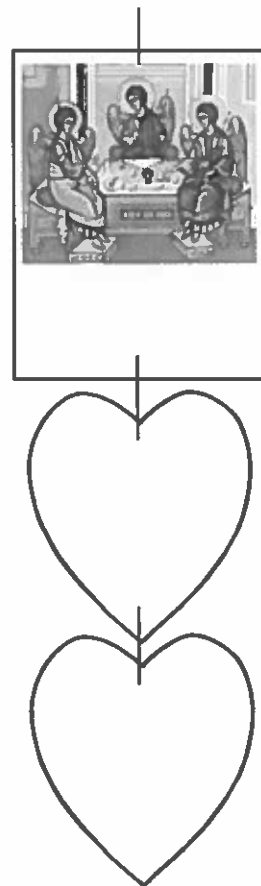
Craft: "God Made Families" Hanging Craft

Materials: "God Made Families" worksheet copied onto heavier paper, markers, hole punch, yarn, parents to help

[Ahead of time you may wish to have all yarn pre-cut, hearts cut out and hole-punched, and the top piece hole punched and yarn already attached.] *Here is a wonderful project to take home to your family. [Hold up sample.] It says "God Made Families to Love." There is an icon of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, because the Trinity is a community of love. On the hearts below there is room to write the names of the people in your family. You can color the hearts red when you're done. [Some children may wish to include extended family members.]*

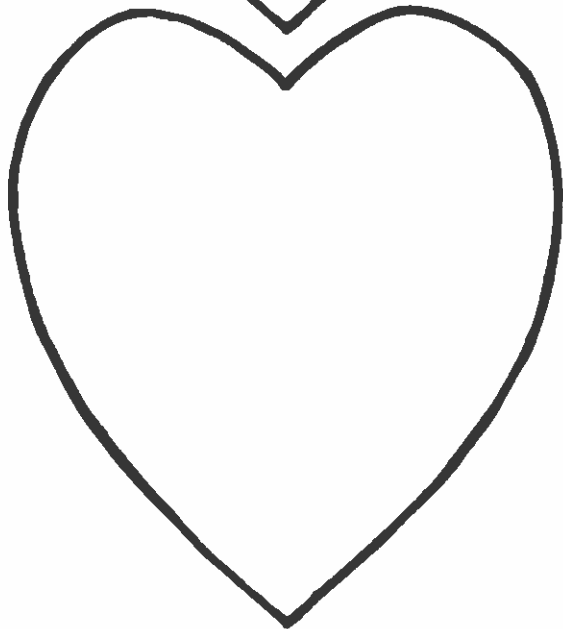
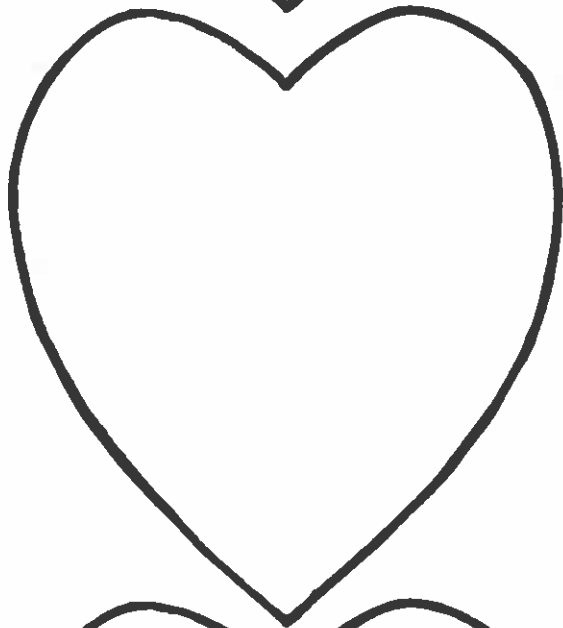
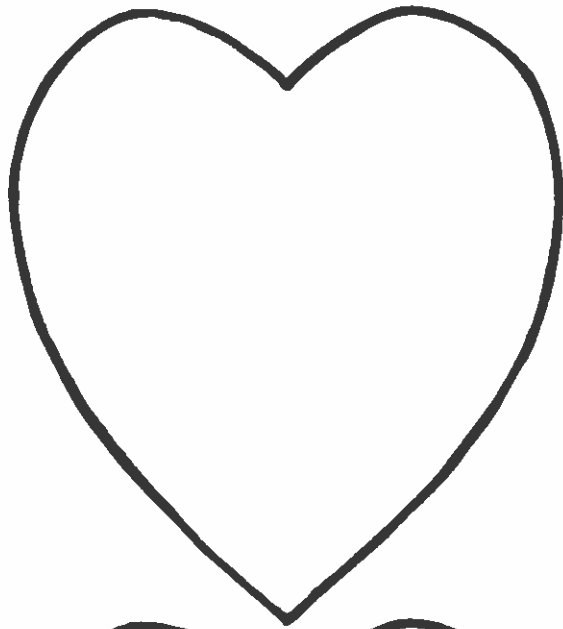


Adam and Eve were the first persons God made. God made Adam to be the husband and Eve to be the wife. They were the first family. Their first children were two boys. They named them Cain and Abel.



Closing

When we prayed earlier, we learned that the first thing we do is stand quietly. Let's try it. Let's stand quietly before the icon. [Gather children before the icon.] How many of you remember how to make the sign of the cross? With our right hand, let us hold our thumb and first two fingers together like this [show the children], and put our other two fingers in our palm like this [show the children]. Let's make the sign of the cross and bow as we say "In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit." For our closing prayer, let's look at the icon for a moment. Now, let's make the sign of the cross, bow, and say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."



God Made Families
to Love

