
IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY



While summertime allows families to get together for the enjoyment of it, I would like today reflect on the importance of families, in our milieu, by taking up Part 2 of my Pastoral Letter on Human Dignity and the Holiness of God, which was published on the occasion of the feast of Pentecost 1994.

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In the name of this same Spirit, we must also consider each family as one of the most precious elements of our society and our Church. God the Father, creator of the universe and of all that is in it, made man and woman in His likeness. So that they might become associated with His work of love, He gave them a heart capable of loving. God willed that man and woman created out of goodness, reach such greatness that their mutual affection would be an image of His love. Through communion of their love and destiny, He makes His life in them increase. Thanks to the Spirit who is Gift and Love, man and woman form one heart capable of propagating life.

To the men and women who in this way have contributed to giving new lives to the world, to couples which union has brought together, to couples united in the sacrament of matrimony, to couples suffering separation or divorce... to all of them I wish to express my gratitude for this marvellous gift that life is. To the extent that you can, protect and intensify family life according to the possibilities that you have. There are many challenges, today, as well as many obligations; nonetheless, it is my prayer that bonds of tenderness and affection - oftentimes in different forms than before - continue to develop between you and each one of your children. Families today are experiencing very deep changes, but it is of the greatest importance that they remain havens of peace, goodness, mutual help, and be growth-producing. May they also be a school of life and holiness in the midst of our daily joys and sorrows: may we discover, there, a God ever at work so that each family member may grow and develop according to all the qualities placed in him or her by the Creator.

Parents united by the sacrament of matrimony, continue to give your life for others, after the example of Jesus who revealed to us that there is no greater love than this. Continue to raise your children, born of your love for one another, in faithfulness to the Gospel. Seek first of all the Kingdom of God and His justice. Give to prayer its rightful place: those moments you will have consecrated to God in thanksgiving and petition will become moments of inestimable peace and unity. Continue to be useful to those around you. Continue to be warm and welcoming to the poorer in your midst. May you always give thanks for what you became, on your wedding day. May the demands made by the Church at the time you exchanged vows continue to produce in you and your family an abundant harvest of peace and joy. By basing yourself on your mutual love and on the love of Christ, take an active part in the construction of a kinder and more just world. As much as possible, be happy witnesses of true love to young lovers who are looking forth to establishing their own families and who are looking at you with a critical eye. Tell our people that love is possible and that even after ten, twenty, or even fifty years of conjugal and family life, there is much room for joy, freedom, growth, happiness, solidarity, and peace.

Have a good week - and a good summer!

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« From A Bishop's Journal » (025) (13 July 1994)