

June 28, 2026

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time *Families in Mission* **What Matters Most?**

Introduction

This guide asks: What is at the center of your life? Use it around a family meal when there is more time for honest conversation. Encourage children to think about how they spend their time and energy, not to judge themselves but to notice. This is not about guilt. When God is at the center, we are freed to love everyone and everything else more fully. Be honest with each other. Let this be a conversation, not a lecture.

Sacred Space:

Place a cross or simple stone at the very center of your prayer table. Around it, arrange objects representing the most important things in your life: family photos, a phone (be honest!), a homework folder, a game controller, a car key. Look at the arrangement together. Where is the cross in relation to everything else? This is not a trick question. It is an invitation. Let the arrangement begin your conversation.

Opening Prayer: Alternate line between (P)arents and (K)ids

P: God, we spend a lot of time thinking about stuff we want, games we want to win, and people we want to impress.

K: And honestly, some of that is fine. You made us to love things and people.

P: But sometimes we hold on so tight to our plans that we forget to ask: God, what do you want?

K: Loosen our grip today. Not because our lives don't matter, but because your path is better.

P: Give us the courage to follow, even when we don't know exactly where we are going.

K: And surprise us. You are good at that. Amen.

Share Your Story:

Think about someone you love very much. Remember a moment when one of you made a meaningful sacrifice for them, like giving up something important, adjusting your plans, or putting the other's needs ahead of your own. How did that feel for you? And what did it bring to your life in return?

STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

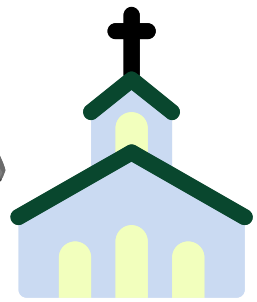
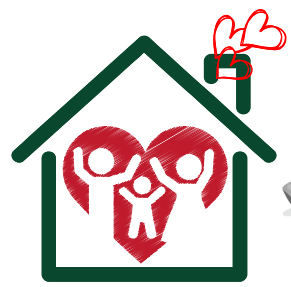
James Pawlowicz arrived in Brazil later than planned. His visa was delayed. His cohort had already settled in. When James finally arrived, his Portuguese wasn't ready for real life. He ordered the wrong food. He walked into a two-hour Lenten service expecting thirty minutes and ended up at the front receiving an anointing of oil he hadn't seen coming. He could have been rattled.

Instead, he reflected: did I know what was happening? No. Did I go forward? You bet. James is a new Maryknoll lay missionary learning what every missionary eventually learns: the call is not a plan. It is an invitation to follow. The delays, the miscommunications, and the unexpected anointings are not obstacles to the mission. They are the mission. God has reminded me that his invitation was and is to follow him. Nothing more, nothing less.

(Going Forward by James Pawlowicz, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, March 11, 2026)



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Sharing the Good News: MATTHEW 10:37-42

Jesus said to his disciples: "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me. And anyone who welcomes me also welcomes the one who sent me."

"Anyone who welcomes a prophet, just because that person is a prophet, will be given the same reward as a prophet. Anyone who welcomes a good person, just because that person is good, will be given the same reward as a good person."

And anyone who gives one of my most humble followers a cup of cool water, just because that person is my follower, will surely be rewarded."

Reflect Together:



Quick question: what is the first thing you reach for in the morning? If you said your phone, you are not alone. Most people do. And it is not necessarily bad. But it is worth noticing. Jesus is asking us to be honest about what is really at the center of our lives. What gets most of our time? Our worry? Our energy? He is not saying stop loving your family and friends. He is saying, make sure none of those things push God out of first place. James went to Brazil with a plan. The plan fell apart in the first week. He got the wrong food, ended up in the wrong service, and got anointed when he wasn't expecting it. And he says it was exactly what he needed. When you let go of your grip on how things are supposed to go, you make room for what God is actually doing. That is not losing. That is finding.

Share: Reflect on a time when something didn't go the way you planned, but looking back, you can see God was there with you. What did that teach you about trusting God over your own plans?



Take Action as a Family:

- Step 1: Write down your top 5 priorities—people, activities, things, and worries that take up your time. Be honest, but don't feel like you have to share everything.
- Step 2: Look at your list. Where do you see God? Now, rewrite the list to show how you'd like it to look.
- Step 3: Pray about the difference between the two lists. Do this with hope, not guilt. Ask God: what small step can I take this week to move closer to the list I want?

Closing Prayer:

Loving God, we come with our plans, our phones, and our idea of how everything should go. We don't always want to let go. But you have surprised us before, and we trust you to do it again. Teach us to hold everything more loosely. Put yourself back at the center of our family. Send us forward with open hands, ready for whatever comes next. Amen.

