

# Along the track

## Bless our Home

Home. What a powerful word that is. Home is much more than a house. We can buy or build a house, but we have to create a home. That takes more than time or money. While the building may not change all that much over the years, the home may. It can go through stages just as we do.

I have visited many homes over the years – from the bark huts in Papua to palatial mansions in the affluent suburbs of Melbourne. My early childhood was in a home with no electricity and where there never seemed to be quite enough beds for the eight of us. I have known families who made their home in tents or caravans. The building may provide shelter, a place to gather, to eat and sleep but that does not necessarily make it a home. Home is as much in the mind as in the bricks and mortar. A home is made of hopes and dreams.

Home can be a haven, a refuge, a place where we feel safe and supported, understood and accepted for who we are. It can be a place of happiness and joy, a place where we can be nurtured emotionally, spiritually and mentally. We like our home to be cosy, to be a haven from the stresses of daily living, a place to relax and to get away from it all.

It may feel, even look different at various stages, the toddler years, then teenagers, then adults but the basics are the same. It doesn't happen all by itself. The home creates a space for faith, it gives life to what we believe, what we hold dear, a space where we feel confident enough to explore meaning and purpose. This space for faith is found when love is present, when forgiveness is experienced, when we work together to build harmony and peace, where family members feel accepted and valued, an environment where hope and trust can flourish.

As we work to create our home, we may not always be conscious of how much of that we pass on to our children. It is helpful to ask sometimes what strategies, what practices do we have in place to ensure a peaceful and caring environment, where the inevitable conflicts find harmonious solutions, where times of quiet are the building blocks of peace and serenity? What strategies do we use to build community? A community acknowledges and builds on the strengths and talents of its members. Of its nature, real community is welcoming, generous and outgoing. It is not exclusive of others. Home is not only where the heart is, but it is also meant to be a refuge from uncertainty and tension, from troubles

and hardships, where sadness is shared and where we can feel secure. But it will only be that way if we create such an environment. It is a place of forgiveness. Finding joy and laughter is an essential ingredient of good health as well as a good family life. They are both blessings.

For many of us, the place where we first encountered the Christian faith was at home. Maybe it was prayers at mealtime, or before going to bed. Or getting dressed for church, or a family wedding, a grandparent's funeral, or a baby brother's baptism. What religious rituals or symbols do we have in our home? A crib at Christmas time? Those symbols or rituals make a statement about how important our faith may be to us.

Years ago, we used to ensure that our homes were blessed; we asked for God's loving care and protection on those who live in this home. For some reason, we only did that once but I guess that was because the priest came to do the blessing. We left it up to him. If you were blessing your home today, how often would you do it and what words would you put together for the blessing of your home? Something like this perhaps?

God bless our home.

May those who live here be sheltered by Your love.  
May all who come here find a place of welcome.  
May prayer, joy and laughter never be strangers here  
We pray, loving God that you keep our children safe.  
May their lives be filled with optimism,  
encouragement and hope. Help them to experience  
your world as the beautiful place You created it to be  
and may they learn to care for it and protect it.  
May this home be a place of peace, a refuge in time  
of hardship, a source of encouragement in times of  
the pain or growth  
And may the spirit of pardon and forgiveness always  
be present here.

Why not write your own?

Regards  
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