

## **FAMILY**

Over-romantic, patriarchal, or sentimental ideas of family life no longer carry convictions. Neither can the picture we give be an over-abstract one, divorced from the actual realities of modern families. It must, rather, take sympathetic account of the nature, difficulties, and opportunities of the family as it is.

### **THE FAMILY IN THE ORDER OF CREATION**

#### **Family And Marriage**

The family has its origin in marriage; marriage is directed to the family as its goal. The marriage itself and the personal relationship of the married couple are increasingly seen as the real heart of the family on which the children depend for growth and support. Emphasis and detailed stress must be laid on married love without omitting a corresponding emphasis on its expression and development in the family and the children. Marriage is not instituted solely for procreation. Rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of the children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that is, that it grow and ripen. Therefore, marriage persists as a whole manner and communion of life and maintains its value and dissolubility even when, despite the often intense desire of the couples, offspring are lacking.

#### **Family And Community**

The family, not marriage, is the primary unit of community living. It binds the sexes as well as the generations and introduces the young people into the life of the community. It brings into existence on a minute scale an astounding variety of relationships since it encompasses the members entirely and binds them together in love. The proper development of this variety of relationships needs corresponding need for space (housing) and time, as well as an alertness and sensitivity of spirit.

#### **Family And Fellowship**

##### **The sex and blood relationship**

The intimate relationship between husband and wife affects both, physiologically and biologically, but especially the wife, through the exchange of semen and hormones, as well as the life of the senses. The laws of heredity, too, have confirmed the experience that the children are physically and therefore in their basic temperaments formed by both parents. The parents pass on life, their life, to the children and see in them both the fruit and the continuation of their own life.

##### **The primary economic community**

In the family we have an intensive exchange of goods and services that is not commercial but based on love -- perfect communism according to the classic formula: from each according to his means, to each according to his needs. Such perfect communism is possible only here, for nowhere else do we find such deep and intimate personal relationships. This "communism of love" carries at the same time an urgent appeal, an earnest demand for selflessness, self-giving, readiness for sacrifice, and self-conquest.

#### Community of mind and spirit

In daily living, based on love, trust, esteem, and respect, there is also an exchange of ideas, convictions, values and attitudes, a sharing of the experience of joys and sorrows, successes and trials, such as we find in no other group. Thus, the family remains a holy place in which religious sentiments and convictions are cultivated in common, passed on to the coming generation, and above all carried into the realities of everyday life. In the family, the child is baptized and receives the first introduction to the truths and realities of faith.

#### Educational unit

Modern psychology and methods of teaching confirm the traditional judgment that a person's decisive formation takes place in the earliest years of life, long before his or her intellect is capable of critical discernment or judgment. This is true first of all because he or she is most impressionable at this stage and secondly because it is then that facts and attitudes are conveyed to him or her in the most intimate and personal way, in love. A person takes in best what comes by way of the heart. Thus, it is also of decisive importance that the family and family living be shaped and surrounded by a religious atmosphere that is healthy, mature, and responsible.

#### Meeting of the generations

The most fundamental and most intensive meeting of the generations comes about through birth and shared living. Yet, in a dynamic society, age does not have the commanding position it held in earlier times. Nowadays, the knowledge and experience of earlier generations are handed on not merely in the family but also in the school, as well as through organizations, books, libraries and museums, press and radio, TV and the Internet.

Also, the older generation has become more independent of the younger generation in material matters. The duty of children to provide for their aged parents has ceased to a great extent to be a matter of necessity.

Nevertheless, the meeting of the generations in the family retains its importance, especially in the realm of the mind and the spirit.

#### The Change In Family Life In Industrial Society

Industrial society has made an enormous change in the external form of family living, and the inner structure has not remained unaffected. Careful consideration must be given to the question as to which of these changes represent a decline, which are merely a transition from one historical situation to another, and which even imply genuine progress in the light of true Christian values.

The present-day family in industrial society has suffered socially and economically a considerable loss of function and has taken a turn in the opposite direction. The consequence is that greater emphasis is laid on the cultural and spiritual functions of the family. Today, a multitude of outside influences affect the members of the family and the family itself. The force and significance of tradition have diminished. The call for discussion, personal assimilation, and independent conviction is incomparably greater. Today, relationship in both directions plays a far smaller part: the social pressure of the family has grown less, the freedom and independence of the individual has grown greater and more demanding. The patriarchal age was based less on moral and religious convictions than on social and cultural factors. Today, the father's authority rests not so much on his economic functions as on his personal qualities of mind and character.

The mobility of industrial society weakens tradition or makes it partly impossible both from a cultural and a religious point of view. In addition, partly as a consequence of the changes described above, the consciousness of individuality and the desire for freedom have a much greater influence nowadays, bringing a new pressure to bear on the family, even to the extent at times of breaking it up. There is "emancipation" in all spheres and greater exposure to the multiple influences of the larger society. This situation, however, can lead to a mental development of the individual and to better human relations.

#### Some Characteristics Of The Modern Family

The modern family is far more dependent on its mental, cultural, moral, and religious powers. This involves a greater vulnerability and insecurity but also a greater opportunity and task from the personal point of view.

Both for the protection and orderly development of the family, in moral and religious questions as well as in matters of authority, there is a need of a more intensely personal commitment. The family is not sufficiently secure, either socio-economically or legally. All the more earnestly must those forces be developed that are calculated to strengthen families and that hold them together. Less stress must be laid on commands and prohibitions and more on the development of the inner forces of selflessness and readiness for sacrifice, of responsibility and fidelity freely chosen.

In this respect, particular importance attaches to the role of the woman and her training for that role. It is especially the woman's task -- and her potentialities make her capable of it -- to bring the spiritual forces to their full development. It is a matter for urgent consideration whether the education and training given to girls take sufficient account of this fact. In our preoccupation with mental and occupational training for girls, not to

speak of competitive sports, do we not perhaps give far too little attention to the training of the heart, the sensibilities, the awakening of love? The basic vocation of the woman, to be a life companion and mother, should not be pushed too far into the background in a reaction against the former patriarchal social order. As well as the similarity, the dissimilarity (not inferiority, not subjection) should not be eliminated or neglected. This would be to subject the special qualities and task of women to harmful pressures.

The man's position and task, as husband and father, also call for special qualities of mind and character. Man is not so much the head of the wife but rather the natural head of the marriage and of the family community. This gives the justification for his position as well as setting the limits of his task. It signifies no right of precedence but rather an obligation of service. The man has the amount of authority that is called for by the needs of the marriage and family, of the wife and the children. That will vary with age and other circumstances.

The children are less dependent on their parents, especially as they get older. This makes education more difficult but also more human. The bases of education have to be trust and service, rather than authority and obedience.

Aging parents, as mentioned above, have become more independent materially of their children and relatives. Young families have a right, indeed a duty, to direct their lives in a free and more independent way. Yet, a warm and intimate relationship between the generations, with respect for freedom on both sides, can be of great human and spiritual value. The duties of the aged must be re-formulated.

Finally, the circle of relatives is smaller, the relationships are fewer and above all less taken for granted. They should not be neglected, especially as a protection against isolation as an enrichment of life, but they should be cultivated on a new basis and in greater freedom and independence.

### The Special Task Of The Family In Industrial Society

The family has a providential task as a place of refuge and protection for the soul and mind of man and woman, for personality and individuality, for freedom and morality, for the direct responsibility for others and for religion.

### TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF THE FAMILY

Since marriage and the family derive clearly from the order of God's creation, there is a special dignity and sacredness about them. They are much more closely connected with human nature and existence than, for example, the State. Thus, they are also more directly determined and regulated by nature and its Creator.

The priority of parenthood over married union is biblically and theologically untenable. Marriage is a holy union for the consecration not of parents but of the husband and wife. However, since marriage is a permanent state and since married love naturally unfolds in parenthood, the latter shares also in the dignity and grace of the sacrament. Fruitfulness pertains without any doubt to the essential function of marriage in the biblical and theological view.

The well being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. Since the Creator of all things has established the conjugal partnership as the beginning and basis of human society and, by his grace, has made it a great mystery in Christ and the Church, the mission of married persons and of families is of unique importance for the Church and civil Society. The family has received from God its mission to be the first and vital cell of society. Therefore, the family must not close in on itself in an egoistic or timid way, but must exert its influence on the Church and Society.

If the human being is, in a certain sense, a summary of the variety of existence, so is the family in a special way the living synthesis and harmony of multiple tensions: matter and spirit, natural tendency and free choice, sex and love, personality and community, the past (in the forefathers) and the future (in the children), tradition and individuality, self-realization and self-giving, nature and grace are brought in the family in a unique, personal, and yet socially valuable way to a fruitful unity, both bringing life to be and shaping its development.

The seemingly most trivial things in the family come to have the greatest human and spiritual significance as symbols and expressions of love and fidelity. Diversity and tensions are here not so much a source of conflicts as of fruitfulness. Since the consecration of married love is the foundation of the family and comes in it to full development, the entire order of creation becomes here in a sense a vehicle for grace and a means of sanctification.

--Jakob David, edited by Patrick J. Hession