



**Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis
Consilium Internationale**

FAMILY COMMISSION

Silvia Diana, Jenny Harrington, Fr Francis Dor OFM Cap.

Dear brothers and sisters, peace and all good,

We have begun the job as the Family Commission in which once a year we will send material to our local fraternities to reflect on on this beautiful treasure that is **'the family.'** We want to share, to reflect and to commit ourselves. This is our first document, which corresponds to the year 2016: **"FAMILY AND MARRIAGE."**

Our proposal is for you to discern in the light of the Word and the messages from our Popes, and preparatory catechesis for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, 2015; and help and contribute to our families, commit ourselves to support and strengthening of the values of the same from the proposal of the Evangelical Jesus.

We can share that the four issues of Koinonia for 2015 have focused their articles on the importance of the Family for the OFS and for YouFra.

In the first issue, Br Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, consider the theme of the family in the Magisterium of the Church, from the Second Vatican Council until today. In the second issue, Br. Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv, considers the family in the Rule and General Constitutions of the OFS. The third issue, edited by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, be dedicated to the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization. Finally, the fourth issue, edited by José Antônio Duarte Cruz, OFM, focus on the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world.

This material for 2016 is only a guide. If it seems extensive, you can divide it. Each fraternity can recreate it, deepen it and adapt it to its needs, prioritizing the needs of the FAMILIES in each location.

We hope that this work will strengthen our families in each community, village or city. Only by beginning to change ourselves can we make possible the words of Jesus: ***"In this you will all know that you are my disciples: in the love that you have for each other."*** (John: 13, 35)

Family Commission

2016 ANNUAL THEME: FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

"In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ. By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church.

They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child"
(Rule OFS Article 17).

..... Married couples find in the Rule of the SFO an effective aid in their own journey of Christian life, aware that, in the sacrament of matrimony, their love shares in the love that Christ has for his Church. The way spouses love each other and affirm the value of fidelity is a profound witness for their own family, the Church, and the world.

(CCGG Art. 24)

WORK PROPOSAL:

We have considered a work dynamic that has three parts:

- 1. Questions to share...**
- 2. We enlighten ourselves... Material for reflection.**
- 3. We commit ourselves together...**

Sharing our lives:

1. questions to share...

- What are the values that Catholic families live or try to live?**
- What are the most common problems that we encounter as married couples?**

2. We enlighten ourselves... Material for reflection:

- A. GOSPEL
- B. APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO* PART TWO 11, 14,15. POPE JOHN PAUL II
- C. POPE FRANCIS: The family - 12. Marriage (I)
- D. POPE FRANCIS: The family - 13. Marriage (II)
- E. A preparatory catechesis for the World Meeting of Families Philadelphia, 2015 LOVE IS OUR MISSION The family fully alive 54-57

A. The Gospel according to St. John, 2: 1-11

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. It happened that the wine prepared for the wedding ran out. Then, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."⁵ But His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding some 100 liters. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it

came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

**B. APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO PART TWO 11, 14,15.
POPE JOHN PAUL II**

Man, the Image of the God Who Is Love

11. God created man in His own image and likeness (20): calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love.

God is love (21) and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.(22) Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.

As an incarnate spirit, that is a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love.

Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is, in its own proper form, an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being "created in the image of God."

Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally.

This totality which is required by conjugal love also corresponds to the demands of responsible fertility. This fertility is directed to the generation of a human being, and so by its nature it surpasses the purely biological order and involves a whole series of personal values. For the harmonious growth of these values a persevering and unified contribution by both parents is necessary.

The only "place" in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself(23) which only in this light manifests its true meaning. The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom.

Children, the Precious Gift of Marriage

14. According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning. (34)

In its most profound reality, love is essentially a gift; and conjugal love, while leading the spouses to the reciprocal "knowledge" which makes them "one flesh,"(35) does not end with the couple, because it makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person. Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.

When they become parents, spouses receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to become for the children the visible sign of the very love of God, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."(36)

It must not be forgotten however that, even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children.

The Family, a Communion of Persons

15. In matrimony and in the family a complex of interpersonal relationships is set up-married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation and fraternity-through which each human person is introduced into the "human family" and into the "family of God," which is the Church.

Christian marriage and the Christian family build up the Church: for in the family the human person is not only brought into being and progressively introduced by means of education into the human community, but by means of the rebirth of baptism and education in the faith the child is also introduced into God's family, which is the Church.

The human family, disunited by sin, is reconstituted in its unity by the redemptive power of the death and Resurrection of Christ.(37) Christian marriage, by participating in the salvific efficacy of this event, constitutes the natural setting in which the human person is introduced into the great family of the Church.

The commandment to grow and multiply, given to man and woman in the beginning, in this way reaches its whole truth and full realization.

The Church thus finds in the family, born from the sacrament, the cradle and the setting in which she can enter the human generations, and where these in their turn can enter the Church.

C. POPE FRANCIS The family - 12. Marriage (I) *Wednesday, 29 April 2015*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

Our reflection on *God's original plan for man and woman as a couple*, after having considered the two narratives from the Book of Genesis, now turns directly to Jesus.

At the beginning of his Gospel, John the Evangelist narrates the episode of the wedding at Cana, at which the Virgin Mary and Jesus were present with his first disciples (cf. Jn 2:1-11). Jesus not only participated at that wedding, but "saved the feast" with the miracle of wine! Thus, the first of His prodigious signs, with which He reveals his glory, He performed in the context of a wedding, and it was an act of great sympathy for that nascent family, entreated by Mary's motherly care. This reminds us of the Book of Genesis, when God completes his work of creation and makes his masterpiece; the masterpiece is man and woman. And here at a marriage, at a wedding feast, Jesus begins his own miracles with this masterpiece: a man and a woman. Thus Jesus teaches us that the masterpiece of society is the family: a man and a woman who love each other! This is the masterpiece!

Since the time of the wedding at Cana, many things have changed, but that "sign" of Christ contains an ever valid message. Today it seems difficult to speak of marriage as a feast which is renewed in time, in the various seasons of the couple's lifetime. It is a fact that progressively fewer people are getting married; this is a fact: young people don't want to get married. In many countries the number of separations is instead increasing while the number of children decreases. The difficulty of staying together — both as a couple and as a family — leads to bonds being broken with ever increasing frequency and swiftness, and the children themselves are the first to suffer the consequences. Let us consider that the first victims, the most important victims, the victims who suffer the most in a separation are the children.

Should you feel from childhood that marriage is a "temporary" bond, unconsciously it will be so for you. In fact, many young people are led to reject the very plan of an irrevocable bond and of a lasting family. I believe that we must reflect very seriously on why so many young people "don't feel like" getting married. There is a culture of the provisional ... everything is provisional, it seems there is nothing definitive.

This matter of young people not wanting to marry is one of the emerging concerns of today: why aren't young people getting married? Why is it that they frequently prefer cohabitation and "limited responsibility"? Why is that many — even among the baptized — have little trust in marriage and in the family? If we want young people to be able to find the right road to follow, it is important to try to understand this. Why do they have no trust in the family?

The difficulties are not only economic, although these are truly serious. Many believe that the changes that have occurred in these last decades were put in motion by the emancipation of women. But even this argument is invalid, it's false, it isn't true! It is a form of male chauvinism, which always seeks to dominate women. We give the bad impression that Adam gave, when God asked him: "Why did you eat the fruit of the tree?", and he said: "The woman gave it to me". It's the woman's fault. The poor woman! We must defend women! In fact, nearly all men and women would want stable emotional security, a solid marriage and a happy family. The family tops all the indices of wellbeing among young people; but, fearing mistakes, many do not want to even consider it; even being Christians, they do not consider the sacrament of matrimony, the single and unrepeatable sign of the covenant, which becomes a testimony of faith. Perhaps this very fear of failure is the greatest obstacle to receiving the Word of Christ, which promises his grace to the conjugal union and to the family.

The most persuasive testimony of the blessing of Christian marriage is the good life of Christian spouses and of the family. There is no better way to speak of the beauty of the sacrament! A marriage consecrated by God safeguards that bond between man and woman that God has blessed from the very

creation of the world; and it is the source of peace and goodness for the entire lifetime of the marriage and family. For example, in the first ages of Christianity, this great dignity of the bond between man and woman overcame an abuse then held normal, namely the husbands' right to repudiate their wives, even for reasons based on pretext or to humiliate. The Gospel of the family, the Gospel which proclaims this very Sacrament overcame this culture of customary repudiation.

The Christian seed at the root of equality between spouses must bear new fruit today. The witness of the social dignity of marriage shall become persuasive precisely in this way, the way of a testimony which attracts, the way of reciprocity between them, of complementarity between them.

For this reason, as Christians, we must become more demanding in this regard. For example: firmly support the right to equal pay for equal work; why is it taken for granted that women should earn less than men? No! They have the same rights. This disparity is an absolute disgrace! At the same time, recognize women's motherhood and men's fatherhood as an always precious treasure, for the good of their children above all. Likewise, the virtue of the hospitality of Christian families today takes on a crucial importance, especially in situations of poverty, degradation, and domestic violence.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to invite Jesus to your wedding feast, to invite Him to our home, that He may be with us and safeguard the family. And we mustn't be afraid to also invite his Mother Mary! When Christians marry "in the Lord", they are transformed into an effective sign of God's love. Christians do not marry for themselves alone: they marry in the Lord for the good of the entire community, society as a whole.

I will also speak about this beautiful vocation of Christian matrimony in the next catechesis.

D. POPE FRANCIS The family - 13. Marriage (II) Wednesday, 6 May 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

In our journey of catecheses on the family, today we touch directly *on the beauty of Christian marriage*. It is not merely a ceremony in a church, with flowers, a dress, photographs.... Christian marriage is a sacrament that takes place *in* the Church, and which also *makes* the Church, by giving rise to a new family community.

It is what the Apostle Paul says in his celebrated expression: "This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul says that the love between spouses is an image of the love between Christ and his Church. An unimaginable dignity! But in fact it is inscribed in the creative design of God, and with the grace of Christ innumerable Christian couples, with all their limitations and sins, have realized it!

St Paul, speaking of new life in Christ, says that Christians — each one of them — are called to love one another as Christ has loved them, that is to "be subject to one another" (Eph 5:21), which means be at the service of one another. And here he introduces an analogy between husband-wife and Christ-Church. It is clear that this is an imperfect analogy, but we must take it in the spiritual sense which is very lofty and revolutionary, and at the same time simple, available to every man and woman who entrusts him and herself to the grace of God.

Husbands — Paul says — must love their wives "as their own body" (Eph 5:28); to love them as Christ "loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (v. 25). You husbands who are present here, do you understand this? Do you love your wives as Christ loves the Church? This is no joke, these are serious

things! The effect of this radical devotion asked of man, for the love and dignity of woman, following the example of Christ, must have been tremendous in the Christian community itself. This seed of evangelical novelty, which reestablishes the original reciprocity of devotion and respect, matured throughout history slowly but ultimately it prevailed.

The sacrament of marriage is a great act of faith and love: a witness to the courage to believe in the beauty of the creative act of God and to live that love that is always urging us to go on, beyond ourselves and even beyond our own family. The Christian vocation to love unconditionally and without limit is what, by the grace of Christ, is also at the foundation of the free consent that constitutes marriage.

The Church herself is fully involved in the story of every Christian marriage: she is built on their successes and she suffers in their failures. But we must ask in all seriousness: do we ourselves as believers and as pastors, accept deep down this indissoluble bond of the history of Christ and his Church with the history of marriage and the human family? Are we seriously ready to take up this responsibility, that is, that every marriage goes on the path of the love that Christ has for the Church? This is a great thing!

In the depths of this mystery of creation, acknowledged and restored in its purity, opens a second great horizon that marks the sacrament of marriage. The decision to "wed in the Lord" also entails a missionary dimension, which means having at heart the willingness to be a medium for God's blessing and for the Lord's grace *to all*. In deed, Christian spouses participate *as spouses* in the mission of the Church. This takes courage! That is why when I meet newlyweds, I say: "Here are the brave ones!", because it takes courage to love one another as Christ loves the Church.

The celebration of the sacrament must have this co-responsibility of family life in the Church's great mission of love. And thus the life of the Church is enriched every time by the beauty of this spousal covenant, and deteriorates every time it is disfigured. The Church, in order to offer to all the gifts of faith, hope and love, needs the courageous fidelity of spouses to the grace of their sacrament! The People of God need their daily journey in faith, in love and in hope, with all the joys and the toils that this journey entails in a marriage and a family.

The route is well marked forever, it is the route of love: to love as God loves, forever. Christ does not cease to care for the Church: he loves her always, he guards her always, as himself. Christ does not cease to remove stains and lines of every kind from the human face. Moving and very beautiful to see is this radiation of God's power and tenderness which is transmitted from couple to couple, family to family. St Paul is right: this truly is a "great mystery"! Men and women, brave enough to carry this treasure in the "earthen vessels" of our humanity, are — these men and these women who are so brave — an essential resource for the Church, as well as for the world! May God bless them a thousand times over for this!

E. A preparatory catechesis for the World Meeting of Families Philadelphia, 2015
LOVE IS OUR MISSION The family fully alive 54-57

Virtue, love, and goodness help fulfill our destiny

54. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is a popular Scripture choice for Christian weddings: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not

irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (NRSV)

55. The text is beautiful. Having been created in the image of God, loving this way coheres with our true human nature. But loving this way is never easy. It demands humility and patience. As Pope Francis recently said, "Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted."⁴⁸ Marital love must be built on more than romance. Romance is wonderful — but alone, it can't survive the cares and challenges that inevitably visit every married couple. To be what we are — to love as we were created to love — certain virtues are necessary. We must be alive to these virtues, and cultivate them, in order to fulfill our destiny.

56. Saint John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" speaks of a certain "interior freedom" and "self-mastery" which spouses need in order to truly make a gift of themselves to one another.⁴⁹ A person tied too tightly to romantic expectations, without the leaven of interior freedom and the capacity for self-gift, will lack flexibility. To live the sacramentality of marriage and to follow the way of the covenant, husbands and wives need the capacity to transcend resentment, to lay aside entitlements, and to step forward in generosity. Without this interior freedom and power, serious problems are bound to arise, because life puts husbands and wives in situations that are very often not romantic at all.

57. No marriage founded on mere sexual chemistry endures. Erotic partners focused mainly on possessing each other lack the interior skill of stepping back and making space for self-criticism, reconciliation, and growth. The marital promise to love steadfastly as God does helps to create and protect this vital space. The sacramental commitment to do the work of love, even when loving is tough, is an essential ingredient in God's covenant.

3. We commit ourselves together...

SHARE:

- **Let's share reflections on the reading.**
- **What does it mean to be "created in the image of God"? Is it possible to understand human identity without God? Why or why not?**
- **How is God's way of loving different from our human way of loving?**
- **What is true love and how do we recognize it? What are some similarities and differences between your culture's notion of romantic love and God's covenant of love?**
- **What is the Catholic spirituality of marriage? What can families do to celebrate and protect Christian marriage?**
- **What are the topics relating to matrimony that you consider indispensable that should be included in our OFS-YOUFRA formation programs?**
- **What can we do in our communities to accompany (support) married couples?**

We ask to send the answers, comments and proposals shared the secretary of CIOFS for the Family Commission before October 2016, to continue our work with their contributions.

Bibliography to consult:

- APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO*, POPE JOHN PAUL II
- A preparatory catechesis for the World Meeting of Families Philadelphia, 2015
<http://www.worldmeeting2015.org/> Catechesis for Download.

December 2015.