

## Guide for Holy Conversation in your Family

In times of uncertainty, it is important to be open and honest regarding current events. Persons of all ages should be able to share how they are feeling in response to their experiences. Remember -- fear, anxiety, concern, and anger are all normal responses to a natural disaster and tragedy. Try to minimize screen time and continuous access to media reports and updates. This will help decrease anxiety- protecting all persons from constant coverage and overwhelming images that may only increase their anxiety and fear. Reassure family members as they share their concerns. **Structure is also important during times of uncertainty. Persons thrive when they have a clear understanding of expectations. Knowing what to expect will provide a sense of security when everything feels out of control. Routines and schedules can provide a sense of comfort and certainty for all persons, especially young children.**

- **Gather:** In times of uncertainty and tragedy it is important for families to come together. Create a **Safe Space** where all members of the family can listen, wonder, and pray together. You can find a devotional below to help you in this time together.
- **Connect:** Once gathered, take time to connect to God and to one another.
  - *Connecting with God:* Affirm God's presence. Read scripture together. These actions help us remember God's promise to be with us "every day until the end of this present age" (Matthew 28:20). You might also choose to read another text that brings you comfort and helps you reflect on your emotions. There are suggestions listed below.
  - *Connecting with each other:* Physically connect -- look into each other's eyes, hold hands, offer hugs or other comforting gestures. Be present with one another.
- **Wonder:** Wonder together. Reflect on your feelings and concerns. Listen openly as each person shares. Invite persons to express how they are feeling in response to what they are hearing, seeing, or experiencing. Take time to validate all feelings and remember that you do not have to fix anxiety or fear. This will take time. Here are some sample wondering questions:

- For individuals and families as we learn about, prepare for, and respond to the Corona Virus Pandemic:
  - *I wonder:* What have you heard about the coronavirus?
  - *I wonder:* What questions do you have?
  - *I wonder:* How do you feel in response to this disease?
  - *I wonder:* What do you want to say to God?
  - *I wonder:* What is God saying to us?
  - *I wonder:* What can we do next?
- For individuals and families who are praying for persons and communities impacted by the Coronavirus:
  - *I wonder:* What you have heard about the coronavirus?
  - *I wonder:* How does this make you feel?
  - *I wonder:* What questions do you have?
  - *I wonder:* "How is God calling us to respond?"
- **Pray:** Talk to God together. Share your emotions, fears, and concerns. Lift up your hopes and ask for help with next steps. A simple breath prayer can help calm anxiety. Take a deep breath together and say: "Lord, you keep me safe." Then breathe out: "I put my trust in you" (based on Psalm 91). Repeat this as a group, slowing your breath and calming your spirit.
- **Work:**
  - *Reflect:* Take time to journal, color, draw. Give everyone in your family time to be together as they silently process all they are experiencing. You can choose to follow this time with more reflection or wondering. Ask: "I wonder, do you want to tell me about your drawing, journaling, or work?" A great resource for this is: *Praying in Color by Sybil MacBeth*.
  - *Play:* Remember to play. This is one way we process our emotions. We can use our actions to express our fears and anxieties. It is also a way to help all members of our family experience joy in the midst of turmoil and sadness.

- *Respond:* Take time to share what you, your church, community, others, are doing to help your family and others who have been impacted by the Coronavirus. Talk about how you can care for your bodies and protect others. Ponder on what your family can do next. Identifying next steps helps persons of all ages overcome feelings of helplessness. Persons often regain a sense of control and power when there is a clear task
- **Bless each other:** Take time to bless one another. Give thanks to God for your safety. Look each family member in the eye, and make the sign of a cross on their forehead or open palm as you say: "God is with you, you are not alone. You are in God's care."