

April 2018

Proposed Theme: All Families

The Joy of Love: Pope Francis

Faithful to Christ's teaching we look to the reality of the family today in all its complexity, with both its lights and shadows. Anthropological and cultural changes in our time influence all aspects of life and call for an analytical and diversified approach. (32)

Seeing things with the eyes of Christ inspires the Church's pastoral care for the faithful who are living together, or are only married civilly, or are divorced or remarried. (78)

Therefore, while clearly stating the Church's teaching, pastors are to avoid judgements that do not take into account the complexity of various situations, and they are to be attentive, by necessity, to how people experience and endure distress because of their condition. (79)

Some thoughts:

- Every family, whatever its composition, whatever its faith or lack of faith or even its rejection of God, is a sacred place.
- We cannot impose our faith on others. They have to have the freedom to make their own choices and we have to respect those. But we can make them part of our prayer and our love.
- Within the community of faith, especially in our Catholic tradition, the family is seen as the Domestic Church, the Church of the home. This has serious implications for our vision of the Church in general.
- It is in the home that Christian faith is at its best and sometimes also at its worst. The home is a community that is rooted in love. It is also a community that is committed to love as its way of life. It is where each person has the best chance to be loved as she or he is; where each one can have freedom to become her or his own unique person – and this is not just about the children!; where each one can make mistakes and know that they will be forgiven and even understood.
- But the family cannot find its way on its own. The parish community is vital for the growth and well-being of each family. It is from the parish community that the family can be reminded of the values we hold in following Christ. And it is there also that each family can find support in trying to live out those values of love and generosity and faith.

Questions:

1. What do you see as some of the most important elements in building a good, healthy and faith-filled family?
2. How do you see that your parish community can encourage families to work at building their family life as a community of love?
3. Especially where there are children, Baptism is the direct link between the family and the parish community. Parents promise to bring up their child in the faith; the parish promises to support them in this in every way possible. Is that second promise even known in your parish community?
4. How could the celebration of Baptism become more a celebration of the community and not just of the family of the child?
5. Do you think of couples or individuals living on their own as a family with the responsibility of being a Domestic Church?