



# Priests' Family Health Assessment Manual

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*A Comprehensive Checklist for Diagnosing  
the Spiritual Health of Families*

# **Priests' Family Health Assessment Manual**

*A Comprehensive Checklist for Diagnosing the  
Spiritual Health of Families*

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**INSTITUTE FOR  
CATHOLIC FAMILY  
FORMATION**

## Introduction

The spiritual well-being of the family remains a central concern of the Church's pastoral mission. In every age, the domestic church serves as the primary place where faith is received, nurtured, and lived. Yet many families today face pressures that obscure their identity and weaken the foundations of prayer, order, and virtue within the home. The *Priests' Family Health Assessment Manual* has been developed to assist clergy in discerning the spiritual condition of the families entrusted to their care. It provides a structured, theologically grounded framework for evaluating the essential elements of family life, prayer, communication, discipline, wounds, virtue, and the interior formation of both parents and children.

This manual is intended as a practical aid for priests engaged in pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, marriage preparation, home visits, and the broader work of parish renewal. By offering clear diagnostic categories and concrete indicators of spiritual health, it enables clergy to identify underlying patterns that contribute to familial strength or dysfunction. The goal of this resource is not to impose burdens but to illuminate a path toward healing, order, and holiness within the domestic church. It is offered in service to the priest's ministry, supporting his role as shepherd, teacher, and physician of souls, and assisting him in guiding families toward the fullness of life in Christ.

## **Section 1 - Family Prayer & Sacramental Life**

### **A. Daily Prayer in the Home**

- Parents pray daily on their own
- Parents pray daily *with* their children
- Children know basic prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)
- Children know how to pray spontaneously
- Family has a morning offering
- Family has a night prayer routine
- Grace before meals is consistent
- Rosary is prayed weekly or daily

#### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Children cannot recite basic prayers
  - Parents do not pray together
  - Prayer is irregular or absent
  - Prayer is only “school-based,” not home-based
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### **B. Sacramental Life**

- Sunday Mass attendance is consistent
- Holy Days of Obligation are observed
- Confession is monthly or bi-monthly
- Eucharistic devotion (Adoration, visits)
- Children understand the Mass
- Parents prepare children for sacraments

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Confession is rare or absent
  - Mass attendance is inconsistent
  - Children are sacramentally unprepared
  - Parents rely entirely on school or parish
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**C. Liturgical Life in the Home**

- Liturgical seasons are observed
- Feasts and saints' days are celebrated
- Advent and Lent have family practices
- Home contains Catholic Art

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- No liturgical awareness
  - No visible signs of Catholic identity in the home
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## **Section 2 - Parental Spiritual Formation**

### **A. Parents' Personal Spiritual Life**

- Parents have a daily prayer rule
- Parents read spiritual books
- Parents examine their conscience
- Parents understand the stages of the spiritual life
- Parents seek spiritual direction

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Parents have no personal prayer life
  - Parents do not understand spiritual growth
  - Parents rely on “Catholic culture” rather than formation
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## **B. Parents' Understanding of Their Vocation**

- Parents know they are the primary educators
- Parents understand their authority as God-given
- Parents see themselves as spiritual leaders
- Parents know their example forms the child's imagination

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Parents outsource formation to school or parish
  - Parents do not see themselves as spiritual leaders
  - Parents lack confidence in teaching the faith
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## **Section 3 - Virtue & Moral Formation**

### **A. Teaching Virtue**

- Parents teach virtues explicitly
- Children know the theological virtues
- Children know the cardinal virtues
- Virtue is discussed at meals or bedtime

- Parents correct vice consistently

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Discipline is inconsistent
  - Virtue is never discussed
  - Children lack self-control or obedience
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**B. Modeling Virtue**

- Parents model patience
- Parents model forgiveness
- Parents model humility
- Parents model charity
- Parents model chastity in speech and media

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Parents correct children for behaviors they themselves exhibit
  - Anger or sarcasm is common
  - Children imitate parental vices
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## **Section 4 - Family Culture & Environment**

### **A. Atmosphere of the Home**

- Home is peaceful
- Home is orderly
- Home is free of constant noise
- Home has beauty (art, music, books)
- Home has boundaries around technology

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Screens dominate family life
  - Home is chaotic or loud
  - No shared meals
  - No beauty or silence
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### **B. Recreation & Leisure**

- Family has wholesome recreation
- Children play outdoors
- Music is uplifting
- Books are present and read

- Family spends time together weekly

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Entertainment is primarily digital
  - No shared recreation
  - No exposure to beauty
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**Section 5 - Parental Roles & Unity**

**A. Father's Role**

- Father leads spiritually
- Father prays with children
- Father disciplines calmly
- Father spends time with children
- Father models masculine virtue

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Father is passive or absent
  - Mother carries all spiritual leadership
  - Father is harsh or disengaged
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## **B. Mother's Role**

- Mother models tenderness and strength
- Mother teaches prayer
- Mother forms the emotional life of the home
- Mother supports father's leadership

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Mother is overwhelmed
  - Mother undermines father's authority
  - Mother lacks spiritual support
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## **Section 6 - Child Formation & Education**

### **A. Catechesis**

- Children know the basics of the faith
- Children understand sin and grace
- Children know the commandments
- Children know the sacraments
- Children know the life of Christ

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Children cannot explain basic doctrines
  - Parents rely entirely on school or parish
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## **B. Social & Moral Development**

- Friendships are monitored
- Children are taught modesty
- Children are taught respect
- Children are not sent to dangerous schools
- Children are taught responsibility

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Children have unmonitored online access
  - Children imitate worldly culture
  - Children lack discipline or reverence
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## **Section 7 - Emotional & Mental Health**

### **A. Family Wounds**

- Parents acknowledge wounds

- Parents avoid harshness
- Parents avoid favoritism
- Parents apologize when needed
- Parents seek healing when necessary

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Unresolved anger
  - Emotional neglect
  - Generational wounds unaddressed
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**B. Children's Emotional Life**

- Children feel loved
- Children feel safe
- Children feel heard
- Children feel guided
- Children feel forgiven

**Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Children show anxiety or fear
- Children lack confidence

- Children avoid parents
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## **Section 8 - Parish & Community Engagement**

### **A. Parish Life**

- Family attends parish events
- Family participates in devotions
- Family supports parish mission

### **Missing Formation Indicators:**

- Family is isolated
  - Family attends Mass only
  - No connection to parish life
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## **Section 9 - Priest's Diagnostic Summary**

### **Strengths Observed:**

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### **Weaknesses Observed:**

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**Missing Formation Areas:**

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**Recommended Practices:**

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**Follow-Up Date:**

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**Final Reminder**

A priest's care for families is a participation in Christ's fatherhood. Each home examined and healed strengthens the parish and renews the Church.