

# Blessing One Another

Greetings!

As parents and grandparents seek to pass on the faith, they teach traditional prayers. A type of prayer that is sometimes overlooked is that of blessing.

According to Jewish oral tradition, in the beginning God alone could bless people. His first blessing was offered to Adam and Eve, whom he told to be fruitful and multiply. Subsequent blessings were to Noah and then Abraham and his descendants.

Today participants at rites and liturgies are blessed. At the end of Mass, the priest completes our time of prayer by blessing us in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At the end of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we receive a blessing. Bridal couples receive a blessing at the end of the rite of Marriage. Because we often hear the priest conferring the blessing, we may think that the act of blessing is reserved to the priest. That isn't the case.

Prior to the Baptism of an infant, for example, parents and godparents are invited to trace the cross on the forehead of the child being presented for the sacrament. We also bless ourselves every time we make the Sign of the Cross. During

## We can bless our children by making the Sign of the Cross on their forehead.

these blessings and others, we remember that it is God who does the blessing.

Every night as my mother turned out the light in my childhood bedroom, she would say, "God bless you, Patricia." On days that include a challenge, such as a test, we can bless our children by making the Sign of the Cross on their foreheads before they head out for school. As someone departs for a trip, we can pray that God bless their travels.

We can bless our homes when we move in or as we depart before a new family arrives. One of my children's favorite home rituals was the blessing of the rooms of the house on the Feast of the Epiphany. We sprinkled holy water, and sang "Let all around us be peace," by David Haas, as we processed from room to room.



Parents can pass on the faith as they bless children at the start of the day.

We can adopt a phrase that has meaning, such as "Bless the Lord, O my soul," to be said in moments of gratitude or wonder. We can sing blessing prayers over those celebrating birthdays or sacraments, another practice my family has cherished. We can toast one another's successes with cherished words like those of the Irish Blessing. We can say the words that the Lord told Moses to give to Aaron to bless the Israelites: The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Each time we offer a blessing, we become one of the people who shines light into darkness in Jesus' name.