

...illuminates the sacred in the everyday ... invites us to turn a lazy Saturday morning breakfast ... or the end of a stressful day into an opportunity to look for God, hiding in plain sight."

— Rachel Held Evans

# FAITHFUL FAMILIES

CREATING SACRED MOMENTS AT HOME



TRACI SMITH

Originally titled *Seamless Faith* — now with more practices

# Morning

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## *Gratitude Cafe*

One of my parishioners, a busy professional and mother of two, once told me, “In the morning, I take my coffee out to the porch and take a few minutes to reflect on everything I’m grateful for. This is how I find God and keep sane.” This tradition is a version of her tradition, adapted for family use. Gratitude has been proven, time and again, to be a value that increases health of all kinds: spiritual, mental, and physical. To take a moment and reflect on all of life’s many blessings, even once a week, is a worthwhile endeavor.

### **Designed for Ages 8+**

#### **Materials**

1. A variety of morning beverages (tea, coffee, orange juice, hot chocolate)
2. Pencils and pens

**Time Investment:** 15–20 minutes

#### **How To**

1. Choose how often the family will hold the gratitude cafe. Weekly? Monthly? Daily? I suggest weekly, though some families will find this too frequent or infrequent for their needs.
2. On the morning of gratitude cafe, wake up early, make a special beverage for each family member, and gather someplace together. Outside can be a nice option, depending on space and weather conditions.
3. Say, *“There are so many things for which we can be thankful: the air we breathe, the home we live in, the clothes we wear. Let’s each*

*take a moment and write down some of the things we are thankful for. Let's try to each write down five things, and then we will share them."*

4. After a time of silent writing, say, *"Let's share the things we are thankful for with one another."*

5. Once everyone has shared, close by saying, *"God, we are thankful for all of these blessings, Amen."*

### **Notes**

- Gratitude cafe is listed in the traditions section because it is, ideally, practiced with some degree of regularity. Over time, family members will begin to anticipate the gratitude cafe moments and look forward to reporting specific things for which they are thankful. Try to incorporate it at regular intervals throughout your family's life.
- Saturday mornings are a great time for many families, as are Sunday evenings. If the cafe moment needs to be cancelled for some reason, make an effort to reschedule within a day or two.
- Some may need prompting for this activity, especially at first. Ask leading questions:

*Are you thankful for any material blessings of this past week?*

*Thankful for anything special we have done as a family?*

*Thankful for any lessons you have learned?*

*Morning: Gratitude Cafe*

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- Parents and adults can model what it means to be thankful in all circumstances by highlighting the lessons they've learned from mistakes, or the hidden blessings in difficult circumstances.

**Variations**

- At the end of the tradition, put the slips of paper in a basket and use them for the New Year's tradition "Remembering God's Blessings in the Past Year." (See chapter 2.)
- Have younger children draw pictures instead of writing.
- Encourage family members to hold individual gratitude cafes each day, and then compare notes at the end of the week.