



Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis
Consilium Internationale
FAMILY COMMISSION
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CONCLUSIONS OF THE SYNOD OF THE FAMILY

PART II - Chapter 1

The Family in God's Plan, the Family in Salvation History

We continue with the reflections on the conclusions of the Synod of the Family and the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) and we see how the family is and always was part of God's plan.

Jesus, who reconciled all things in himself, restored marriage and the family to their original form (cf. Mt 10:1-12). Marriage and the family have been redeemed by Christ (cf. Eph 5:21-32) and restored in the image of the Holy Trinity, the mystery from which all true love flows. The spousal covenant, originating in creation and revealed in the history of salvation, takes on its full meaning in Christ and his Church. Through his Church, Christ bestows on marriage and the family the grace necessary to bear witness to the love of God and to live the life of communion. "The Gospel of the family spans the history of the world, from the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27), to the fulfillment of the mystery of the covenant in Christ at the end of time with the marriage of the Lamb (cf. Rev 19:9)".(AL 63)

The family is a school of love and a stable family is the building block of society that allows persons to flourish as human beings.

Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ and have need of His graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginning", that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan. (FC 3)

The Synod Fathers noted that Jesus, "in speaking of God's original plan for man and woman, reaffirmed the indissoluble union between them, even stating that 'it was for your hardness of heart that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so' (Mt 19:8). The indissolubility of marriage – 'what God has joined together, let no man put asunder' (Mt 19:6) – should not be viewed as a 'yoke' imposed on humanity, but as a 'gift' granted to those who are joined in marriage... God's indulgent love always accompanies our human journey; through grace, it heals and transforms hardened hearts, leading them back to the beginning through the way of the cross. The Gospels clearly present the example of Jesus who... proclaimed the meaning of marriage as the fullness of revelation that restores God's original plan (cf. Mt 19:3)".(AL62)

[...]The wedding takes place in the community of life and love and the family participates in the work of evangelization. The bride and groom, thus becoming Christ's disciples, are accompanied by him on the way to Emmaus; they recognize him in the breaking of bread; and they return to Jerusalem enlightened by his resurrection (cf. Lk 24:13-43) (n 36).

Because of the **divine pedagogy**, according to which the plan of creation is fulfilled through successive stages in the order of redemption, we need to understand the Sacrament of Matrimony as it was in the beginning, based on the order of creation. From this perspective, we understand the **salvific action of God**, even in the Christian life. Because everything was done through Christ and for him (cf. *Col* 1:16). The incorporation of the believer into the Church through Baptism is completed in the other Sacraments of Christian Initiation. In the domestic Church, which is his family, the believer starts that “dynamic process, one which advances gradually with the progressive integration of the gifts of God” (*FC*, 9), by an ongoing conversion to the love that saves us from sin and gives fullness of life. (n 37)

The Icon of the Trinity in the Family

Scripture and Tradition give us access to a knowledge of the Trinity which is revealed in the features of a family. The family is the image of God who “in his deepest mystery is not all by himself, but a family, since he has in himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love” (John Paul II, *Homily at Parafox Major Seminary*, Puebla de Los Angeles (Mexico), 28 January 1979). God is a communion of persons. At Christ’s Baptism, the voice of the Father called Jesus his beloved Son, and, in this love, we come to recognize the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mk* 1:10-11). Jesus, who has reconciled all things in himself and has redeemed us from sin, not only returned marriage and the family to their original form, but has also raised marriage to the sacramental sign of his love for the Church (cf. *Mt* 19:1-12; *Mk* 10:1-12; *Eph* 5:21-32).

In the human family, gathered by Christ, the “image and likeness” of the Holy Trinity (cf. *Gen* 1:26) is now visible, a mystery from which flows all true love. Through the Church, marriage and the family receive the grace of the Holy Spirit from Christ so as to bear witness to the Gospel of God's love until the fulfilment of the Covenant on the Last Day, at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (cf. *Rev* 19:9; John Paul II, *Catechesis on Human Love*). The covenant of love and fidelity, lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth, illuminates the principle which gives form to every household, and enables it better to face the vicissitudes of life and history. On this basis, every family, despite its weaknesses, can become a light in the darkness of the world. “Here each of us understands the meaning of family life, its harmony of love, its simplicity and austere beauty, its sacred and inviolable character; may it teach us how sweet and irreplaceable is its training, how fundamental and incomparable its role in the social order” (Paul VI, *Discourse at Nazareth*, 5 January 1964). (n 38)

The Family in Sacred Scripture - Through the fruitfulness of their love, man and woman continue the work of creation and collaborate with the Creator in salvation history through successive genealogies (*Gen* 1:28; 2: 4; 9:1,7; 10; 17:2,16; 25:11; 28:3; 35:9,11; 47:27; 48:3,4). The reality of marriage in its exemplary form is outlined in the book of Genesis, to which Jesus also refers in his idea of married love. Man feels incomplete, because he lacks “a helper fit for him”, who “stands before him” (*Gen* 2:18-20) in an equal dialogue. The woman participates, therefore, in the same reality of the man, represented symbolically by the rib, or by the same flesh, as proclaimed in the song of the man’s love: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (*Gen* 2:23). They thus become “one flesh” (*Gen* 2:24). This foundational reality of the marital experience is exalted in the expression of one belonging to the other in the profession of love, pronounced by the woman in the Song of Songs. The formula is similar to that of the covenant between God and his People (cf. *Lev* 26:12): “My beloved is mine and I am his,... I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine” (*Cant* 2:16; 6:3). (n 39)

The words of eternal life, given by Jesus to his disciples, include his teaching on marriage and the family. In them, we can recognize three basic stages in God's plan. Firstly, there is the family of origin, when God, the Creator, instituted the primordial marriage between Adam and Eve, as the solid foundation of the family..... Subsequently, in its historical form in the tradition of Israel, this union, wounded by sin, underwent several variations: Lastly, the reconciliation of the world took place with the coming of the Saviour, not only restoring the original divine plan but leading the history of God's People to a new fulfilment. Above all, the indissolubility of marriage (*Mk* 10:2-9) is not meant to be a burden but a gift to those who are united in marriage. (n 40)

“The example of Jesus is a paradigm for the Church... He began his public ministry with the miracle at the wedding feast of Cana (cf. Jn 2:1-11). He shared in everyday moments of friendship with the family of Lazarus and his sisters (cf. Lk 10:38) and with the family of Peter (cf. Mk 8:14). He sympathized with grieving parents and restored their children to life (cf. Mk 5:41; Lk 7:14-15). In this way he demonstrated the true meaning of mercy, which entails the restoration of the covenant (cf. John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, 4). This is clear from his conversations with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 1:4-30) and with the woman found in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11), where the consciousness of sin is awakened by an encounter with Jesus’ gratuitous love”. (AL 64)

The incarnation of the Word in a human family, in Nazareth, by its very newness changed the history of the world. We need to enter into the mystery of Jesus’ birth, into that “yes” given by Mary to the message of the angel, when the Word was conceived in her womb, as well as the “yes” of Joseph, who gave a name to Jesus and watched over Mary. We need to contemplate the joy of the shepherds before the manger, the adoration of the Magi and the flight into Egypt, in which Jesus shares his people’s experience of exile, persecution and humiliation. We need to contemplate the religious expectation of Zechariah and his joy at the birth of John the Baptist, the fulfilment of the promise made known to Simeon and Anna in the Temple and the marvel of the teachers of the Law who listened to the wisdom of the child Jesus. We then need to peer into those thirty long years when Jesus earned his keep by the work of his hands, reciting the traditional prayers and expressions of his people’s faith and coming to know that ancestral faith until he made it bear fruit in the mystery of the Kingdom. This is the mystery of Christmas and the secret of Nazareth, exuding the beauty of family life! (AL 65)

Jesus and the Family “The covenant of love and fidelity lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth illuminates the principle which gives shape to every family, and enables it better to face the vicissitudes of life and history. On this basis, every family, despite its weaknesses, can become a light in the darkness of the world. ‘Nazareth teaches us the meaning of family life, its loving communion, its simple and austere beauty, its sacred and inviolable character. May it teach how sweet and irreplaceable is its training, how fundamental and incomparable its role in the social order’ (Paul VI, Address in Nazareth, 5 January 1964)”.(AL 66)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you understand the role of marriage and the family in salvation history?
2. How do you see families being the icon of the Trinity?
3. Discuss "Motherhood" and "Fatherhood".
4. How can we offer to the world the meaning and values of marriage and the family?

Documents:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20151026_relazione-finale-xiv-assemblea_en.html

We finish our encounter praying together: THE PRAYER OF THE HOLY FAMILY.

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