

Consecrated to Christ through Family Life (Part 1)

1. Openness to Life

Psalm 127: the Blessing of Children

Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;

you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;

your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. (Psalm 127:1-4)

Vatican II on the Family and Openness to Life

By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory. Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves... Hence, true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it, without diminishment of the other ends of marriage, are directed to disposing the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will increase and enrich his family from day to day... (Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* 48.1; 50.1; cited in CCC 1652-53)

2. Holy Mass and Sunday Rest

Hebrews 10: “Not Neglecting to Meet Together”

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some*, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Pope John Paul II: The Eucharist and the Family

The Eucharist is the very source of Christian marriage. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, in fact, represents Christ's covenant of love with the Church, sealed with His blood on the Cross. In this sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant, *Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed.* As a representation of Christ's sacrifice of love for the Church, the Eucharist is a fountain of charity. In the Eucharistic gift of charity the Christian family finds the foundation and soul of its "communion" and its "mission"... (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* no. 57)

Pope Francis: Sunday Rest and Family Time Together

Let me tell you one thing: when I [hear confessions]... when a young mom or dad comes, I ask: “How many children do you have?” and they tell me. And I always ask another question: “Tell me: do you play with your children?” Most of them answer: “What are you asking, Father?”—“Yes, yes, do you play? Do you spend time with your children?” *We are losing this capacity, this wisdom of playing with our children.* The economic

situation pushes us to this, to lose this. Please, spend time with our children!... And found within this context is also the issue of working Sundays, which concerns not only believers, but touches everyone, as an ethical choice. It is this area of gratuitousness that we are losing. The question is: “What do we want to give priority to?” Having Sundays free from work—apart from necessary services—stands to confirm that the priority is not economic but human, gratuitousness, not business relationships but *those of family*, of friends, for believers the relationship with God and with the community. (Pope Francis, *Give Us This Day Our Daily Love*, 33-34)

3. Family Prayer

The Catechism: Jesus Learned to Pray in His Family

The Son of God who became Son of the Virgin also learned to pray according to his human heart. *He learns the formulas of prayer from his mother, who kept in her heart and meditated upon all the “great things” done by the Almighty* (Cf. Luke 1:49; 2:19; 2:51). He learns to pray in the words and rhythms of the prayer of his people, in the synagogue at Nazareth and the Temple at Jerusalem. But his prayer springs from an otherwise secret source, as he intimates at the age of twelve: “I must be in my Father’s house.” (Luke 2:49) (CCC 2599)

Pope Francis on Family Prayer

We are well aware of how many difficulties two spouses experience... The important thing is to keep alive their bond with God, who stands as the foundation of the marital bond... When the family prays, the bond is preserved. When the husband prays for his wife and the wife prays for her husband, the bond becomes strong; one praying for the other. (Pope Francis, *Give Us This Day Our Daily Love*, 4)

Pope John Paul II on the Family Rosary

The family that prays together stays together. The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God. Many of the problems facing contemporary families, especially in economically developed societies, result from their increasing difficulty in communicating. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television. To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images, images of the mystery of salvation: the image of the Redeemer, the image of his most Blessed Mother. The family that recites the Rosary together reproduces something of the atmosphere of the household of Nazareth: its members place Jesus at the centre, they share his joys and sorrows, they place their needs and their plans in his hands, they draw from him the hope and the strength to go on. (John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* no. 41)

4. Holy Scripture

Deuteronomy 6: The *Shema* and the Parents' Role in Scriptural Education

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. *And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* (Deuteronomy 6:4-8)

Pope Benedict XVI: Scripture in Family Life

The great mystery of marriage is the source of the essential responsibility of parents towards their children. Part of authentic parenthood is to pass on and bear witness to the meaning of life in Christ: through their fidelity and the unity of family life, *spouses are the first to proclaim God's word to their children.* The ecclesial community must support and assist them in fostering family prayer, attentive hearing of the word of God, and *knowledge of the Bible.* To this end the Synod urged that *every household have its Bible, to be kept in a worthy place and used for reading and prayer.* Whatever help is needed in this regard can be provided by priests, deacons and a well-prepared laity. The Synod also recommended the formation of small communities of families, where common prayer and *meditation on passages of Scripture* can be cultivated. Spouses should also remember that “the Word of God is a precious support amid the difficulties which arise in marriage and in family life.” (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God, *Verbum Domini* no. 85).

Consecrated to Christ through Family Life (Part 2)

4. Daily Work

Genesis 2: Adam is Placed in Eden to Work the Garden

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it... (Genesis 2:15)

The *Catechism* and Paul VI: The Hidden Years of Jesus

During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: *a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor*. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God, a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was “obedient” to his parents and that he “increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.” Jesus’ obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. *The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: “Not my will....” The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.* The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life. (CCC 531-533)

Pope Paul VI: the “School of Nazareth”

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus—the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for *silence*, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us ... A lesson on *family life*. *May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character* ... A lesson of *work*. Nazareth, home of the “Carpenter’s Son,” in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work.... To conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern, their brother who is God. (Paul VI, at Nazareth, Jan 5, 1964, cited in CCC 533)

5. Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Genesis 3: The Fall of the Family

He said, “...Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.*” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “*The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.*” (Genesis 3:12-13)

Ephesians 4: Anger and the Devil’s War on the Family

Be angry but do not sin; *do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil....* Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:26, 31-32)

Pope Francis on Reconciliation in the Family

It is true that there are so many difficulties in married life, so many, when there is insufficient work or money, when the children have problems. So much to contend with. And many times the husband and wife become a little fractious and argue between themselves. They argue; this is how it is. There is always arguing in marriage; sometimes the plates even fly! Yet we must not become saddened by this; this is the human condition. The secret is that love is stronger than the moment when there is arguing, and therefore I always advise spouses: do not let a day when you have argued end without making peace. Always! And to make peace isn't necessary to call the United Nations to come to the house and make peace. A little gesture is sufficient, a caress, then let it be! Until tomorrow! And tomorrow begin again. And this is life, carrying on, carrying on with courage and the desire to live together. And this is truly great; it is beautiful! (Pope Francis, *Give Us This Day Our Daily Love*, 5).

Pope John Paul II: The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Repentance and mutual pardon within the bosom of the Christian family, so much a part of daily life, receive their specific *sacramental* expression in Christian Penance. (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* no. 57)

6. Redemptive Suffering

The Suffering of Childbirth

To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children..." (Genesis 3:16)

The Suffering of Fruitless Toil

And to Adam he said, "...Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17-19)

Pope Francis: The "Daily Martyrdom" of Family Life

Today we have more martyrs than in the first centuries! However, there is also daily martyrdom, which may not entail death but is still a "loss of life" for Christ, by doing one's duty with love, according to the logic of Jesus, the logic of gift, of sacrifice. Let us think: how many dads and moms every day put their faith into practice by offering up their own lives in a concrete way for the good of the family! (Pope Francis, *Give Us This Day Our Daily Love*, 109)

The Catechism: Marriage is a Participation in the Cross

It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. This grace of Christian marriage is *a fruit of Christ's cross*, the source of all Christian life. (CCC 1615)

7. Conclusion

Ephesians 5-6: The Christian Family and the “Great Mystery”

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish... “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church... (Ephesians 5:21-32)

The Catechism: Family Life as a Foretaste of the Resurrection

“Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony.” Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another’s burdens, to “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,” and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. *In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb.* (CCC 1642)