

Ask Search Knock

**An hour of Prayer for
Marriage & Family Life**



**A Movement of Continuous Prayer
for Marriage & Family Life**

Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR

Ask Search Knock

**An Hour of Prayer for
Marriage & Family Life**



**You are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a consecrated nation,
a people set apart
to sing the praises of God
who called you out of the darkness
into His wonderful light.**

(1 Pet 2:9)

Ask, Search, Knock
by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR

© 2000, Pastoral & Matrimonial Renewal Center,
P.O. Box 2304
Southeastern PA 19399-2304

All rights reserved. Reproduction of all or part of this book is prohibited
without the written consent on the publisher.

Printed in U.S.A.

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
For those preparing for marriage.....	10
For married couples.....	14
For families	19
For married people who are alone	23
For those who support marriage and family life....	28
For those taking over from you.....	33
Resources	36





INTRODUCTION

**“Ask and you will receive;
search and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you”.**

Luke 11:9

These words of Jesus form much of the basis for the prayer and activity of His followers in every generation. They need to be heard and listened to by us today, especially in the area of marriage and family life. We are very conscious of the increasing incidence of marriage break-up in our society. Many of us are touched at a personal level, at least through family or friends, by the pain and trauma that this causes to couples and their children. Too easily we can despair that anything can be done to turn things around. “Ask and you will receive. Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you”. Do we believe that?

Dynamic Words

The three words that Jesus speaks are all action words.

Ask

In order to ask for something, you have to be very clear about what you want and why you want it. When we are not clear about what we want, we tend to only make suggestions. Or when it's not clear why we want something, we can end up demanding it. What is it we want for those preparing for marriage, for married couples, for families, for married people who are alone, for those who work to support marriage and family life? By praying through this question for an hour every month, we might get much clearer ideas of

what we want, and what we want might move closer to what God wants. God wants everything that is good, everything that is life-giving, everything that brings joy, peace, hope and love. The closer we come to being caught by God's spirit, the more clearly we will see that we have to work for all of that in every way possible, both in our own lives and, within our communities.

Search

We get so used to things the way they are. This is true even when things are not good. We can settle for the status quo. To search is to be open to change. When Mary was asked to become the Mother of God the question she asked was, "How can this come about?" That's the real question of searching. When we get in touch through prayer with what is good and healthy for marriage and family life, our question also has to be: "How can this come about?" We do not ask it in doubt or in despair, thinking that it is impossible, that things have gone too far, that there is nothing we can do. We ask that question with a willingness to search for the ways that are going to make it possible for marriage to be revered, for couples to grow in love, for families to be united in joy, for people to be healed into hope, for the Church to have confidence, for society to be transformed. As we search for these ways we need to hear the angel's word to Mary in response to her question. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you". Through our prayer month by month for marriage and family life, have no doubt that the Holy Spirit will come upon us too, showing us the ways forward for our couples and families. There will be ways that will involve us and turn us upside down in gladness and enthusiasm.

Knock

When you knock at someone's door you put yourself into their hands. What happens next is up to them. The same is true when we knock at God's door in prayer. We have to learn to place ourselves, our concerns, our anxieties, our world in His loving hands, knowing that we will be safe. Sometimes people act as if they are obliged to save the world. They charge out on campaigns and then find that things only seem to get worse! They get burnt out, frustrated, angry and they give up. We don't have to save the world.

All we have to do is make it possible for Christ to save the world. We do this by bringing our longings, our desires, our ambitions to Him. We then need to let Him expand all of those into His which are even greater and more loving. We take the opportunities to open the doors of couples lives to His gentle power. And we leave everything in His hands, knowing that every seed of goodness that we sow in love will be fruitful because of Him.

Great Possibilities

So, there are great things ahead for each of us personally, for couples, families, parishes, the Church, the world. We remain open to these wonderful gifts through prayer and especially now in this Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage and Family life. Hopefully this is not the only prayer any of us are engaged in, but make it a very special time. It is just an hour each month, but it is part of a continuous prayer that we can tune into at any time knowing that someone is holding the doors open for Christ to enter in and be Lord of our lives and our world.

This movement of continuous prayer began on December 1st, 1998. Initially there were thirty-one groups in various parts of Ireland and England, each taking a day of the month to pray for the 24 hours. What a wonderful way to enter the new millennium if we could have people in every parish taking a day of prayer each month to support and encourage the love of husbands and wives and to fill our homes with God's peace and joy.



About this Booklet

To pray for an hour is a very daunting prospect for most people. This booklet is written to help make it possible and enjoyable. However, there are some things to remember as we engage in this hour's prayer and use what is written here.

Our prayers are not needed to convince God about the importance of marriage and family life, nor to get God to give us what we need for these relationships. God is already on our side, wanting everything that is good and life-giving for every couple and every family. Prayer is about opening us up to receive all that God longs to give us. Through our prayer we can also help to open up what is closed in other people's lives or in the life of the church or society so that God may be effectively present to give life.

This booklet is written as a help to people, not as something that becomes a burden. If you can pray for an hour for marriage and family life in some other form then please do. Or you may find some of it helpful and other parts not. Remember, what is here is your servant to be used as you want.

There is more in this booklet than you will need for an hour. Take time to relax with different parts of your prayer time. Do not exhaust yourself with words but let yourself be enlivened and enthused by the Spirit.

The decades of the Rosary are suggested at various times. Some people will find this helpful, others will not. Pray the way that helps you to open up to various issues of marriage and family life. Mary, however, is our great model of openness to God's way and God's spirit.

This particular prayer time is specifically for marriage and family life. Your prayer is part of a continuous prayer for these so you can let yourself be lifted up by the prayer of people before you, after you, around you, as we fill our world with God's love.

Getting Started

You have dedicated the next hour to praying for marriage and family life. It is a big undertaking, a very generous one and a very important one. How it goes for you will depend to a great extent on how you begin. If you set out thinking of it as a chore or a burden, it could become difficult for you. If, however, you set out seeing this next hour as a prayer adventure, it could be exciting and enjoyable. It is an adventure into your own heart to find that God is there even though there are so many other things that hide the divine presence. It is an adventure in prayer into the lives and relationships of married couples and families. This may be your own relationship to start with and then, those of your friends and neighbours and community. But your prayer can also bring you out into the wonderful, sometimes messy world of couples and families to the ends of the earth. And the great truth is that wherever you come to in prayer you can find that God is there before you, wanting everything that is best for those you pray for. Your prayer can take you into the heart of God.

Settling Down

It is so important to take a few minutes at the beginning to settle yourself down. Get comfortable. Have a special prayer space, maybe with a special candle lit in the centre. If you are married, photographs of yourselves and your family could help to get you into the atmosphere. If you are not married, maybe the photographs of friends or loved ones would help to put faces on your prayers.

A picture of Christ or Our Lady or some particular religious image that means something to you can also be a help to settling down and letting go.

Begin by praying for those who have just finished the previous hour's prayer. You may know who that is or you may not. They ended their prayer time thinking about you and wishing you well. Now, let them fill your mind, and heart for a little while. Ask God

to bless them for their generosity, to enthuse them in their love, to heal them in any ways they need His healing. You are taking on the precious gift that they have been carrying so faithfully for the past hour.

You are the salt of the earth.
But if salt becomes tasteless,
what can make it salty again?

It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out
to be trampled underfoot by people.

You are the light of the world.
A city built on a hill top cannot be hidden.
No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub;
they put it on the lampstand
where it shines for everyone in the house.

In the same way your light must shine
in the sight of others,
so that, seeing your good works,
they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.

(Mt 5:13-16)



FOR THOSE PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

When we think of people preparing for marriage we immediately think of engaged couples. They are the most obvious people involved in this, but there are a lot more, and we pray for them all in this time.

Children

Many of those who are children now will one day get married. How are they being prepared for it? Some are getting a good example from their parents and are being given good values for their lives; values that are based on our faith in Christ. They will some day have to accept these values and examples or reject them, but at least, they are being given a great opportunity in life. Many other children are not being offered this opportunity. As they grow up, they may suffer abuse of one kind or another. Some children will be starved of real love and affection. Some will never know tenderness or praise. Pray for all children of every age, that adults, especially parents, will learn the art of loving them in ways that will give hope.

Young People

Falling in love is one of the most beautiful experiences of life and it so often happens in teenage years for the first time. It can also be one of the most traumatic experiences because everything

changes, and that first love may not work out. Feeling special to someone is wonderful. Dating is a sign of leaving childhood behind and moving into the adult world of love, and yet it is not all as simple as it sounds. Young people today are so easily caught up in a sex culture of 'I feel like it, therefore I do it'. Love and sex become the same, and people get badly hurt.

We pray for young people, that they may enjoy this special time of their lives. But we pray also that they will listen carefully to the wisdom of the ages. We pray that young men will learn to respect themselves and the women in their lives - their mothers, sisters, girlfriends, other girls. We pray that young women will respect their own dignity and the dignity of the men in their lives, and lead their men into a greater knowledge of what is right and good in their relationships.

Older single people

Many older single people - in their late thirties, forties, fifties or older - are also open to the possibility of marriage. Their openness is accompanied by questions and life challenges quite different from those of the young single. Then again, for some older single people, marriage appears to be an 'impossibility', and this can be a source of deep pain. We praise God for the gift of all these men and women. We pray that they will grow in understanding of God's unique plan for their lives. We pray that their choices will lead them along a joyful path of loving and faithful commitment, whether this leads to marriage or to another path of love God has in mind for them.

Engaged Couples

These are the people who are most immediately preparing for marriage. They have decided to marry and they have their partner clearly identified. Today, many of these couples are already living together, but most are not. All of them have a great need to set their sights firmly on what is good and best for their lives ahead. There can be a lot of unexpressed doubt at this stage. This can come from a fear of the life-long commitment involved, or it can

come from aspects of the relationship that have not been talked about, such as drinking patterns, family difficulties, occasions of violence, etc. We pray for couples that they will take the time, and call on whatever help they need to sort these things out before they get married.

Most couples do a program of preparation for marriage, many of them very reluctantly! We pray for all the courses that are taking place this month, for those giving them and for those taking part.

In preparing for marriage, couples need to look seriously at the priorities of their lives and let those priorities change so that their relationship of love is constantly placed at the center of their attention. This is a difficult thing to do. So, we pray that our couples will have the generosity to do it.

Finally, we think of and pray for all couples getting married this month. We pray that their wedding day may be filled with joy, and that all who attend will be blessed with God's love.



I now suggest that you say a decade of the Rosary for all these people you have been thinking about while reading this.

Pray that, through the intercession of Mary our Mother,

For Those Preparing For Marriage

**God of love,
we praise and thank You
for the wonderful gift of life.
Help us to cherish that gift in ourselves
and in all whom we meet.**

**Bless all children
that they may know the joy of being alive
and that we may help them towards
a great future.**

**Bless all young men and women.
Be with them through these years
of change in their bodies,
their priorities, their relationships,
so that nothing may damage
their joy and their hope.**

**Bless older single people
as they discern their way forward in life.
Fill them with a deep sense
of their personal goodness and
the awareness that the source of marital love -
God's love - is the same source
at the heart of their lives right now.**

**Bless all couples preparing for marriage.
Help them to cherish each other more every day.
Give them the courage
to put their love for each other first,
so that their lives may be full
and their marriages happy.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen



FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Marriage is a journey, not a destination. It is a journey of each husband and wife towards one another in love. There are many elements common to each couple, but each marriage is unique, each journey is different.

In our prayer, we thank God for the gift of love that drew each couple to one another. That gift of love developed into a great generosity of wanting to share their love for the rest of their lives. We ask our loving God to reinforce the gift of love in each married couple and to increase the generosity of their commitment to one another so that they can let go more fully, more freely, more joyfully to one another.

Newly-weds

We think of couples in their first year or two of marriage. This is a time of joy, of excitement, of romance. We pray that couples in this first year or two will make the most of their time together to learn what a wonderful way of living marriage is.

This is also a time of adapting that can bring its own difficulties for couples. They are adapting to being full-time with someone else. They are facing together the realities of a home, of bills, of shortages. They are beginning to see faults in themselves and in each other that were not as noticeable before. Criticism and anger can become part of their relationship. They are facing the question of having a family in a way that was not there before; struggling with questions on how to avoid having a child for another year or two or maybe beginning to get anxious about whether they can have

children.

This is a beautiful time in a couple's journey of love, but it is also a delicate time in which the future shape of their marriage is formed. Think of couples whom you know who are in this early stage of their marriage, and pray for them and for all young couples. Ask God to be with them, to bless them with gentleness and patience and the ability to face everything together so that their love may grow.

Couples married a number of years

We think of couples who have been married a number of years. People often talk about the seven year itch where after a few years, married people can get very unsettled and have no real explanation for it. This can be difficult to cope with because it can seem that marriage was all a mistake. In these years of marriage, couples have been through a lot together - joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, delights and anxieties. Many have had children and that is both a great joy and a source of worry. Many will have also discovered that they cannot have children of their own, and no one will ever know the devastation this can cause. There have been so many new experiences, and it can be difficult to handle the ever changing scene - decisions to be made; sickness to be faced; uncertainties to be gotten over.

Pray for couples who are ten or more years married. Pray in thanksgiving for the extraordinary generosity of love that has brought them through to this point. Pray for the grace and goodness that they need, to stay with it together, so that their joy will not be overcome by troubles; that their hope will not be dashed by disappointment and hurt; that their affection and romance will not be diminished by routine.

Silver anniversarians

We think of couples who are celebrating their silver wedding this year. What a marvellous achievement this is, for a man and woman to work at their love relationship for twenty five years and then look forward to renewing that love for the rest of their lives. They have seen their children grow up into young women and men. They have shared the joys and sorrows of those years. They have

been part of the awesome experience of setting their children free. They have journeyed together into mid-life not without difficulty but together. There have been many times of closeness and joy in their life of love. There have been times of distance and loneliness, but now as they travel towards this point in their lives, they need our prayers so that they can become people of thankfulness and praise. We pray that couples at this stage of their lives look at each other and know how blessed they are to have had each other. We pray that they can look to the future with confidence and with expectation that the best is yet to come in their love for each other, their communication with each other, their healing of one another, their lovemaking together.

Older couples

We think of couples who are entering old age together. For some people this can be a sad time as they experience more and more the pains of growing old, the worry about what is going to happen, or the hurt of the past; but it can and should be a time of great peace and joy in a couple's love affair. Couples who are thirty, forty, fifty years married have so many great memories to share with each other and with others. They have so much experience of life to hand on to the young people of today, experience that is vital. They have worked at being faithful to each other for all the years. They have had so many times of starting again with one another. We pray that couples at this time of life, will have the openness and generosity to pass on their wisdom of life to those around them.

Couples at this stage of life have also to learn that the most important gift they have is the present moment. As we grow older, we learn the reality of our own mortality and that life is very fragile. We cannot allow ourselves to live in the past or get caught up in the future. The present is where life is lived and couples, as they approach their Golden Wedding Anniversary and beyond it, know this only too well.

We pray for all couples who are at this stage of life that their homes may be filled with peace, that their love may be renewed in affection and that their lives may be lived in thankfulness and praise, of each other and of those who make up their lives.

A second decade of the Rosary could be said now for all married couples.

Pray that, through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, all couples may be renewed in love. Pray that every husband and wife, at whatever stage of life they are, will work together in making their lives together joyful and wonderful.



For Married Couples

**God of love,
in Your wonderful love for us,
You have made the love of woman and man
the mirror of your everlasting love.
May we reverence all married couples
and make it possible for them
to grow in their love every day.**

**Bless all young married couples.
May their passion for each other
grow through their lives.**

**Be with couples who
are a number of years into marriage.
Give them a great commitment to each other
as they learn to cope with
and master the ever-changing decisions
they need to make together.
Keep them faithful to each other and to you.**

**Journey with all married couples
who are entering mid-life together.
Give them a deep affection for one another.
Keep them open to one another
and all those around them.
May their love become
an ever greater gift to the Church.**

**And we pray for couples
who are entering into old age together.
Keep them young at heart and confident,
in their love for each other and,
in Your presence in their lives.
Keep all couples aware of the importance
to love fully in the present
so that our world may be
transformed by the radiance of married love.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen



FOR FAMILIES

A beautiful part of our tradition, which was highlighted and renewed by the Second Vatican Council thirty years ago, is that the family is the Domestic Church. Christ is present in every home because of the people who live there. It is in our homes that the Church is at its best and its worst. It is in our homes and families in a very special way that we have the opportunity and the responsibility to make Christ present through the quality of our love, the aliveness of our affection, the generosity of our understanding, the freedom of our forgiveness. It is here that we have the greatest possibility of reverencing each person as she/he is; of encouraging each person to accept and live with their own gifts; of setting one another free to live life to the full.

Another lovely part of our tradition is being at ease with ourselves as far less than perfect. There is a huge variety of family groupings. Many of these are less than what we might consider the perfect combination, and yet Christ is present in all of them. During this time, we think about and pray for all the different kinds of families that we know.

The couple with their new born baby

We thank God for the joy of new life and the generous love of parents. May they treasure their little ones always and love each other so that their children can grow up with joy and hope. We pray for couples who may be finding it difficult to adjust to their new born baby. We ask you, Lord, to give them affection for each other and patience with themselves.

The couple with young children

There is often a lovely atmosphere of joy and freshness in a home with young children. We thank God for that and pray that we can build it up. There is sometimes a lot of anxiety too as children grow in age and numbers. We ask you, Lord, to be powerfully present so that families can enjoy this special time and have courage to share their anxieties. We pray especially that children will be treasured and not abused, ever.

The couple with teenage children

Again this is a time when joy and suffering are intertwined in family life. There is the joy of new friendship. There is the tension of new freedom. There is often the pain of disappointment mixed with the happiness of success. It can be a time of uncertainty for family members. We pray that all families at this stage will work at understanding each other, listening to one another, forgiving each other, growing in love and affection for one another.

Lone parents with children

This is often a very difficult situation for families; it can be difficult financially, and it can also be difficult emotionally. There can be a sense of betrayal or failure, an experience of being abandoned. We pray that families in this situation will get all the help they need to believe in themselves, to fill the future with confidence and hope. There is also so much to be thankful for, especially the extraordinary generosity of love that parents on their own give to their children. We thank God for this generosity and ask that it will be rewarded.

People who live on their own

Some people cope very well on their own and can build up a very happy and fulfilled life for themselves. Some find it very difficult and can end up with a lot of anger and bitterness. We pray for all who live on their own that their homes may be filled with happiness and peace and kept safe from all harm. We pray that they may grow in a knowledge of the Lord being with them.

Older brothers and sisters who live together

We thank God for the bonds of family love that make this possible. We pray that they will grow in respect for each other; that they will give each other space; that they will truly learn to share their lives; and that their home will be a place of welcome for others.

Couples who have no children

These can be young couples who have decided to leave off having a family for a few years. It can be a time of tension and anxiety about being pregnant or about maybe not being able to have a child.

They can be couples who are coming to terms with the fact that they cannot have children. This is a growing phenomenon and is a traumatic experience for couples.

They can be couples whose family has grown up and left home. Children continue to visit, but it is not the same. We pray for all these couples, asking God to turn them ever more fully to each other, to find their strength in their love, to discover the richness of life they share and to make the decisions that are necessary to bring joy and happiness to each other.

Other 'family-like' households

Beyond marital and blood bonds, there are other households where members live as 'family' to one another. Drawn together by similar goals, shared values or common struggles, they seek to 'make a home' together by living as a united community. We pray that their love will be selfless and sincere and reflect the truth of God who is the source of all love.



A third decade of the Rosary
could now be said for all families.

The Holy Family of Nazareth
is the model for family life,
not because it was perfect but because Jesus was found
there. We pray that every family can discover the joy of
knowing that He is with them also.

For Families

**Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit,
we praise You and worship You.
You are the origin of all life.
You are the source of all love.
We thank You for sharing Your life
and Your love with us, your people.**

**We pray for all families made in your image.
Unite all couples.
and fill them with enthusiasm for their love.
Bless all families so that parents
may treasure their children of all ages
and that children may grow in affection
and love for their parents and one another.**

**Be with those who are alone.
Help them to know their beauty
and goodness and give them peace
in their times of loneliness or isolation.
Fill every home with Your love.
May each of our homes
be places of Your presence
and sources of Your peace.**

Amen



FOR MARRIED PEOPLE WHO ARE ALONE

“Marriage is not all a bed of roses” is the kind of statement that is used far too frequently to put down the beauty of marriage. There is great joy and happiness in marriage. There is a wonderful sense of fulfillment in it. Couples experience the beauty of life and the exhilaration of new life. There is a sense of hope and peace, an experience of love and companionship. Marriage is a wonderful way of living.

Of course there are difficulties and problems in marriages as in every other way of life. These are often the growth pains of a relationship that is moving into a new phase. Working together through these difficulties can be a great experience for a couple that brings them to a better maturity.

However, being married and alone is a situation that can be very difficult to cope with. We pray for those people in this section and, through our prayers, encourage them to hope, trust and love.

Communication break down

We think of couples whose communication has broken down. Sometimes, because of serious hurt, couples find it very difficult to talk to each other. This can be a very lonely time, and unfortunately, the longer it goes on the more painful it becomes and the more difficult it is to do something about it. Pray that any couple in this situation will look for whatever help they need to talk out what is dividing them so that they can begin again with one another.

Separation

We think of couples who are separated for long and frequent periods of time. This happens often because of the nature of work, and it is most often the man who is away, the woman who is at home, maybe with children to look after. There is an obvious source of loneliness here simply in the amount of time spent apart, but there is also an emotional loneliness that is often not obvious even to the couple themselves, until serious problems of communication begin to appear.

Pray that couples like this will stay open to each other with regard to what is happening to them. We pray that all couples will have the courage to make whatever decisions are necessary to keep their marriage alive and growing.

Illness

We think of couples where one partner is seriously ill. This is a very difficult situation that needs our prayers and our care. It is a time of anxiety that many people are not prepared for. It is a time when many people suffer the pain of helplessness and the frustration of uncertainty. It is a very lonely time when both partners can feel isolated, both from each other and from those closest to them. We pray for them that their love relationship may grow through this time, that they will get strength from one another for whatever is ahead and that they will get support from their families and their communities to help their love to flourish.

Death

We recall married people who have lost a wife or husband through death. No one is ever ready for the death of a loved one. Even if there has been a prolonged illness, death is always a terrible shock. This is even more true when death is sudden. Most difficult of all is to come to terms with a sudden death when violence is involved: murder, suicide or traumatic accident. We pray for all those whose wife or husband has died. We pray for those for whom this is very recent and who are feeling the intensity of their loss. We think of those who are having difficulty with the memory of a spouse who has died, maybe because of guilt or anger or

anxiety. We remember those whose spouse has died and pray that they will find comfort in the memory of the love they shared; that they will be able to forgive and let go where this is necessary; that those closest to them will allow them to grieve fully and not try to short-circuit it for convenience; that they may find consolation in their faith and grow in the love of God.

Divorce & separation

We think of those couples who are separated or divorced. This is an increasing phenomenon in our society and one where deep pain and anger and despair is so often present. No one gets married in order to separate; everyone gets married expecting that it will bring happiness and fulfillment. Yet, so many people today have to live with what looks like failure. Sometimes this is because they married the wrong person in the first place and better preparation might have helped. Sometimes, it is the right person, but they fail to build intimate communication until it is too late. Sometimes it is the selfishness of one partner that causes the breakdown through over-indulgence in their own interests in sport, hobbies, or work. It may come from a life of substance abuse, addiction or infidelity.

Whatever the reason, the breakdown of a marriage is always the source of terrible trauma and pain for everyone involved, and we pray for people who have to work their way through this to health again. We pray with compassion and an openness to understand. We pray that they will not despair, but look for and be open to all the help they need to see them through. We pray that people going through this terrible experience will be able to let go of their deep anger and learn to forgive the person, who may have done them such awful wrong by betraying their love. We pray for children who may be caught in the middle of a marriage break-up, that everything will be done to protect them. We pray that couples moving in the direction of separation will take charge of their relationship, and for the sake of each other, their family, and everyone around them, that they will find the ways of healing the wounds and making a fresh start.



The fourth decade of the Rosary could be said now for all these situations of pain and trauma in people because of their marriage journey.

Mary is called the Comforter of the Afflicted. We pray that she may help to bring healing and comfort to all who need her intercession.

For Married People Who Are Alone

**God of love and compassion,
we ask Your special blessing
on those among us
who have lost a wife or husband in any way.
They all set out with high ambitions.
Many now live in disappointment
or deep loneliness,
or anger,
or despair.
Reach into their hearts and lives
and bring them to healing.**

**We ask You to comfort those
who are alone through death.
We ask You to strengthen those
whose spouse is seriously ill;
to inspire those
whose communication has broken down
and give them courage to begin again.**

**We pray for those
whose marriages have irrevocably broken down.
Help them to find the way back
to health of body and spirit.
Give those around them a generous love
and a caring understanding
so that they will be supported as they need.**

**Prompt those moving in the direction of break-up
to see what is happening
and to do everything that is needed to prevent it.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen



FOR THOSE WHO SUPPORT MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

There are many people who give their time and energy in supporting marriage and family life and who need and deserve our prayers. We thank God for the generosity of their lives, and we ask that God may inspire them with an even greater reverence for the love of husband and wife, an even deeper compassion for those who are suffering in these intimate relationships, and a greater ambition for building up the unity of our people's homes.

Church leaders

We think of our Holy Father, our bishops, priests and religious. All of these have a special call in their vocations to care for couples and families. So much good work is done by them in their teaching, their active involvement in visiting, in advising, in comforting, and in strengthening people. We thank God for the very many wonderful priests and religious that grace our Church. We pray that they may be strengthened in their own vocation and find support among us. We pray that they may recognise ever more clearly that the greatest strength for the Church is found in the love of husband and wife, that our greatest potential lies in the vibrancy of good family life. We pray that a lot more of the resources of the Church may be devoted to the support of marriage and the development of family life.

Teachers and educators

We recall teachers and all who are involved in education. For a variety of reasons, teaching is becoming an increasingly stressful occupation. We thank God for the many generous and good teachers who work in our schools. We ask God to give them confidence in what they are doing. We pray that they may have a greater love for the children and young people in their care, and that they may receive from those they teach, the respect and gratitude they deserve. We pray that all our schools will be developed into places where our young people will be treasured. We ask God to help us all to make the education of our young people more and more centered on true values of human life as found in the gospels and the following of Christ.

Organizations and movements

We think of those organizations and movements that are dedicated to the support of marriage and family life. Many groups in various ways give their time and talents to supporting marriage and family life. Think of the ones you know and pray for them. Their generosity is so often taken for granted. We pray for those who help young couples prepare for marriage either with weekend courses or one night a week courses. We ask God to bless any of these courses that are taking place this month, that those giving them will be rewarded for their generosity and those taking part will be open to searching for all that is good and best for their future marriage.

Course Facilitators

We pray for those groups and individuals who are working at parenting courses, Sacramental courses and young people's programs. All of these are important contributions to the development of good communication within our homes, and we pray for the spread of them into all our communities. We thank God for those who take initiative in developing and implementing them for others. May His Spirit continue to inspire people to look for better and more effective ways to help us towards unity with one another.

Healing and relationship ministers

We pray for those who work to bring healing to people who have suffered through the intimate relationships of marriage and family life. We think of those involved in helping people through initiatives like New Beginnings, Project Rachel, Retrouvaille and marriage and family counselling services of various kinds. May people involved at this level not get discouraged by the enormity of the task, but see each person as precious and to be revered. We pray that they may find support and encouragement from all of us to continue their healing mission.

People of Prayer

We pray for all those who are involved in this Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage and Family Life and for all other movements of prayer. We ask God to give us all an ever greater spirit of faith, hope and love. And we ask him to reward greatly those who dedicate themselves in this way to others.

Governments and legislators

We pray for all governments and legislators, that they may develop the laws in ways that favour marriage and family life. We pray for those groups that are dedicated to keeping pressure on our governments for that purpose.

May all these people be led in ways that do not resort to violence or division but always keep the values of respect for every human person as the motivation of their activities. As the laws of our land are developed for the common good of all, may our legislators keep in mind that the greatest stability is to be found in strong marriage and family relationships.

The fifth decade of the rosary
could now be offered for all those
who are involved in supporting marriage and family life.



We ask that, through the intercession of Mary,
Mother of Good Counsel,
that they may all be given a fresh enthusiasm
for their particular work and that together
we may all help couples and families into fuller life.

For Those Who Support Marriage and Family Life

**All powerful and ever living God,
Your will is that no one
should have to go through life
without knowing how special they are,
how treasured and loved they are.
We ask You to forgive us for failing
so many people in their journey through life.**

**Bless all those who give themselves
so generously in helping husbands and wives
to renew their love constantly,
so that through each other
they may know Your love.**

**We ask Your blessing on those
who work at helping parents and their children
to develop a good communication,
so that understanding and love
may grow in our homes
and the reverence for each person be nurtured.**

**We pray for an outpouring of Your Spirit
on those who are engaged
in bringing healing to the people
who are damaged because
of their experiences in marriage or family life.**

**Inspire all leaders of church and state
to know more clearly,
that it is in marriage and family life especially
that human life has its greatest potential,
and that it is in these relationships
that we can come to know Your presence
and love in a special way.**

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen



THOSE TAKING OVER FROM YOU

As you come towards the end of your hour of prayer take a few minutes to think about and pray for whoever is taking over from you. You may know who that person/couple/family/group are or you may not. If you know who it is, think of them by name. Bring them into your mind and heart and ask God to bless them with peace, with joy and with love. Each person has their own preoccupations as they enter into an hour's prayer like this. Ask the Lord to ease any anxiety that is there and help them to be open to all that they are going to pray about.

If you do not know who is taking on the prayer next, just be aware that it is going to happen. There are so many wonderful people among us and around us. Someone else is going to take over where we leave off, and they take over in our name. Thank God for them and pray that whoever it is, will be blessed in all that they do and that their home will be filled with God's peace and love.

**Pray the Hail, Holy Queen
for whoever is taking over from you,
asking that, through the intercession of Mary,
they may come to a real sense
of the presence of Christ in the hour ahead
and that through this they may have confidence
in His love.**



**Hail, Holy Queen,
Mother of Mercy.
Our life,
our sweetness and our hope.
To you do we cry
poor banished children of Eve.
To you do we send up our sighs,
mourning, and weeping
in this valley of tears.
Turn then, Most Gracious Advocate,
Your eyes of mercy towards us.
And after this our exile,
show unto us
the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.
O clement,
O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary.**

**Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God
that we may be made worthy
of the promises of Christ.**

**Let us pray.
Pour forth we beseech You, O Lord,
Your grace into our hearts
that we
to whom the Incarnation of Christ Your son
was made known by the message of an angel,
may by his passion and cross
be brought to the glory of his resurrection,
through the same Christ our Lord.**

Amen

Take the final few minutes to rest in the presence of God with you.

**God of love,
we praise and thank You
for the privilege of knowing You and loving You.
Thank You for this time spent in Your presence.
Bless all those we have thought about
and prayed for during this time.
Bless all married couples.
Help them to rejoice in their love today.
Be with all families
so that your love and peace
may be in all our homes.
And bless all of us
so that Your will may become ours,
Your name may be held holy,
and that Your kingdom
may be established in our world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

Amen



The Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage and Family

is promoted in the United States by

The Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center

Other titles in the Movement of Continuous Prayer Series include:

The Vision and the Dream,

by Fr. Charles Gallagher, S.J. and Ron and Kathy Feher

A call to prayer in response to the USCCB National Pastoral Initiative for marriage. We can change the world by changing our hearts. This booklet presents a practical plan for spreading the Movement of Continuous prayer as well as keen insight into ourselves and others as members of the Body of Christ. It includes a treasure-chest of tips for leaders to encourage others in prayer and inspirational material to make prayer more effective in the leader's own life.

Additional copies of **Ask, Search, Knock** may be ordered from the Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center by writing to the address below, contacting the Center toll free at 877-201-2142 or emailing PMRCusa@msn.com

The suggested donation for this booklet is \$2.95. Please consider donating twice the amount, so that we might continue to offer **Ask, Search, Knock** to anyone who desires to pray for marriage and family.

Kindly send your donation of any amount to:

**Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center
P.O. Box 2304**



Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center
www.pmrcusa.org

The Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center, founded by Fr. Chuck Gallagher, S.J., is an international network of priests, couples, and dedicated baptised who design, implement, and promote life-changing retreats, programs, and resources focused on the Sacrament of Matrimony and a model and prophetic sign to the church. The Center addresses every belonging relationship within family and parish in the most engaging, current, practical, relevant way in the Jesuit tradition and spirituality.



Ask, Search, Knock

by Fr. Johnny Doherty, CSsR

A guided prayer book to help us lift others up in prayer, including every circumstance they might find themselves in relevant to marriage and family. We pray for those who are preparing for marriage, childless, struggling, or caring for a sick spouse, for those whose love is growing and enriching their children and their parish as well as those who are divorcing and in pain. This is an invitation to belong to one another as a faith family and to pray for each other with the compassion and caring of the Body of Christ.