

In other words

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” (Aesop)

“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” (Mark Twain)

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.” (Dalai Lama)

“Kindness is a choice.” (Rick Warren)

“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” (Proverbs 3:3)

“Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not jealous, is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury.” (1 Cor 13:4–5)

“Be kind and compassionate to one another.” (Ephesians 4:32)

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal 5:22-23).

“My advice is never to let the day end without making peace in the family. ‘And how am I going to make peace? By getting down on my knees?’ No! Just by a small gesture, a little something, and harmony within your family will be restored. Just a little caress, no words are necessary. But do not let the day end without making peace in your family. Our first reaction when we are annoyed should be one of heartfelt blessing, asking God to bless, free and heal that person” (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 104).

“We have known a love that is prior to any of our own efforts, a love that constantly opens doors, promotes and encourages. If we accept that God’s love is unconditional, that the Father’s love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us” (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 108).



In our 50-50 Partnership Agreement we promised to become more conscious of people in our family, neighborhood, parish, and the wider society and to treat them with kindness and respect. Here are some ways your household might carry out your pledge. There are suggestions for families with children of any age and for households without children.

Household activities to foster awareness, kindness and respect

Tell or read stories together about virtuous heroes and heroines who have gone before us, people known for caring and kindness. Some might be canonized saints, public figures, grandparents or other relatives who led lives of service.

Look around for an ill or elderly neighbor or parishioner or a family down on their luck and consider what you can do to make their life easier. It might be to prepare a meal, complete a home repair, provide a break for a care-giver, buy groceries, mow the lawn, or take the person to church or an appointment. Then do it.

Use role playing in order to gain a better understanding of someone who annoys or troubles a family member. Try out various responses to the irritating person.

Designate a “random act of kindness” day when each of you does a kind deed for another family member or someone else.

Practice smiling for a day (or a week!) no matter how grouchy you feel. At the end of the day, share how that affected you.

Go through the house looking for clothes, toys, dishes, tools, anything that you do not need, and donate for someone who does.

Tips for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and all adults who care about children

Affirm the kind, generous, and loving actions you see in your children, not just what needs improvement.

Write a letter to each of your grandchildren or nieces and nephews. Tell the child the good things you see in her or him.

Model concern and kindness for your children: Open the door for them, say “please” when making a request, and thank them.

Instead of showing your irritation when your child is behaving poorly, ask in a kind tone of voice, “What’s bothering you?” or “What do you need help with?”

Work with your children and encourage them to help one another. Point out how each one contributes to a joint effort.

During prayer times, encourage your child to pray for family members and neighbors by name. As children grow and become aware of community and world events, suggest prayers for people affected by war or disasters, aid workers, elected officials, etc.

When a child complains about a friend or schoolmate, ask your child what might be going on in the other child’s life to make him or her unpleasant or unkind. Suggest that your child pray for the other one and, if appropriate, counter the offense with kindness.

Reflect on the difference between being kind toward your children and making them happy. Whose responsibility is their happiness? What do they truly need from you?

Think about what children who know you might see in you. How apparent is it that you show respect for and kindness to others?

We experience God’s kindness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). Seek out the sacrament and take your children with you.

To think about and talk about

Discuss these questions over a meal, in the car, or during a walk; or make one the focus of a “family hour” that includes a snack.

When have you felt hurt by being treated unkindly? How did you respond? Are you happy with the outcome? If this happens regularly, who could help? What is a healthy way to respond to unkindness?

Who are a few living examples of kindness and respect? What do you most admire about the person you named? How could you imitate him or her?

How many of your neighbors do you know? Whom do you overlook? How could you get to know more neighbors? What neighbor might particularly appreciate your kindness? What will you do?

How well do you know fellow parishioners? How often do you greet people at church whom you don’t know, introduce yourselves, and ask them about themselves?

Over a series of dinners, explore ways to live the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy (which you can find by visiting stjvp.org—click on Links, and see Jubilee Year of Mercy on the left). If you live alone you can reflect privately.

What kinds of people make you uncomfortable? Why? How could you gain a better understanding of their situation? What would it take for you to respect and care about a person without condoning behavior of which you disapprove?

How good is your family at forgiving? Do you ever say “I’m sorry” without meaning it? Do you sometimes say “I forgive you” too quickly? Do family members carry grudges? How does that affect your behavior? How can you get better at forgiving?

What was the nicest act of kindness you experienced today or this week?