

## **Family: Like Mother Theresa, be a channel of God's Mercy**

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### **The Christian Family:**

Sanctity is not just for monks or nuns or celibates only. Christian spouses and parents are also included in the universal call to sanctity. Marriage is a sacrament and hence family life is a vocation to holiness. It is there that one picks up the basic and essential virtues like faithfulness, truthfulness, honesty, tolerance, patience, kindness, co-operation, service, understanding etc.

Family, as a fundamental unit of society, plays a central role in the humanization of the individual and society and thus, in weaving our social fabric. The family is, by itself, the living image of the church and symbolises the community of life between God and his people. The witness of a life of faith lived in the family, is the first and the most effective evangelisation that the children and those living around that family receive.

### **Family called to form a Community of Persons:**

Communion of persons is established through fidelity and total giving of oneself to the other. Spousal couples should be aware of one's own abilities and limitations, so also the abilities and limitations of the other. Spousal couples should constantly renew and relive their commitment given to God and to each other on their wedding day. As persons or human beings they are prone to commit sins or mistakes but they should acquire strength from the Lord to change, convert and to forgive one another and seek forgiveness from God. These conditions will bring about the success and durability of the family communion. If the family is the first school of socialization, it is because marriage, the conjugal union of the spouses, is "the first expression of the communion of persons." (Gaudium et Spes, n.12).

### **The Most Beautiful Thing - Family:**

*The "Holy Family"* is a model for our families today. Children will find in Jesus, a divine example of obedience. Mothers have, in Mary, their model; in keeping the love

of God alive and active in their homes. Fathers will find in St. Joseph, the patient and just man. He worked all day, struggling to procure the needful for Jesus and Mary and sometimes without any earthly reward so as to fulfil the role assigned to him.

### **Family Spirituality:**

A man and a woman united in the sacrament of matrimony, grow together in faith, hope and charity and God wants to lead the family to sanctity. Thus they bear witness to the love of Christ in the world. This process is characteristic of marriage and family life. In the Christian living of matrimony taken globally, there are two distinct and inter related areas, one is conjugal spirituality and the other is family spirituality.

a) **Conjugal spirituality:** It is realised in the loving relationship between the man (husband) and woman (wife) in marriage.

b) **Family spirituality:** It extends to the relationship between parents and children.

Authentic mutual love promotes freedom and creativity to the highest degree. Persons who love in this manner help each other to bloom, to be their best and to grow in excellence. The sacrament of matrimony contains in itself a powerful dynamism of renewal and growth.

Christian Family by its very vocation is called to partake of the life of the Most Holy Trinity. The spirituality of the Trinity, that is the spirituality of love and communion, is the daily sustenance of all Christian families and every liturgical celebration. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist in communion with other families and the family prayer especially, the Rosary, along with the sharing of love and communion within the family deepens the Trinitarian spirituality of the Christian family.

Christian families need to deepen, through prayer, their relationship with the Most Holy Trinity (Ecclesia in Asia, n. 46; Familiaris Consortio, n. 59). Prayer is indeed a covenant relationship between God and the human being. Daily family prayer, therefore, establishes and strengthens an intimate and lively relationship with the Trinity and in turn, Christian living in a family is animated by prayer that is rooted in the spirituality of the Trinity (CCC, n. 2564).

### **The Word of God Guides the Life of Families:**

God speaks to us not through words that convey death, but through communication that imparts His divine life to us. This Word of God is Jesus himself: “The Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us” (Jn.1: 1, 14). God’s Word in the family is the presence of His only son “If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples” (Jn.8:31).

Husband and wife should build their family on God’s Word (Cf. Mt. 7: 24-26) and the Scripture reminds us that they should adorn their married life with virtuous love (Cf. Ef.5:25-33). For this reason, the Church forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful to learn about the surpassing love of Jesus Christ by frequently reading the Sacred Scriptures (Dei Verbum, n. 25).

### **Family offers their sacrifices through the Sacrifice of Christ:**

The summit of life of Christ is his Paschal Mystery and the heart of the Paschal Mystery is his suffering and death: He gave himself up on the cross. In the eyes of faith, suffering in life is not a burden, but a great opportunity to fulfil God’s will. The sufferings of Jesus are an inspiration to us, because they are valued as his self sacrifice made in surrender to the Father’s Will (cf. Mt.26:36-46). God will therefore, be pleased with any sacrifice we make with the intention of offering ourselves up to Him in surrender (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, n.13)

The core of the celebration of the Eucharist is the same self-offering that Jesus made on the cross and whose memorial He established at the Last Supper. He chose two signs: bread and wine, because these two items were essential to the Jewish meal. Bread and wine symbolize human weakness, human toil or sacrifice. In one word, they symbolize human life, more specifically, family life. By the sweat of their brow, the husband and wife lovingly place ‘bread and wine’ meaning food and drink on the family table. Bread and wine also signify the happy and also sad events, day to day painful or sorrowful experiences of life, the doubts and the hopes, the sufferings, pains and afflictions accepted by the family in a spirit of faith. That is why in every celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the husband and the wife can, through the

symbolism of bread and wine, offer their whole family life, indeed the entire world to God. (Christifideles Laici, n.14).

### **Bear One Another's Burdens:**

Being more intelligent, humans are also more selfish. It would be a great shame if our families become a mere collection of individuals who seek their own pleasure, comfort and identity, with no concern for anyone else. Homes are certainly not meant to be filling stations or shopping places where individuals come to eat, sleep, dress, watch T.V. etc. Wherever two or more persons live together, differences and frictions are bound to occur. The family is no exception to this. If the family has to go forward in peace, love, joy and unity, members must be willing to forgive others and to seek forgiveness for themselves.

As St. Paul advises us, "Be always humble, gentle and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another". The pooling together of interests, energies, efforts and resources is necessary for a good family. If the spouses do not offer support to each other, it is really difficult to go forward in family life. Similarly, parents should support their children and vice-versa.

### **Joys and Demands of Love:**

Love is a relationship. There can be no neutrality and no indifference. In a loving relationship freedom of the other is respected and the other is valued as a person. Family cannot live without love for love is the foundation of married life. Love helps to reconcile with God which in turn helps to reconcile with one another. Genuine love is both sustaining and healing. Another quality of love is that love is caring and serving. Love needs to be a gift, meaning self-donation or offering oneself to the other and needs a sacrifice. Hence, love is both, a "*gift and sacrifice*". Another important quality we see in a family is to be one in spirit, which means there is no such thing as "*my decision*" and "*your decision*" but always should be "*our decision*", i.e, one common decision of the family.

**Family Today:**

A family in the modern world wants all the comforts of life. This is the case with almost all families irrespective of religion, region or colour. Poor families struggle to make ends meet and wish they had more wealth which would give them some more comfort. Rich families want more wealth since they are not sure of the future and somehow wealth gives the best of everything including luxury, comfort, power and better treatment from people. The rich want peace, the poor want some respite in their lives and everybody wants a better life. Most choose to get involved and immersed in a world that has everything to offer: power, success, pleasure, fame, popularity and the satisfaction of all the senses. In this rush to obtain everything, a lot of times, the commandment of love cannot be followed and families become transgressors of God's most important commandments: LOVE GOD with all your heart, mind, strength and soul and LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

**God's Mercy:**

In times of such deceit and wickedness, it is difficult to follow the commandment of love and we often fall, therefore begging God to have Mercy on us. Jesus says that blessed are the merciful for they will obtain mercy. Those who give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, give shelter to the homeless and do other merciful deeds, are indeed blessed by God.

**Mother Theresa and her Mission:**

Who can be the best example of God's mercy to the modern man other than Mother Theresa herself? All her deeds of mercy were done with great love and patience. Mother Theresa once said, "The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service and the fruit of service is peace." Mother Theresa spent three hours in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament everyday and when questioned about it, she said that her entire life of service was due to these three hours spent by her in the presence of the Lord.

Dear Families, life is very tough in these times, especially for faithful families. You may face it bravely but you will not be able to make it to Heaven without God's Mercy. Divine Mercy is your only hope of salvation and heaven and God's providence on earth. Without Divine Mercy, you may get everything on earth but you will not be able to stay faithful to God and you will thus, lose your inheritance in heaven. We have to continue to do good deeds, even if the world has become more evil. The Rosary makes good works flourish. It is Mother Mary who obtains Mercy for all of us including the worst sinner if he sincerely repents.

Most of us cannot live like Mother Theresa. To be another Mother Theresa, you have to renounce the world and what it offers and perform the works of Mercy as told by Our Lord Jesus Christ. To do that, you have to first give your heart to the Lord. Let her exemplary life teach us to be more merciful to those in need and to do works of mercy. We thank the Lord for what he has done through Mother Theresa to make the world a better place. Mother Theresa is a perfect example of Divine Mercy in action. Mother Theresa is God's expression of love in recent times to a world which is sorely in need of love and Mercy!