

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN THE SERVICE OF LIFE

Description

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The future of HUMANITY passes by way of the FAMILY!!!

(Saint Pope John Paul II: Familiaris Consortio, no. 86. 1981.)

1. Familiaris Consortio (family community) is 40 years old this year



Familiaris Consortio (FC) was published on the feast of Christ the King on 22 November 1981. This means that in 2021 was its 40th anniversary on the Feast of Christ the King. If we look back over the last 40 years, we can see that it is also a prophetic revelation, and its message is even more valid today than it was when it was first published. Although in the address, Saint Pope John Paul II is writing to the bishops, priests and faithful of the Roman Catholic Church, in the concluding section he addresses all Christians: “**Finally, I wish to call on all Christians to collaborate cordially and courageously with all people of good will** who are serving the family in accordance with their responsibilities.” (FC no. 86.)

In my previous article, I wrote that the Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (FC, 1981), written by Saint Pope John Paul II, defines four fundamental tasks of the family, namely:

- 1. forming and maintaining a community of persons,**
- 2. serving life,**
- 3. participating in the development of society and**
- 4. sharing in the life and mission of the Church.**

In this article, the first basic task – forming and maintaining a community of persons – was discussed.

2. The fundamental vocation of MAN is LOVE

The Familiaris Consortio formulates the fundamental vocation of man as follows:

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

God is love 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**. **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. (FC no. 11.)

The intimate and permanent unconditional love (agape) of the divine Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – constitutes and animates the Trinity, in whose image and likeness God created MAN. That is why every human being longs for and vitalizes on this unconditional love. For this reason, man can only find himself in the self-giving lived-in love (cf. Gaudium et Spes no. 24) and only in sincere self-giving can his growth towards ever fuller divinity be realized. Thus, it is understandable that the first general task of family life, which is based on marriage, is to form and maintain a community of persons. It is the ongoing achievement of this task that creates and sustains the family community. **The family**, based on the covenant of conjugal love, is **an intimate community of life and love** (cf. Gaudium et Spes no. 48), which is also **Ecclesia domestica**, “domestic Church”.

3. Serving LIFE

A FAMILY is a community of intimate love of persons, gives life to and open to the undertaking and nurturing of new life. God enriches the great family of humanity through the family of marriage, together with man. God enriches the great family of humanity – through the family which is based on marriage – together with man. The mutual self-giving and acceptance and reception of the other, lived-in marriage, is realized in its soul-body fullness. In this union, the two become one flesh from which new human life can spring. In the full sense of fertility, the physical and the spiritual are included. Thus, in addition to begetting children – the fruits of conjugal love – it is also involved in their education, i.e.: “the fruitfulness of conjugal love is not restricted solely to the procreation of children, even understood in its specifically human dimension: it is enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world.” (FC no. 28.)

To serve the whole of life – physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and spiritual – is one’s task in marriage and in the family. If we look at the service of life in this way, we can be discouraged by the magnitude of the task. But as I mentioned before: “God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the **vocation**, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of **love and communion**.” (FC no. 11.) In other words, every single person is capable of love and responsible for it. Each person is capable of love according to his or her own talents, circumstances and possibilities. Of course, not every moment is 100% successful, but there is always the possibility to start again, even seventy times seven. Our

capacity to love God, who is Love, can bear ever more fruit depending on the depth and intensity of our lived relationship with Him.

4. The role of the Church in the protection of life

The Church today is still on the side of life, of WHOLE LIFE. Today, living its mission in a social and cultural context in which ever greater forces are working against the emergence, understanding and living of divine truth, the Church can only find strength to fulfil her mission in the love of her divine Master, Who is still present today. For this reason, Saint Pope John Paul II asks:

For this reason, together with the Synod Fathers I feel it is my duty to extend a pressing invitation to **theologians**, asking them to **unite their efforts in order to collaborate with the hierarchical Magisterium** and to commit themselves to the task of illustrating ever more clearly the biblical foundations, the ethical grounds and the personalistic reasons behind this doctrine. ... doubt or error in the field of marriage or the family involves obscuring to a serious extent the integral truth about the human person, in a cultural situation that is already so often confused and contradictory. In fulfillment of their specific role, theologians are called upon to provide enlightenment and a deeper understanding, and **their contribution is of incomparable value and represents a unique and highly meritorious service to the family and humanity.** (FC no. 31.)

Within the Church, each person, according to his or her talents, position and possibilities, is responsible for the family churches and thus for the humanity. In 1981, Pope John Paul II, in relation to the pastoral care of the family, asked the following of all members of the Church: “Therefore, it must be emphasized once more that the pastoral intervention of the Church in **support of the FAMILY** is a **MATTER of URGENCY. Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a REAL MATTER of PRIORITY**, in the certainty that **future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church.** (Saint Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of Latin America 29 January 1979)” (FC no. 65.)

At the beginning of the Familiaris Consortio, the addressees are the bishops, priests and faithful of the Catholic Church. At the end of the document, Pope John Paul II opens the door to cooperation and responsibility: “**Finally, I wish to call on all Christians to collaborate cordially and courageously with all people of good will** who are serving the family in accordance with their responsibilities.” (FC no. 86.)

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Please, pray for marriage, sexuality and family mission!

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