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## WITNESSES OF GOD'S LOVE (6)

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May this sixth excerpt from my Pentecost 2004 pastoral letter help us discover anew the beauty and grandeur of Christian marriage.

### **FORGIVENESS**

If communication and affection are major components in a community of life and love, there is another component that is absolutely essential, and that is forgiveness. The more humans know one another, the more can they identify their mutual strong and weak points as well as their limits. They do not take one another for someone else! However, this does not necessarily mean that they can forgive one another's faults and failings against one's word, not living up to the other's expectations, or one's not responding appropriately to the common project. Without leading to scrupulosity, daily forgiveness can be a wonderful way to an intense communion of life. If a couple can forgive one another every day, all the negative which has crept into the day dissipates without making a drama or being the subject of endless reminders. Turning to grace of God contributes to the couple's welfare. The future once again looks bright, to the couple!

### **PRAYER**

While some describe prayer as a simple trusting conversation with God, others find it more difficult, more complicated, and more of an effort. Sometimes prayer becomes a quiet, daily habit, a period of recollection set aside morning and evening for prayer. It is sometimes a silent activity, an exchange between lovers on things religious. Prayer leads to a real meeting with the Creator, the Saviour, in the Holy Spirit. It takes much tact for a couple to get to pray together since the values and beliefs of one are not necessarily the same as the other's. However, for those who believe and who respect one another, meeting in prayer can become one of the day's highlights. For people who have had a Christian marriage, it is once again the wedding at Cana, because Jesus is a guest at this intimate moment, and one who can transform everything into the greatest love affair. Prayer is not necessarily made up of words and formulas, but it is a real faith encounter with God.

### **FAMILY**

At a time when every couple forms a family unit, sometimes close but often apart from other members of their respective families (parents, grandparents), it is pleasing to realise that new ties can be created according to the most varied interests, whether cultural, sports, social, or religious. If it is not good for man and woman to be alone, it does not necessarily follow that it is good for a couple to always be alone. In this era of globalization, no one can be isolated from others. Quite the opposite. While respecting their intimacy as a couple, it is important that ties be created with one's milieu. Couples and members of the family unit are not only the first implicated in this affair, they are also the first to benefit from it. Through the days and seasons, parents and grandparents will discover new roles to play with their children and grandchildren, while safeguarding their traditions and customs.

Intergenerational relationships can be most beneficial to both couple and children, as well as to those of the preceding generation who live only for them.

### **COMMUNITY**

One's fellow citizens also form part of one's immediate family. Civil, provincial, and federal authorities are involved in the welfare of every family, If the couple must entertain good relationships with others, social and community leaders have serious obligations not only towards the environment, housing, revenue, leisure, transportation, education, health, and justice for all citizens, but more especially for families which are the

basic, vital unit of society. Pope John Paul II has often called for a charter on family rights; he has even drafted an outline of it in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. The Church openly and vigorously defends the rights of the family against the intolerable claims of both State and society.

#### **COMMITMENT**

The couple must not isolate itself from others and turn in on itself. It must also show solidarity with its milieu. Temporary or permanent commitments can be made within the larger or at least the local community, according to the needs expressed and the couple's aptitudes. This is one way for a couple to return to the milieu what it gets from it. Such commitments are very beneficial, if there is balance between one's personal life and life as a couple. One can sometimes be committed too much to one thing for the health of their couple relationship or family life. Double commitments are getting to be more and more necessary, in the Church; mutual help between couples, and family catechesis or religious education, are the two main components of family ministry. Is there any better support to a couple than that of another couple? Can there be better catechesis and religious education of one's children than that given by the parents themselves? This is a very demanding commitment, but it is really a mutual and very stimulating enrichment, most of the time.

#### **TESTIMONY: THE LORD HAS WORKED WONDERS**

At the time it was the natural thing for us to enter a Christian marriage. For forty-four years we have had the certainty the sacramental grace has been our constant support. We have always felt God's presence in times of happiness and times of anguish, and in more difficult situations. We had the happiness of having two sons, the joy of our lives, and three grandchildren who are the sun of our lives. Their birth came as beautiful gifts. They are our riches and our hope. As with everyone else, life has brought us both good and bad surprises. Our love has always been our strength. We thank the Holy spirit for this grace of always seeing His light and feeling His protective hand over our home. We often say that we are blessed. We were blessed in our parents, our family, our friends. Yes, the Lord has worked wonders for us! And we thank Him.

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« From A Bishop's Journal » (555) (24 August 2004)