

# FAMILY: A COMMUNITY OF LOVE

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*“And Joseph too went up from Galilee ... to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her firstborn son.” --Luke 2:4-7*

From this Holy Family, we learn much about God’s plan for families. The fact that, in Christ, God willed to be born into a human family has made each family a place where God is present.

*“Families are a sign of God’s Presence.” -Follow the Way of Love, USCCB*

The Eucharist and the Family have a deep and special relationship. If we understand the family as the domestic church then certainly we must recognize a connection between Eucharist and family. In the Eucharist we are made participants in the one sacrifice that Christ offered for our sins on the Cross.

In the same way, the family is called to be an image of love and self-sacrifice. The husband and wife give everything to each other and out of this boundless love new life is created just as in Christ’s own self-sacrifice there is new life and redemption. Therefore we can say that the Eucharist is a sacrament of love and sacrifice and that Marriage is likewise a call to selfless love and sacrifice for the sake of the other.

*“We [the US Bishops] understand the pain of those for whom divorce seemed the only recourse. We urge them to make frequent use of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation.” - USCCB pastoral letter, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan (2009)*

Those in non-traditional families are also called to a sacrificial foundation of relationship with Christ and each other. Whether divorced or single, in single parent or second marriage situations, all are called to honor God and to manifest His love in their lives.

Within our families, we learn how to relate with others and to trust and to love. It is also where we first learn about God and develop our understanding of right and wrong. The well-being of society absolutely depends on healthy families, committed marriages and responsible parenting.

*“Strong families are built on the foundation of strong marriages. Strong societies are built on the foundation of strong families. Indeed all civic communities should do what they can to promote economic and social policies that aid young married couples and facilitate their desire to raise a family.” - Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI*

Jesus was born into and grew up in a family with a mother and a father and gave the highest dignity to the institution of marriage and family life. The family is the basic unity of society. A healthy family is essential for a healthy society.

*“Every child is descended from one father and one mother and longs for the warmth and safety of a family so that he may grow up secure and happy.” -Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207-2208*

In the family, life is co-created with God, it is nurtured and protected. If the structure and centrality of family life is diminished, the dignity of the human person becomes obscured and we risk losing our identity as children of God. Since the family is the domestic church, it is fitting that parents always encourage their children to make decisions with serious consideration about the best ways to live out their faith.

What kind of love does Jesus call us to witness? It is the kind of love God gives us freely and abundantly. It is the love that led Jesus Christ to the cross and led Mary and Joseph to form a family despite the very real challenges they faced and the very real sacrifices they freely made out of love.

*“The future of the world and of the church passes by the way of the family.” -Blessed John Paul II*