



EMMAUS 90

FAMILY GUIDE

ARCHDIOCESE *of* MILWAUKEE



WELCOME TO THE EMMAUS 90 FAMILY GUIDE!

As you considered the invitation to join this pilgrimage, you may have seen that the Emmaus 90 journey and practices are designed primarily for adults meeting with their peers. But what if you feel called to journey with your spouse? Some Scripture scholars believe that the pair of disciples in the Emmaus story were indeed a married couple. And what about bringing your children along on your pilgrimage? *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* holds that parents are the first teachers, evangelists, and catechists of their children (CCC 2221-2231). If you desire to journey with your family towards Christ, Emmaus 90 is a great way to begin or deepen that journey together.

At the same time, if you've ever gone for a hike, a bike ride, or really, *anything* with children, you know expectations management is key and that plans must be adjusted if we are to keep peace in our own hearts and within our family. Emmaus 90 is no different. This guide was created for *you and your family*, to give tips and suggestions on how to moderate and adjust the Emmaus 90 practices in the context of family life. We'll point out which practices should *not* be adjusted (for parents and adults), along with how to include younger children in the practices (and identify which ones you might consider dropping for them).

Read this guide along with the Emmaus 90 pilgrim book. In particular, we will be looking at the Practices and Pilgrim Group guidance found on pages 8-12. May God bless your pilgrimage and journey as a family!

General Tips

Keep these in mind in general as you adjust Emmaus 90 for your family:

- There is a fine line between *inviting* and *imposing*. Each member of the family should be *genuinely* invited to Emmaus 90; it should never be forced or required. Make sure you have a conversation with your spouse and each adult/older child in your family to gain their understanding and willingness before beginning.
- When starting Emmaus 90, talk with your children about what this journey means - discuss with your children that your family is embarking on a pilgrimage (a spiritual journey) for the next 90 days. As pilgrims on this adventure, each person in the family is going to try to focus on loving God more and helping each other become more like God.
- Create a dedicated space for family prayer. This prayer space can be as simple as a small table or shelf set up with a crucifix, Bible, a candle, prayer cards, image of the Holy Family or other religious images. This can also be a "living" prayer space where parents and children can decorate the prayer space to reflect the different liturgical seasons, celebrate different feast days and solemnities, and remember prayer intentions.
- **For adults and teens (8th/9th grade and older):** aim to keep the individual daily and weekly practices as best as possible. This means everyone should still aim to pray for 15 minutes per day, do a daily examen, etc. If these practices are new, start small and build gradually – add one practice at a time or build up the prayer time by 5 minutes each week.
- **For younger kids:** adapt the prayer practices as a family (more below), or take a tiered approach (very young kids do one thing, older kids do a few more things, etc.)
- We'll give you many ideas in this guide – you don't need to do them all! One or two habits sustained over time is much better than trying to do everything sporadically. Aim to be faithful to a smaller amount of family practices (even if it's just one!), and once you've made it a habit, gradually add more.



- Our lives are full, so adding Emmaus 90 practices (both individually and as a family) may require you to let go of or reprioritize other activities. Maybe that's an episode of TV each night, or maybe it's something bigger. Discuss how you will make time as a family for this journey because the end goal is for the whole family to grow closer to God.

Time for God

Reminder: Adults and teens should keep their individual Time for God practices from Emmaus 90! The suggestions below are meant to help you navigate those practices while also incorporating prayer and reflection for families and younger kids.



Daily Prayer (15 minutes/day with Emmaus 90 Scriptures)

- For Couples: Be on the same page – it's hard to find silence in our homes! Discuss how you can protect each other's prayer time. Maybe that means one parent prays early in the morning (while the other parent watches the kids) and then the other parent stops by church on the way to work. Get creative and help your spouse make space for silent prayer time.
- For Families: Pick a consistent time of the day (before school or before bed) and read the daily Scripture passage out loud with children. Help them think about the passage through conversation. You can ask questions like:
 - Where is God in the passage?
 - What do you think God is telling us here?
 - What can we learn from how the people in the passage respond to God?

Daily Examen (5 minutes/day, ideally at the end of the day)

- For Couples: Make this a little ritual before bed or before leaving for work. Use the *Becoming One in God* prayer template at the end of this guide.
- For Families: Establish a nightly prayer ritual as a family. Gather around a prayer space if you have one; if you don't, perhaps in your living room or by a crucifix.

Family Examen

Begin with the Sign of the Cross

Go around the room, having each member of family say one thing they are thankful for that day.



Pro Tip: Encourage them to address God during this part - "God, thank you for . . ." OR "God, I am thankful that . . ."

Go around the room again, sharing something they could have done better that day. If this is new for your family, consider focusing on thanksgiving first and then building up to this.



Pro Tip: Again, this can be addressed to God - "God, I'm sorry that I . . ." OR "God, please forgive me for . . ."

LEVEL UP: Ask God for help to do better tomorrow - "God, tomorrow, please help me to . . ."

Close with a short prayer, asking for good sleep and thanking Him once more. Finish up with a rote Catholic prayer, a hymn, or something else.

- This is a great way to help kids (or adults!) learn some of the great treasury of Catholic prayers. Depending on what your kids know already, start with the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Guardian Angel prayers. From there, move on to the Hail Holy Queen, Memorare, and St. Michael prayers.
- You could also use Mass parts (the Gloria, Confiteor, or Creed) or a favorite hymn. *All these prayers are readily available online or in many prayer apps.*

Try Laudate or Hallow for Catholic prayer apps!



Pro Tip: Say the same prayer for about a month before changing. You'll be amazed at how quickly you and your kids will have them memorized (even toddlers!)

Daily Journal

- For Families: If they're not into writing, don't force it. At the same time, journaling can be a great way for anyone to start putting their prayers into words. Young kids may enjoy drawing pictures for God to reflect their thoughts on a reading.

Full, Active, Conscious Participation in Sunday Mass

- Make a plan before the weekend for when your family will attend Mass, and make it a priority to go together.
- Don't skip Sunday's prayer time. Praying with the readings ahead of time helps us to remain prayerful during Mass, even when we are distracted by our children.
- If your kids are still learning how to be still during Mass, make sure you take some extra time to prepare on Saturday or early Sunday morning.



Pro Tip: Consider bringing your kids to your church outside of Mass to pray for a few minutes. The pressure will be much lower when the church is empty – this helps them grow comfortable and peaceful in that sacred space and will help your kids learn to get comfortable there!!

More Time in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

- For Couples: Plan ahead for when each of you will spend time with the Lord, and support one another in making that time possible.
- For Families: Bring your kids for a visit to the Tabernacle or Eucharistic Adoration each week. It does not need to be long (5 minutes, even!). Say a few prayers together, then quietly depart.



Pro Tip: If you bring young children, don't be surprised if you can't complete your full 15-minute silent prayer time—simply being there together is a gift.

Regular Confession

- For Families: If possible, go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation together at least once a month. Even if your children are not yet old enough or choose not to go, seeing you receive the sacrament models this essential practice of discipleship. For more resources for the Sacrament of Reconciliation with children, see *Let the Children Come: The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Children* available at www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/sacrament-reconciliation-children-examination-conscience



Pro Tip: Celebrate God's mercy afterward — stop for ice cream or doughnuts so everyone can participate, not just those who went to Confession.

Time for Connection

Weekly Pilgrim Group

- No matter how you structure your pilgrim groups, check in with one another daily. Ask what you thought of the readings for the day and where you can help each other be more faithful to God and grow in our efforts to live the Emmaus 90 practices.
- Offer genuine affirmation for the positive changes and the consistency you notice. If you have agreed to hold each other accountable for Emmaus 90 practices, do so privately and with gentleness.
- For Couples: Talk about what will work best for you. Participating in a pilgrim group together may be beneficial for you or it might be more fruitful to join separate pilgrim groups for support from the wider community. Either way, help each other make time for it.
 - If you have friends who are couples, consider forming groups where wives meet together and husbands meet together.
- For Families: This will be one of the more unique parts of Emmaus 90 for families. The daily check-ins and the family examen will serve as the primary way of journeying together.
 - Most younger kids aren't ready for long discussions, keep things short.
 - If you have older kids participating, use the standard Emmaus 90 Pilgrim Group Meeting Itinerary as a guide. If discussion feels overwhelming, focus instead on the prayer prompts and pray together as a family.



Weekly 30-minute Formation Session

- For Couples: Consider watching together, especially if your pilgrim groups view them separately. You could even host a small watch party

for both of your pilgrim groups - share dinner or dessert before or after to build community naturally.

- For Families: The formation talks are typically designed for adults. Unless you have teens it's perfectly fine to skip this portion.

Walk with One

- For Couples: In addition to praying about who the Lord may be inviting you to accompany individually, pray together about who you might walk with as a couple or family. Is there a neighbor, another couple or family that you might walk with? Consider how your family might pray for them, connect with them intentionally, and love them with Christ's love.
- For Families: Invite your children to think of someone in your community who your family could pray for and serve. Consider how you might spend time with them and serve them as a family. Maybe there is a neighbor who could use a visit or help around the yard, or perhaps you decide as a family to serve together at a food pantry or meal program?

Time for Excellence

Live Sundays Well

- After Mass, set aside time together as a family for rest and recreation. Learn a new board game, have family or friends over for brunch, or go for a hike.

Pro Tip: Clear your to-do list on Saturday so that you are not trying to catch up on chores on Sunday.



Pro Tip: Start your "Sunday Rest" on Saturday evening and end it after Sunday dinner, allowing you time to do preparatory chores for the week ahead.

- For Families: Look beyond Sunday to other feast days and celebrate those with a special treat or activity. See the resources at the end of this guide for books and websites that can help.

Fast from Meat on Fridays

- Plan some meatless meals ahead of time so you have some variety.
 - Pre-Lent: If abstaining from meat is difficult logically, choose another meaningful sacrifice, such as giving up coffee, sweets, or TV.
- Communicate: If you're gathering with friends, communicate your needs ahead of time. If that's not possible, simply choose another sacrifice that day (again, Pre-Lent only).
- For Families: Talk to your kids about *why* we abstain from meat on Fridays
 - Younger Kids: Jesus gave us all of Himself on Good Friday when He died on the Cross. We make a small sacrifice on the same day to remember His love and to thank Him for His gift.
 - Older Kids: We give up meat because it is the flesh of an animal, and Christ gave up His flesh for us. (Cold-blooded animals have traditionally been considered a different category of animal, hence why we can eat fish on Fridays.)

Do Small Things with Great Love

- For Couples: In addition to doing small things at work or for strangers, look for hidden ways to serve your spouse without them knowing.
- For Families: Challenge one another to do hidden acts of love throughout the day. During your nightly prayer time or over dinner, share where you noticed each other acting with love.

Choose One Virtue to Practice

- For Couples: Share with your spouse which virtue you are working on and why.



Pro Tip: If you're struggling to identify a virtue to work on, ask your spouse! They'll have ideas. 😊

- For Families: Choose one virtue as a family, discuss practical ways to act on it, and check in regularly during dinner or nightly prayers.



RESOURCES FOR FAMILY LITURGICAL LIVING:

Books

- *Living the Seasons* – Ave Maria Press
- *The Catholic All Year Compendium* – Ignatius Press
- *The Year and Our Children* – Sophia Institute Press

Websites

- CatholicAllYear.com
- CatholicLiving.com
- liturgicalliving.com

God, please give us the grace that by the end of Emmaus 90 ...

BECOMING ONE IN GOD

PRAYING TOGETHER AS A COUPLE

Find a quiet place for the two of you to sit together.

Begin by making the sign of the cross and say together:

Father, help us get to know you during this time of prayer.

Take a moment to be still and rest in God's love for you.

Turn towards each other, and holding hands, take turns praying the following out loud with your spouse:

Father, thank you for (name of spouse) and the blessings you have given us, especially ____.

Jesus, I am sorry for the ways I have not loved you or (name of spouse), especially ____.

Holy Spirit, come bless and guide our marriage, particularly give us ____ (ask for specific gifts or virtues that you need). Please help us to glorify you through our marriage.

Take turns praying out loud by saying the following words:

Blessed are you, Lord,

For by your goodness I took (name of spouse) as my wife/husband.

Together Pray out loud:

Blessed are you, Lord,

For in the good and the bad times of our life you have stood lovingly by our side. Help us, we pray, to remain faithful in our love for one another, so that we may be true witnesses to the covenant you have made with humankind.

End by making the sign of the cross.