



# UP TO THE SOURCE

## MONTHLY WORDS

### December: Family—Become What You Are



St. John Paul II has been called *Pope of the Family*. First, because of his very pastoral love for families that were entrusted to him. Second, for his teachings regarding marriage and family, which have become a lighthouse of truth discovering the greatness and beauty of their vocation.

#### ***The Plan of God for Marriage and Family***

God **created** family as the place to love and to be loved for our own sake, where we learn to be human. There we also receive the capacity to know Himself. In the family we learn who we are. In the unique love of parents, we discover our unique value of the baptismal call of being sons and daughters. There we learn the basic grammar of love which is a necessary introduction in knowing God as the Father and Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church.

**Man and Woman He created them as the Image of the God Who Is Love.** Contemplating the family we understand that the Trinity is not a useless category as the German philosopher Immanuel Kant thought. Man fully understands himself only if he discovers himself as generated by a relation of love and that he is called to live in a continuous gift of self. St. John Paul II has explained this in his

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**Theology of the Body** explaining the original experiences of solitude and unity. The former expresses the capacity of all human beings to enter into the loving relationship with God. The latter means the call to form a **communion of persons** as well as the fact that God created man and woman, one for the other to become perennial mutual gifts. Even though Original Sin endangers God's original plans with the family, Christ Redeemer makes it possible for every man and woman.



Thanks to the **Sacrament of Matrimony**, we can understand how great is the love of Christ for His Church and the love of God for humanity. At the same time, this sacrament enables spouses to love one another with the same love with which Christ loves his Church. Loving one's spouse means loving him with the same love of Christ. By virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. The spouses participate in the saving love of Christ as a couple, so that the first and immediate effect of marriage is the Christian conjugal bond. The content of this participation in Christ's life is conjugal love, that involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter: appeal of the body and instinct,

power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity which leads to forming one heart and soul. It demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility". (Cfr. *Familiaris consortio*, 13).

### **The Role of Christian Family**

These roles belong to the family by its nature given by the Creator and reinforced by the Sacrament of Marriage.

**1. Forming a community of persons.** Based on the indivisible unity of conjugal communion the family reveals the unique value of each one of us. To say that we are persons, means that only love responds to our greatness and not the measure of our utility. Love is the principle and power of communion. No matter what, we always remain sons and daughters; we are important for somebody.

**2. Serving life.** By getting married the couple accepts that one of the biggest blessings and tasks of their union are children. This task is double: the transmission of Life and the education of the children. The parents are cooperators in the Love of God the Creator. Only within the marriage can a child understand his unique value as a fruit of mutual gift. Our origin is in the love of parents, who cared for us and thus educated us. While only the marriage is the place worthy of a person to be born, the openness to the new life reveals one essential dimension of marriage whose love desires to grow. The parents are first and primary educators of the children and nobody can take from them this



right and duty. Thanks to the principle of subsidiarity, the Church and the society act as a help to them. It is not the will of spouses nor of society to decide what the family is. The acceptance of the moral teaching of the Church regarding transmission of life, which is founded both in natural law and Revelation, is a necessary condition of living marriage as a way of holiness.

**3. Participating in the development of society.** The family is not a product of a society but an important part of the original plan of God with humanity. The family is the first and vital cell of society. In the family, a man experiences what communion and sharing means. The society is to be at the service of the family.

**4. Sharing in the life and mission of the Church.** Family is the way of the Church. Every Catholic family is a Domestic Church and therefore a place of friendship with Christ and of first evangelization. Christian spouses and parents are included in the universal call to sanctity. Marriage is the sacrament of mutual sanctification. For them this call is specified by the sacrament they

have celebrated and is carried out concretely in the realities proper to their conjugal and family life. This gives rise to the grace and requirement of an authentic and profound conjugal and family spirituality

### ***Elements of Family Spirituality***

- Relationship with God: Eucharist, Confession, and family prayer. Devotion to Mary, mother of beautiful love.
- Family relations: marriage, relations with children, elderly parents, siblings, extended family. Love and care. Pardon and reconciliation. Time together. Motherhood. Fatherhood. Piety and thankfulness.
- Work as an expression of love for the family.
- Apostolate and belonging to the local Church, association of families, civilization of love.

## To know more

1. Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, 1981
2. Theology of the Body, Catechesis, Man and Woman He created them, 1979 - 1983
3. Gratissimam Sane, Letter to the Families, 1994
4. Meditation on the Theme of Sincere Gift, 1994
5. Letter to the Children, 1994
6. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995
7. Love and Responsibility, 1960
8. The Jeweller's Shop, 1960

## Prayer

*Lord God, from You every family in Heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, You are love and life. Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, the fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love. Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all the families in the world. Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love. Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass. Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission in the family and through the family. We ask this of You, Who is life, truth and love with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Pope John Paul II



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