



Catechesis in preparation for the
10th World Meeting of Families

Rome June 22-26, 2022



**“Family love: a vocation and
a path to holiness”**

Catechesis No.1



Vocation and family

Vocation as a calling

The term *vocation* comes from the Latin verb *vocare* whose meaning is *to call*. For each person, God's first calling is to become His children through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Some people who are baptized are called to give their lives to God through consecration as priests or religious; others are called to give themselves to the Lord through the Sacrament of Matrimony. Married life, therefore, is also a *vocation*, that is, **a call from God**.

One's name

The habit of *calling each other* by name is a widespread practice in our families, especially if there are children. Choosing a name, which is given to children and with which they will be called throughout their entire lives, is a very important decision made for parents.

There are many reasons why a name is chosen. Sometimes there are names that have been handed down in the family for generations; sometimes it is the name of a saint to whom the parents are particularly devoted, or the name of a person who, in some way, has left a mark on the parents' lives. For each person, a name is a sort of *calling card* with which one presents oneself to the world. In fact, it already says a lot about a person.

Lonliness

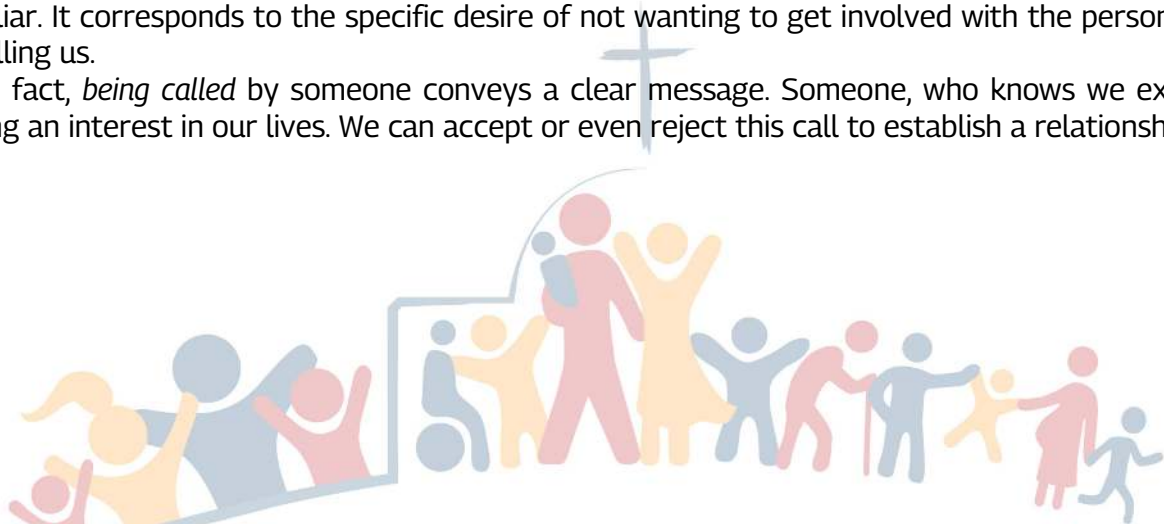
When we happen to have a conversation with someone whose name we do not remember, it is a sign that we have not really connected with that person. The biggest nightmare for a person is that of not being remembered. The feeling of loneliness, which derives from this, comes above all from the impression one gets of not feeling thought of and desired. The long period of *lockdown* that we experienced proved to be a time of extreme loneliness for many, especially for the elderly and for those who, for a variety of reasons, experience the difficulty and hardship of living alone.

We are called

One of the most frequent habits that parents have regarding their children is that of calling them. They do it to wake them up in the morning, to find out where they are, to urge them to fulfill their duties, to show them their love.

Pretending not to hear someone who is calling us is a strategy with which we are all quite familiar. It corresponds to the specific desire of not wanting to get involved with the person who is calling us.

In fact, *being called* by someone conveys a clear message. Someone, who knows we exist, is taking an interest in our lives. We can accept or even reject this call to establish a relationship.





God calls us by name

A passage from St. Paul reveals to us that all of us are *called*, each of us is known and called upon by God the Father:

«He saved us and **called us to a holy life**, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus **before time began**, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel». (2 Tim 1:9-10)

God has called us *before time began*. People call us by the name given to us by our parents. **God himself calls us by that name.**

When reading the Bible, on several occasions, it is obvious that God continually calls men and women in various ways to establish a relationship with Him and to welcome Him into their lives. Today the Father calls us to follow Jesus, because through Him we are given a life in which death is conquered by Christ; a life that, regardless of all the difficulties, is worth living because it leads towards eternal life. **With the strength that comes from the Holy Spirit, we can respond to God's calling, which is unique to each of us.**

Matrimony is a response to a calling

Through the Sacrament of Matrimony, a husband and wife are answering to a calling that God has made to them. That calling entails *loving as He loves*.

However, the *yes* pronounced on their wedding day by the bride and groom clashes every day with the effort of loving each other despite all their fragility and weaknesses. This means that the call to Love can only be sustained by the grace of Christ. This requires that the spouses **continually welcome this Grace** which, received daily, enables them to gradually learn, with tenacious perseverance and humble patience, to love one another and *to love as Jesus loves*.

It is comforting to know that, despite the normal hardships and inevitable moments of difficulty, the presence of Christ remains of essential support and incomparable comfort. His voice, conveyed through the Word, never ceases to call, to console and encourage as we continue on our way.





It is advisable that each person have the time to reread the catechesis, and to reflect on what resonates in his or her heart in a particular way.

Points of discussion for couples/for families

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near.

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways (cf. Is 55:6-8)*

Sometimes God's calling does not correspond to our desires, to our thoughts, to what seems right to us. The Prophet Isaiah tells us: *Seek the Lord, call him.*

- Let us share, as a couple and with our children, whether we wondered what God's calling was for us when we were growing up.
- Were we aware that getting married meant answering to a calling from God?

Points of discussion within the community

Let us reflect, as a community, on marriage as a vocation, as a calling from God to **become a sacrament** and therefore an image (imperfect but real) of His love.

- When we hear a calling in our hearts, how can we tell if it is truly from God?
- Let us reflect upon the importance of discernment when faced with life choices, but also upon the small calls that God makes to us every day.

For more details:

«*Marriage, consecrated life, priesthood: every true vocation begins with an encounter with Jesus*»

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170830_udienza-generale.html





Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

Heavenly Father,
We come before You to praise You
and to thank You for the great gift of the family.
We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
and as small domestic Churches,
may they know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.
Sustain them and make them aware
of the path to holiness upon which You call them,
so that they might experience Your infinite mercy
and find new ways to grow in love.
We pray to You for children and young people:
may they encounter You and respond joyfully
to the vocation You have in mind for them;
We pray for parents and grandparents: may they be aware
that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God
in caring for the children who, in body and spirit, You entrust to them;
and for the experience of fraternity
that the family can give to the world.
Lord, grant that each family
might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church
as a call to become missionary disciples,
in the service of life and peace,
in communion with our priests, religious,
and all vocations in the Church.
Bless the World Meeting of Families.
Amen.

Official prayer for the *X World Meeting of Families*
22-26 June 2022





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“Called to holiness”

Catechesis No.2



Called to holiness

Chosen by God to become holy

What is our family calling? St. Paul - called by the Lord to make a radical turning point in his life - (cf. Acts 9:1-28) - could answer as follows:

*«Blessed be the God [...] [who] **chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love...**» (Eph 1:3-4).*

A family is born from the decision of a man and a woman to begin an experience of life in common together, supported by the Grace of Christ. When this occurs, married life, full of novelties and new challenges to face, becomes for the spouses, as the rite of Marriage says, the *new path towards their sanctification* and, consequently, a privileged path *towards holiness*.

In the same way, family life, entwined with relationships, sometimes complicated, and with relationships that are not always easy, becomes a particularly suitable and favorable context for contemplating the action of the Spirit of God, who can convert human hearts, change their attitudes and make the members of the family capable of *loving as Christ loves*.

Holiness: a calling for all

«For I, the LORD, am your God; and you shall make and keep yourselves holy, because I am holy» (Lv 11:44).

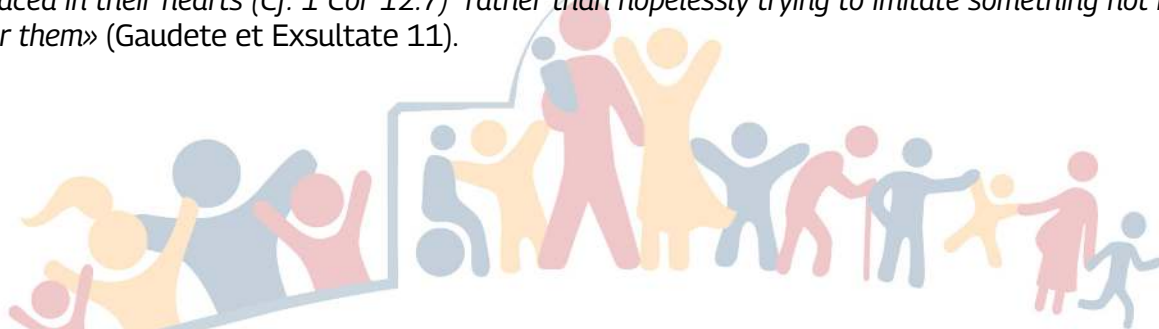
Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, the third of his pontificate, encourages each person to respond to his or her own call to holiness. **God** does not call everyone anonymously and generically, rather he **extends a personal call to each person**.

Let us consider some reflections in which the Holy Father expresses a clear invitation to not be afraid to accept the personal call to holiness.

*«I like to contemplate the holiness present in [...] God's people [...]: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick [...]. Very often it is a **holiness** found in our "next-door neighbours", **those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence**. We might call them "the middle class of holiness» (Gaudete et Exsultate 7).*

*«**all the faithful**, whatever their condition or state, **are called by the Lord** - each in his or her own way - to that perfect **holiness** by which the Father himself is perfect» (Gaudete et Exsultate 10).*

*«**"Each in his or her own way"** [...]. The important thing is that **each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves**, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (Cf. 1 Cor 12:7) rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them» (Gaudete et Exsultate 11).*





«To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. **We are all called to be holy** by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, **wherever we find ourselves**. [...] Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus» (Gaudete et Exsultate 14).

«**This holiness** to which the Lord calls you **will grow through small gestures**» (Gaudete et Exsultate 16).

«May **you come to realize** what that word is, the message of Jesus that **God wants to speak to the world by your life**. [...] **The Lord will bring it to fulfilment despite your mistakes** and missteps, provided that you [...] remain ever open to his supernatural grace, which purifies and enlightens» (Gaudete et Exsultate 24).

In the distant past, as well as in more recent times, it is possible to find children, adolescents, young people, widowers and married couples who can show us a path to holiness for every age and state of life: think, for example, of little Laura Vicuña, who became a saint at the age of twelve, the young Pier Giorgio Frassati, or Therese of Lisieux's holy parents. This idea of the neighborhood saint fits us, it is very close to us, we can relate to it. Perhaps even we can possibly encounter some of them?





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Points of discussion for couples/for families

- *To become holy "each in his own way": this is God's call to become the best version of ourselves. What are the special gifts God has given me?*
- *God "guides us to become holy": when have I felt guided on this journey to holiness?*
- *Have there been any events, encounters, or opportunities that have improved me or that have improved our family?*

Points of discussion within the community

- Every person can, through his or her life, communicate to the world a particular message that the Lord entrusts to him or her.
- Every person should think about someone they spend time with: what message is God giving me through that person?
- Let us think about these last few days: let us share with simplicity which "messengers" of the Lord we have met.

For more details:

Pope Francis and holiness, a call for all, not for "superheroes"

<https://www.vaticannews.va/it/papa/news/2018-04/il-papa-e-la-santita--una-chiamata-per-tutti-non-per-supereroi.html> [In Italian]





Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

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and to thank You for the great gift of the family.
We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
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may they know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
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Sustain them and make them aware
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Amen.

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“Nazareth: Rendering love normal”

Catechesis No. 3

Nazareth: Rendering love normal

The humbleness of Nazareth

In observing Jesus' family, Joseph and Mary, every family can rediscover its own call, and can begin to understand itself a little better, to orient itself on life's journey and feel drawn to the joy of the Gospel.

It is important not to forget that the Son of God, who became man, lived for many years within a normal and humble human family. It is precisely in the humble and normal realities that the Lord longs to become part and establish himself.

Today, our humble and normal existence, following the model of little Nazareth, made up of «one shop, four homes or so, a tiny village»¹, can become the place chosen by God for His Son Jesus to dwell. No one should feel excluded from this great and amazing gift!

Jesus was born in a family. «Jesus' path was in that family. [...] Each Christian family can first of all – as Mary and Joseph did – welcome Jesus, listen to Him, speak with Him, guard Him, protect Him, grow with Him; and in this way improve the world. [...] Each time there is a family that keeps this mystery, even if it were on the periphery of the world, the mystery of the Son of God, the mystery of Jesus who comes to save us, the mystery is at work»².

*«When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, **they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.** The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.*

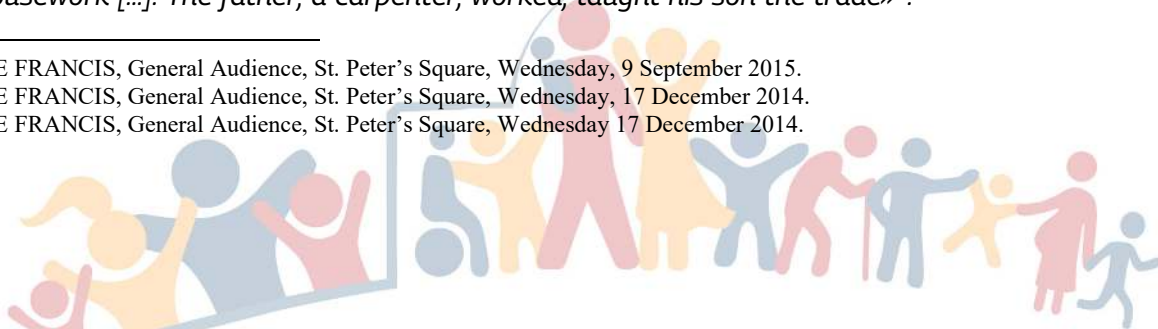
*Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, «Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety». And he said to them, «Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house»? But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and **came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them;** and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man» (Lk 2:39-52).*

In Nazareth «It does not recount miracles or healing, or preaching – He did none in that period – or of crowds flocking; in Nazareth everything seemed to happen “normally”, according to the customs of a pious and hardworking Israelite family: [...] the mother cooked, she did all the housework [...]. The father, a carpenter, worked, taught his son the trade»³.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 9 September 2015.

² POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 17 December 2014.

³ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday 17 December 2014.





Rendering love normal

The time when Jesus lived in Nazareth, within the Holy Family, **illuminates the life of each of our families** in a new way: the daily routine of everyday life, apparently insignificant and meaningless, can become a new way of fulfilling the specific call of the family: **to render love normal**.

Do we ever think about it?

Everything we experience every day at home, at work, at school, even if it doesn't seem directly related to the task of passing on the faith, is actually our way of «*seeking to make love and not hate normal, making mutual help commonplace, not indifference or enmity*»⁴. Just as occurred during those thirty years in Nazareth, so too can it occur within our own families and living environments.

Making room for Jesus

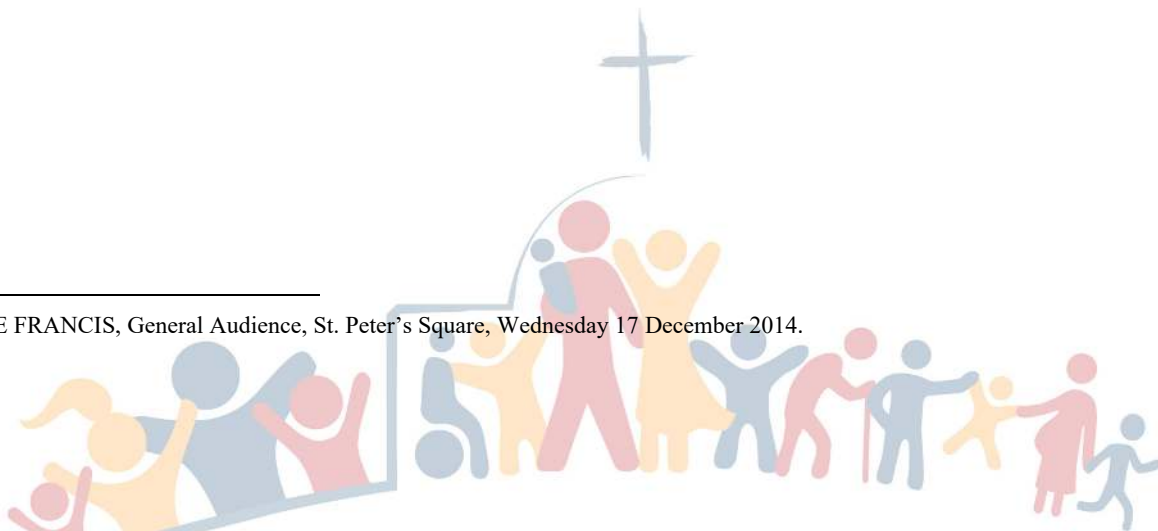
Fulfilling our calling and rendering love normal can only be done by making room for Jesus. «*It means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas*» (Evangelii Gaudium 91)

Our relationships are always auspicious and favorable occasions to live out our relationship with Christ; they represent for us the possibility of encountering *His face, His voice, His pleas*.

By rendering love normal, **each of our families can make an irreplaceable contribution to the world**, so that we can grow in true love and in the most authentic solidarity.

No other school can teach authentic, genuine, trustworthy, and credible love the way a family can.

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday 17 December 2014.





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Points of discussion for couples/for families

- How can we “render love normal” in our families?
- How can we “make room for Jesus” in our families?

Points of discussion within the community

- “Each of our families can offer the world their irreplaceable contribution”: to distribute the “perfume” of Jesus' love around themselves.
- Therefore, the family is a fundamental “player” within our community. How can we enhance the presence of each family?

For more details:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141217_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150909_udienza-generale.html





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Bless the World Meeting of Families.
Amen.

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**“We are all children,
we are all brothers and sisters”**

Catechesis No. 4



We are all children, we are all brothers and sisters

In a family there are different roles, but we are all united by a common identity: we are all children! No one chooses to be born. Each of us owes their existence and their life to a mother and a father. We cannot give life to ourselves, we can only receive it.

Life is a mystery that shines before us when children are born, and we see them for the first time with our own eyes; at that moment we are overcome by something more immense. That boy, that girl, are proof of the mystery of life that only partly depends on us and that we started to love even before we met them.

We all need each other.

When children are young, they need us. Their everyday lives depend on us: food, clothes, body care, communicating, learning to live in the world. Even as adults, however, we all have the experience of depending on something and someone. We are always in need of help, love and forgiveness!

What lies behind this truth?

Loved before birth

God the Father envisioned each of us as unique beings and loved us from before we were born.

«lo pensavo a te prima ancora di formarti nel ventre materno. Prima che tu venissi alla luce, ti avevo già scelto». (Ger. 1,5).

Being dependent, which characterizes our coming into the world, tells us that Someone loved us first, desired us, and that our parents were open to accepting our life as a gift.

It is terrible and distressing to feel we are *not needed*, even not being chosen for a team when we were children, or being chosen last, as if we were a rebound.

But, if we think that **we have been chosen and called all along**, then being in God's heart frees us from the anxiety and assures us that **we have been rooted all along in a love that comes "before" everything else**.

«From this also derives the depth of the human experience of being son or daughter, which allows us to discover the most gratuitous dimension of love, which never ceases to astonish us. It is the beauty of being loved first: children are loved before they arrive»¹.

We have not chosen ourselves rather we have been chosen; this suggests to us that the necessary condition for entering the Kingdom of God consists of *«not considering ourselves self-sufficient, but in need of help, of love, of forgiveness»²*, all things that children, especially when they are small, constantly remind us of.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 11 February 2015.

² POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 18 March 2015.





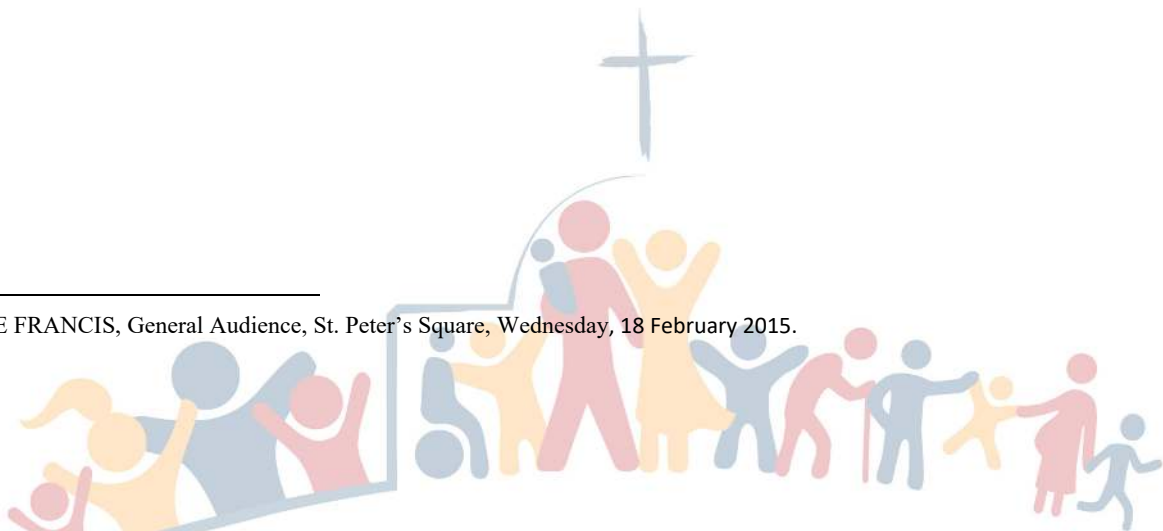
Living in fraternity

The family is the first place where we learn to live the fraternity to which, as children of one Father, we are all called.

*«In the family, among siblings, human coexistence is learned, how one must live in society. Perhaps we are not always aware of it, but **the family itself introduces fraternity into the world!** Beginning with this first experience of fraternity, nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole of society and on its relations among peoples.*

The blessing that God, in Jesus Christ, pours out on this bond of fraternity, expands in an unimaginable way. He renders it capable of overcoming all differences of nationality, language, culture and even religion. History has shown well enough, after all, that even freedom and equality, without brotherhood, can be full of individualism and conformism, and even personal interests»³.

³ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 18 February 2015.





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Points of discussion for couples/for families

Everyone is always in need of help, love, and forgiveness!

- How do we feel when we are helped, loved, forgiven?
- Who do we feel has helped, loved, forgiven us?
- In the heart of every person we meet lies the desire to feel helped, loved, forgiven. Our presence alongside every person can therefore be important. Let's think about these last few days: who have we made happy and who have we struggled to love?

Let us embrace Pope Francis' invitation:

«Each of us think in our heart about our children – if we have any; [...] And let us all think about our parents and thank God for the gift of life»⁴.

Points of discussion within the community

- Children need us to grow up, but we too need others.
- It is terrible and distressing to be or feel we are *not needed*. What might it mean, concretely speaking, to make sure that everyone in our community feels needed? We could organize the next preparatory meeting for the World Meeting of Families, offering everyone the possibility to get involved.
- Let us embrace Pope Francis' invitation:
«Let us think of our brothers, our sisters, and from our heart let us pray in silence for them»⁵.

For more details:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151014_udienza-generale.html

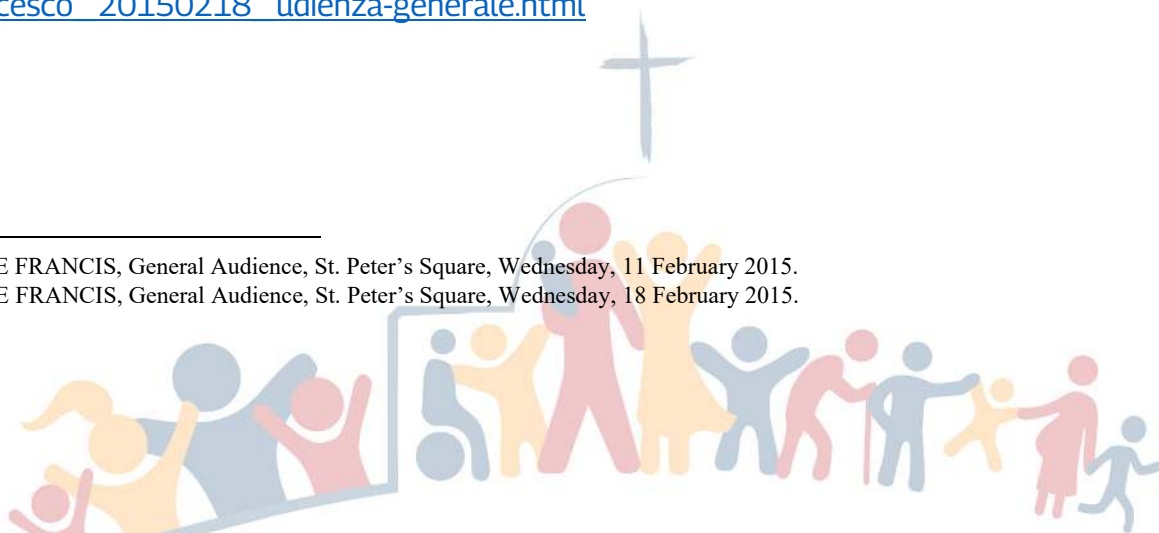
https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150211_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150318_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150218_udienza-generale.html

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 11 February 2015.

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“Fathers and mothers”

Catechesis No. 5



Fathers and mothers

The power of a love that generates

The path to holiness taken by a father or mother involves growing in their love for each other and in the love they give to their children.

There is such a beautiful and powerful calling in becoming fathers and mothers. This call consists in **sharing with God the power of a love that generates life**, in the flesh and in the spirit. The call lasts a lifetime and under all circumstances. The love of a man and a woman is always fruitful, even when there are no children or when the parents become elderly. In fact, spouses can always create children of God.

A merciful and gracious love

In the book of Exodus, after the Jewish people had worshipped the golden calf, the Lord revealed to Moses the quality of His Love:

*«Having come down in a cloud, the LORD stood with him there and proclaimed his name, "LORD." Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, **a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity**, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin" » (Ex 34:5-7).*

Let us dwell on these two words: *merciful* and *gracious*. In Hebrew, these are *raham* and *hesed*; both mean love, mercy, but with important differences that can give us insight into what the path to holiness is like, through the love of a father and mother.

Hesed is the most commonly used term in the Old Testament for mercy and love. It means tenderness made up of faithfulness, assurance, initiative and trust that affirms and accompanies, that does not abandon, that remains steady, that conveys reassurance.

Raham comes from "*rehem*" which in Hebrew means the womb, the place in which the life of the child is formed and grows: it is a love that forms the body, that preserves, that protects, that nourishes and welcomes the existence of another person.

Two dimensions of God's love are thus revealed to us: one that is paternal-masculine and another that is maternal-feminine. Masculine love is imbued with a tender but powerful, operational energy; feminine love, on the other hand, generates, builds and nourishes from a visceral bond. Mother and father are for their children the manifestation of this love.

*« The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For **as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him**; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*





As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; or he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust» (Psalm 103:8-14).

The love of a father and a mother eager to embrace their call to holiness, goes so far as to perform acts that only God is capable of: to **create** and **forgive**.

In the Old Testament, in fact, two actions are reserved exclusively to God: 'creating' [br'] and 'forgiving' [slh].

Every time a father and mother welcome a life and cherish it, every time they forgive each other and resume their journey, **they bring Heaven to earth**. For in that moment it is the Holy Spirit who has acted in them.

*«The first need, then, is precisely this: **that a father be present in the family**. That he be close to his wife, to share everything, joy and sorrow, hope and hardship. And that he be close to his children as they grow: when they play and when they strive, when they are carefree and when they are distressed, when they are talkative and when they are silent, when they are daring and when they are afraid, when they take a wrong step and when they find their path again; a father who is always present. To say "present" is not to say "controlling"! Fathers who are too controlling cancel out their children, they don't let them develop. [...] A good father **knows how to wait and knows how to forgive** from the depths of his heart. Certainly, he also knows how to correct with firmness: he is not a weak father, submissive and sentimental. The father who **knows how to correct without humiliating** is the one who knows how to protect without sparing himself»¹.*

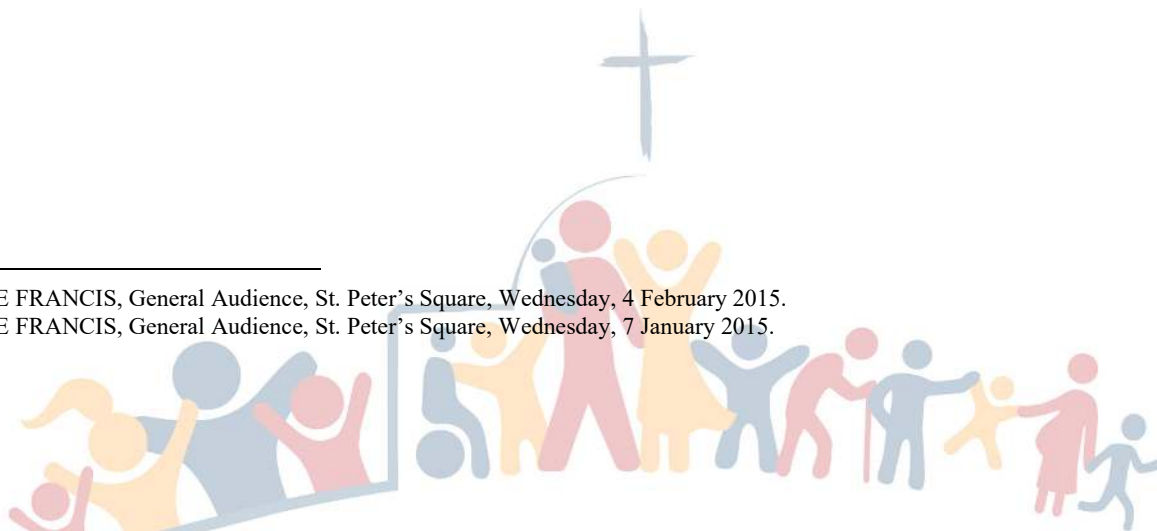
*«Being a mother doesn't only mean bringing a child to the world, but it is also a life choice. What does a mother choose, what is the life choice of a mother? The life choice of a mother is **the choice to give life**.*

And this is great, this is beautiful.

*A society without mothers would be a dehumanized society, for mothers are always, even in the worst moments, witnesses of **tenderness, dedication and moral strength**. Mothers often pass on the deepest sense of religious practice: in a human being's life, the value of faith is inscribed in the first prayers, the first acts of devotion that a child learns. It is a message that believing mothers are able to pass on without much explanation: these come later, but the seed of faith is those early precious moments. Without mothers, not only would there be no new faithful, but the faith would lose a good part of its simple and profound warmth»².*

¹ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 4 February 2015.

² POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 7 January 2015.





It is advisable that each person have the time to reread the catechesis, and to reflect on what resonates in his or her heart in a particular manner.

Points of discussion for couples/for families and within the community

- Let us reread the words of Pope Francis and reflect on our being a father or a mother.
- The love of a married couple also bears fruit in generating God's children, in being spiritual fathers and mothers of their own children and of every person we meet, giving them the tender, welcoming, firm and sure Love of God the Father. Who are the spiritual children that God is entrusting to us at this moment of our lives?

For more details:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150204_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150107_udienza-generale.html





Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

Heavenly Father,
We come before You to praise You
and to thank You for the great gift of the family.
We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
and as small domestic Churches,
may they know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.
Sustain them and make them aware
of the path to holiness upon which You call them,
so that they might experience Your infinite mercy
and find new ways to grow in love.
We pray to You for children and young people:
may they encounter You and respond joyfully
to the vocation You have in mind for them;
We pray for parents and grandparents: may they be aware
that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God
in caring for the children who, in body and spirit, You entrust to them;
and for the experience of fraternity
that the family can give to the world.
Lord, grant that each family
might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church
as a call to become missionary disciples,
in the service of life and peace,
in communion with our priests, religious,
and all vocations in the Church.
Bless the World Meeting of Families.
Amen.

Official prayer for the *X World Meeting of Families*
22-26 June 2022



Catechesis in preparation for the
10th World Meeting of Families

Rome June 22-26, 2022



“Grandparents and the elderly”

Catechesis No. 6



Grandparents and the elderly

Grandparents and the elderly are also part of our families.

Today, a *throwaway culture* that tends to consider the elderly unimportant or even insignificant to society prevails. **Instead, old age is a new opportunity to respond to God's call.** It is certainly a new and different response, and in some respects even more adult and mature.

The vocation to love is a call that God makes to us at every stage of our lives. This means that grandparents and the elderly are also called to live out the grace of their relationship with the Lord through their relationships with their children, grandchildren, young people, adolescents and even children.

The answer to this call develops in two directions: one is given by **what they can offer to others** through their experience, their patience and their wisdom; the other is given by **what they can receive from others** in their condition of fragility, weakness and need.

In this way, the elderly offer themselves and those who come into contact with them a new opportunity for an authentic and mature human development.

Getting old is difficult

We can't hide how difficult it is to get to become elderly.

For some, it is an experience filled with bitterness and sadness, especially when associated with illnesses or diseases that make it difficult to carry out normal activities performed in the past.

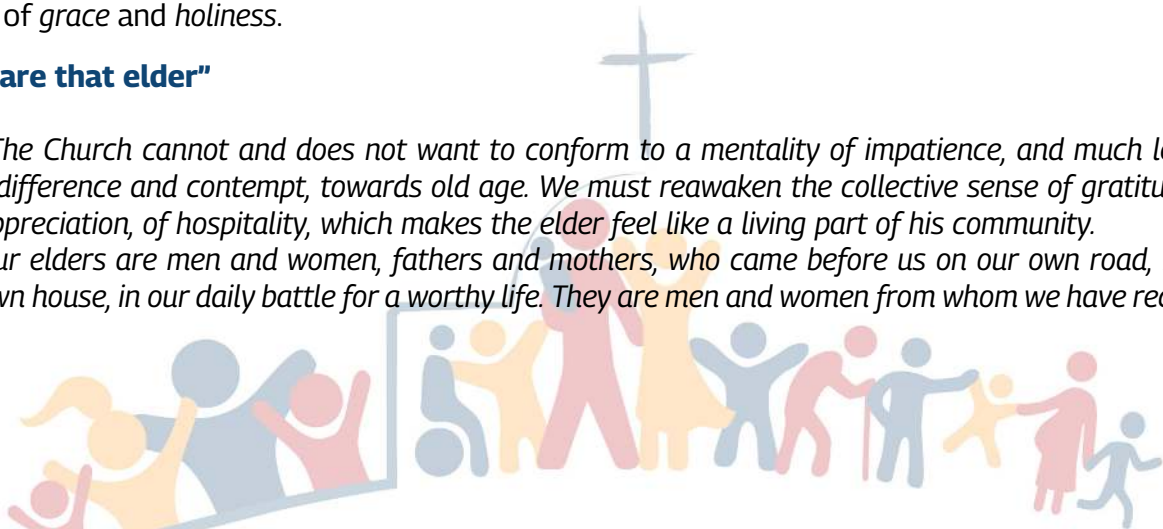
Sometimes the period of old age is also marked by the grief caused by losing one's spouse, with whom they spent a large part of their lives.

In some ways, even the season of old age, characterized by humble and simple daily events lived in concealment, silence and in a condition of apparent irrelevance to the history of the world, can be compared to the life of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Old age is also the period during which, having become more needy and less independent, the elderly's desire for prayer and dialog with God grows. It is undoubtedly a privileged and propitious time of *grace* and *holiness*.

"We are that elder"

«The Church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less of indifference and contempt, towards old age. We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elder feel like a living part of his community. Our elders are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life. They are men and women from whom we have received





so much. The elder is not an alien. We are that elder: in the near or far future, but inevitably, even if we don't think it. And if we don't learn how to treat the elder better, that is how we will be treated»¹.

Old age: a time of grace and mission

«**The Lord never discards us.** He calls us to follow Him in every age of life, and **old age has a grace and a mission too**, a true vocation from the Lord. Old age is a vocation. It is not yet time to "pull in the oars". This period of life is different from those before, there is no doubt; we even have to somewhat "invent it ourselves", because our societies are not ready, spiritually and morally, to appreciate the true value of this stage of life. Indeed, it once was not so normal to have time available; it is much more so today. Christian spirituality has also been caught somewhat by surprise, with regard to outlining a kind of spirituality of the elderly. But thanks be to God there is no shortage of the testimony of elderly saints, both men and women!»².

«When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, [...]. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, **he took him into his arms and blessed God**, saying:

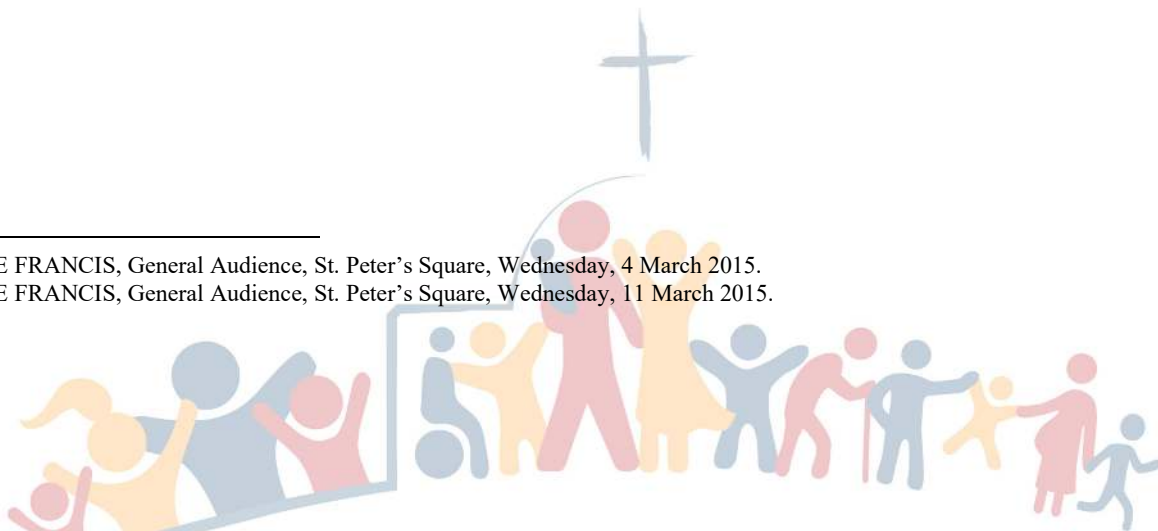
"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace,
according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of
all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory for your people Israel."

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem» (Lk 2: 22-38).

¹ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 4 March 2015.

² POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 11 March 2015.



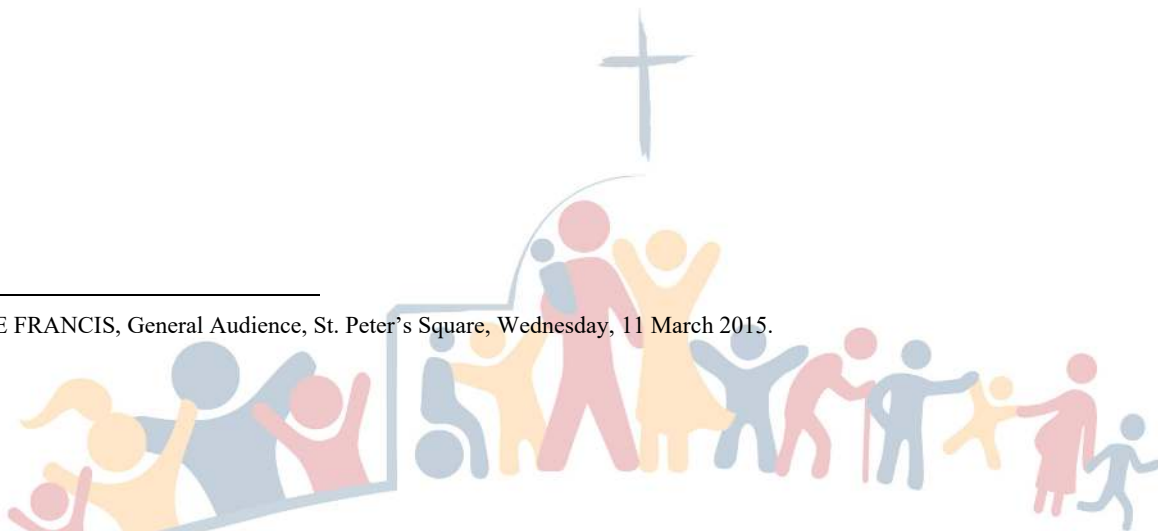


Poets of Prayer

«The Gospel says that they [Simeon and Anna] awaited the coming of God every day, with great trust, for many years. They truly wanted to see Him that day, to grasp the signs, to understand the origin. By then, they were also perhaps more resigned to die first: that long wait, however, continued to occupy their whole life, having no commitments more important than this: to await the Lord and pray. So, when Mary and Joseph went to the temple to fulfil the provisions of the Law, Simeon and Anna moved quickly, inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 2:27). The burden of age and waiting disappeared in an instant. They recognized the Child, and discovered new strength, for a new task: to give thanks for and bear witness to this Sign from God. Simeon improvised a beautiful hymn of jubilation (cf. Lk 2:29-32) – in that moment he was a poet – and Anna became the first woman to preach of Jesus: she “spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38).

Dear grandparents, dear elderly, let us follow in the footsteps of these extraordinary elders! Let us too become like poets of prayer: let us develop a taste for finding our own words, let us once again grasp those which teach us the Word of God. **The prayer of grandparents and of the elderly is a great gift for the Church!** The prayer of grandparents and of the elderly is a great gift for the Church, it is a treasure! A great injection of wisdom for the whole of human society: above all for one which is too busy, too taken, too distracted. Someone should also sing, for them too, sing of the signs of God, proclaim the signs of God, pray for them! [...] A great believer of the last century, of the Orthodox tradition, Olivier Clément, said: “A civilization which has no place for prayer is a civilization in which old age has lost all meaning. And this is terrifying. For, above all, we need old people who pray; prayer is the purpose of old age”. We need old people who pray because this is the very purpose of old age. The prayer of the elderly is a beautiful thing»³.

³ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 11 March 2015.





PRAYER FOR THE FIRST WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

*I thank You, Lord,
for the comfort of Your presence:
even in times of loneliness,
You are my hope and my confidence,
You have been my rock and my fortress since my youth!
I thank You for having given me a family
and for having blessed me with a long life.
I thank You for moments of joy and difficulty,
for the dreams that have already come true in my life and for
those that are still ahead of me.
I thank You for this time of renewed fruitfulness to which You
call me.
Increase, O Lord, my faith,
make me a channel of your peace,
teach me to embrace those who suffer more than me,
to never stop dreaming
and to tell of your wonders to new generations.
Protect and guide Pope Francis and the Church,
that the light of the Gospel might reach the ends of the earth.
Send Your Spirit, O Lord, to renew the world,
that the storm of the pandemic might be calmed,
the poor consoled and wars ended.
Sustain me in weakness
and help me to live life to the full
in each moment that You give me,
in the certainty that you are with me every day,
even until the end of the age.
Amen.*





It is advisable that each person have the time to reread the catechesis, and to reflect on what resonates in his or her heart in a particular manner.

Points of discussion for the family

- Let's read together and reflect on Pope Francis' message to grandparents and the elderly (http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Anziani/KitPastorale/EN/EN_MessaggioA4.pdf)
- As a family, we should think about the elders we could give Pope Francis' message to.

Points of discussion within the community

- Let us also invite grandparents and the elderly and also get them involved in preparing and running this IMF preparatory meeting.
- As a community, what are we already doing to get grandparents and the elderly involved? What more can be done?
- Let's get organized, including involving the youth, to personally bring Pope Francis' message to the elders of our community.

For more details:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150304_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150311_udienza-generale.html

Pope Francis' message for World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly:

http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Anziani/KitPastorale/EN/EN_Messaggio%20A4.pdf

Prayer for the world day for grandparents and the elderly:

http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Anziani/KitPastorale/EN/EN_Preghiera.pdf





Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

Heavenly Father,
We come before You to praise You
and to thank You for the great gift of the family.
We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
and as small domestic Churches,
may they know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.
Sustain them and make them aware
of the path to holiness upon which You call them,
so that they might experience Your infinite mercy
and find new ways to grow in love.
We pray to You for children and young people:
may they encounter You and respond joyfully
to the vocation You have in mind for them;
We pray for parents and grandparents: may they be aware
that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God
in caring for the children who, in body and spirit, You entrust to them;
and for the experience of fraternity
that the family can give to the world.
Lord, grant that each family
might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church
as a call to become missionary disciples,
in the service of life and peace,
in communion with our priests, religious,
and all vocations in the Church.
Bless the World Meeting of Families.
Amen.

Official prayer for the *X World Meeting of Families*
22-26 June 2022



Catechesis in preparation for the
10th World Meeting of Families

Rome June 22-26, 2022



« May I, thank you, pardon me »

Catechesis No. 7



«May I, thank you, pardon me»

«Indeed, these expressions open up the way to living well in your family, to living in peace. They are simple expressions, but not so simple to put into practice! They hold much power: **the power to keep home life intact even when tested with a thousand problems**. But if they are absent, little holes can start to crack open and the whole thing may even collapse»¹.

As we can see from experience, the life of every family is not characterized only by wonderful and enlightening moments. Often, in fact, the difficulties and trials of life and history make the experiences of families dark and difficult. Sometimes it is because they struggle to live together, sometimes because their relationships are not always easy and carefree, sometimes because the couple's relationship goes through moments of disappointment and frustration and the relationship between the spouses is marked by «*a thousand forms of abuse and subjugation, misleading seduction and humiliating ignorance, even the most dramatic and violent kind*»².

In order to obtain the fullness of Love it is necessary to follow a slow and gradual path, which is most often tiring and demanding, and which requires a process of growth in which each day one must humbly and perseveringly accept the Grace of Christ. This Grace, which husband and wife already invoke on the day of their Matrimony as an essential element of their union, is the principal support of spouses. It is only with Christ's help that one can in fact come to love fully, to renounce to continual demands, to reject the ambition of controlling every aspect of reality, to leave aside the desire to dominate the lives of others. Only He has the power to "change the hearts of human beings and render man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us" (cf. FC 13). In fact, it is in the nature of Love (Christ) to always go beyond oneself, to love the other person with all his or her limits and respect his or her freedom.

If this is fundamental in every human relationship, it becomes even more so in the family: none of us alone are enough for ourselves. In fact, we are in such a condition of fragility that we constantly need to be supported in the fight against our own *ego*, which struggles to be self-giving and recognize its very limits.

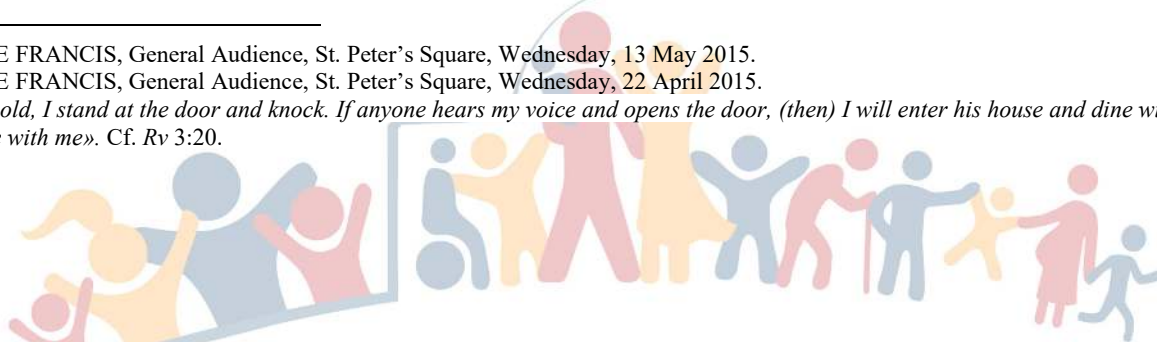
By embracing these three words - **may I, thank you, pardon me** - each member of the family is in a position to **recognize his or her own limits**. Acknowledging one's own weakness leads each of us to not dominate over the other, rather to be respectful and not claim possession over him or her.

May I, thank you and pardon me are three very simple words, that guide us in taking very concrete steps along the path of holiness and in growing in love. Besides, they were words typical of the style of Jesus Christ, who *asks permission to enter*³, who continually thanks the Father, who teaches us to pray, saying: «forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us» (Mt 6:10).

¹ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 13 May 2015.

² POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 22 April 2015.

³ «Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me». Cf. Rv 3:20.





Accepting that we alone are not enough for ourselves and leaving a place for others is the way to live not only love in the family, but the experience of faith as well.

Besides, every human being has been *wounded by love* during their life. Even in the family it can occur that words, actions or omissions have deeply *mortified love*.

Generally speaking, such an attitude or behavior that is created between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, between uncles and aunts, between grandparents and grandchildren, instead of expressing love, can harm or even destroy it.

It must also be noted that there are some wounds, such as illness and grief that are beyond our control, leaving us powerless and often deeply troubled.

These are experiences that sometimes seem to contradict God's promises and to deny His infinite and eternal Love. However, when lived in faith and openness to others, they are just as many opportunities for feeling loved and cared for by God and by others and being the object of their attention.

These are often difficult and painful moments, but they also turn out to be favorable privileged periods in which the Lord comes to visit us, because *«the love of Jesus was in giving health, doing good: this always takes priority!»*⁴.

Each of these hard, difficult and painful experiences become the concrete example of our path to holiness; opportunities that do not prevent us from loving anyhow and from remaining in His love.

However, without presumptions: the vulnerability and hardship of existence are embedded in life and do not allow us to move easily and quickly towards magical or unrealistic solutions. We need to be helped and to help.

In the midst of this hardship, the Holy Spirit accompanies us and does so many times thanks to our family members, our friends, and the people who show us their love: the endurance of love is the beginning of hope and makes us desire that the very Lord manifest Himself as the Love we need most.

*«Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm;
**For stern as death is love,
relentless as the nether world is devotion;**
its flames are a blazing fire.
Deep waters cannot quench love,
nor floods sweep it away» (Song 8:6-7).*

The faith and charity of the Gospel are not life guarantees, nor do they preserve us from the suffering and pain that characterize human existence. They do not ensure our immunity from evil and hardship. Rather, they are a light that brightens our lives in moments of darkness and affliction. Therefore, even the most painful and sad situations, lived in unison with Jesus Christ, can become opportunities for cultivating relationships among each other, growing in our faith in God and in the certainty that every event in our lives holds precious treasures of Grace.

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 10 June 2015.





It is advisable that each person have the time to reread the catechesis, and to reflect on what resonates in his or her heart in a particular manner.

Points of discussion for couples/for families

- Give examples where we could learn to say in our families:
 - May I
 - Thank you
 - Pardon me
- When did I say, "May I", "thank you", "pardon me" today?

Points of discussion within the community

- Are we capable of saying "May I," "thank you," "pardon me" in our community, in our relationships with one another?

For more details:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150513_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150422_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150610_udienza-generale.html





Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

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and to thank You for the great gift of the family.
We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
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may they know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
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Sustain them and make them aware
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