



# UP TO THE SOURCE

*Adoratio* with St. John Paul II

FOR COUPLES

*The Sincere Gift of Self*

From the "Letter to Families" (11) from Pope John Paul II, Feb. 2, 1994

After affirming that man is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, the Council immediately goes on to say that he cannot *"fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self."* This might appear to be a contradiction, but in fact it is not. Instead it is the magnificent paradox of human existence: an existence called to *serve the truth in love*. Love causes man to find fulfilment through the sincere gift of self. To love means to give and to receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually.

By its very nature the gift of the person must be lasting and irrevocable. The indissolubility of marriage flows in the first place from the very essence of that gift: *the gift of one person to another person. ... "I... take you... as my wife (as my husband) and I promise to to be true to you... for all the days of my life"*. A gift such as this involves an obligation much more serious and profound than anything which might be "purchased" in any way and at any price. Kneeling before the Father, from whom all fatherhood and motherhood come, the future parents come to realize that they have been "redeemed". They have been purchased at great cost, *by the price* of the most sincere gift of all, *the blood of Christ* of which they partake through the Sacrament. The liturgical crowning of the marriage rite is the Eucharist, the sacrifice of that "Body which has been given up" and that "Blood which has been shed", which in a certain way finds expression in the consent of the spouses.

When a man and woman in marriage mutually give and receive each other in the unity of "one flesh", the logic of the sincere gift of self becomes a part

of their life. Without this, marriage would be empty; whereas a communion of persons, built on this logic, becomes a communion of parents. When they transmit *life to the child, a new human "thou" becomes a part of the horizon of the "we" of the spouses*, a person whom they will call by a new name: "our son...; our daughter...". "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" (Gen 4:1), says Eve, the first woman of history: a human being, first expected for nine months and then "revealed" to parents, brothers and sisters. The process from conception and growth in the mother's womb to birth makes it possible to create a space within which the new creature can be revealed as a "gift": indeed this is what it is from the very beginning. Could this frail and helpless being, totally dependent upon its parents and completely entrusted to them, be seen in any other way? The newborn child gives itself to its parents by the very fact of its coming into existence. *Its existence is already a gift, the first gift of the Creator to the creature.*

*In the newborn child is realized the common good of the family.* Just as the common good of spouses is fulfilled in conjugal love, ever ready to give and receive new life, so too the common good of the family is fulfilled through that same spousal love, as embodied in the newborn child.

But is it really true that the new human being is a gift for his parents? A gift for society? Apparently nothing seems to indicate this. On occasion the birth of a child appears to be a simple statistical fact, registered like so many other data in demographic records. It is true that for the parents the birth of a child means more work, new financial burdens and further inconveniences, all of which can lead to the temptation not to want another birth. In some social and cultural contexts this temptation can become very strong. Does this mean that a child is not a gift? That it comes into the world only to take and not to give? These are some of the disturbing questions which men and women today find hard to escape. *A child comes to take up room, when it seems that there is less and less room in the world.* But is it really true that a child brings nothing to the family and society? Is not every child a "particle" of that common good without which human communities break down and risk extinction? Could this ever really be denied? The child becomes a gift to its brothers, sisters, parents and entire family. *Its life becomes a gift for the very people who were givers of life* and who cannot help but feel its presence, its sharing in their life and its contribution to their common good and to that of the community of the family. This truth is obvious in its simplicity and profundity, whatever the complexity and even the possible pathology of the psychological make-up of certain persons. *The common good of the whole of society dwells in man; he is, as we recalled, "the way of the Church".* Man is first of all the "glory of God": "Gloria Dei vivens homo", in the celebrated words of Saint Irenaeus, which might also be translated: "the glory of God is for man to be alive". It could be said that here we encounter the loftiest definition of man: *the glory of God is the common good of all that exists; the common good of the human race.*

## Litany of Married Saints

Holy Mary Mother of God, and Saint Joseph of Nazareth, Spouses,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, Parents of the Virgin Mary,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saints Aquila and Priscilla, Missionary Couple,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saints Anastasios and Theopista, Martyred Spouses,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saints Henry II and Cunegunda, Spouses and Emperors,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saint Stephen and Blessed Gisella, Spouses and Monarchs,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saint Isadore the Farmer and Saint Mary of the Head, Married Laborers,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Blessed John and Thecla Hashimoto, Married Martyrs and Parents of Martyrs,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Blessed John Yu Jung and Lutgarda Yi Sun-I, Spouses and Martyrs,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saints Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin, Spouses and Parents of Saints,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Blessed Victoria Rasoamanarivo, Faithful Wife,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saint Franz Jägerstätter, Husband and Martyr,	<i>Pray for us</i>
Saints Luigi and Marie Beltrame-Quattrocchi, Spouses,	<i>Pray for us</i>



## A Prayer for Couples by St. John Paul II

God, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth comes,  
Father, you are love and life,  
make every human family on earth become,  
through your Son, Jesus Christ, “born of woman,”  
and through the Holy Spirit, source of divine charity,  
a true sanctuary of life and love  
for generations that always renew themselves.

Let your grace guide the minds and deeds of the spouses  
towards the good of their families  
and all the families in the world.

Let the younger generation find strong support in the family,  
for their humanity and their growth in truth and love.

Let love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage,  
prove stronger than any weakness or crisis,  
through which our families sometimes pass.

Finally, we ask you through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,  
that the Church in the midst of all the nations of the earth  
can fruitfully fulfill its mission  
in and through the family.

You, who are life, truth and love,  
in the unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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“The good God gave me a father and a mother worthier of heaven than of earth” (S. Thérèse of Lisieux, Letter 261).

