

## **THE HOLINESS OF THE FAMILY AT THE SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL (Mark 16:14-18)**

By means of the sacrament of marriage, in which it is rooted and from which it draws its nourishment, the family is continuously vivified by the Lord Jesus and called and engaged by him in a dialogue with God through the sacraments, through the offering of one's life, and through prayer.

The sacrament of marriage is the specific source and original means of sanctification for Christian married couples and families. It takes up again and makes specific the sanctifying grace of baptism. By virtue of the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ, of which the spouses are made part in a new way by marriage, conjugal love is purified and made holy: This love the Lord has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting, and exalting gifts of grace and of charity.

The gift of Jesus Christ is not exhausted in the actual celebration of the sacrament of marriage but rather accompanies the married couple throughout their lives. Jesus Christ abides with them so that, just as he loved the Church and handed himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-dedication. For this reason, Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state. By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope, and charity. Thus, they increasingly advance toward their own perfection, as well as toward their mutual sanctification, and hence contribute jointly to the glory of God.

Christian spouses and parents are included in the universal call to sanctity. For them, this call is specified by the sacrament they have celebrated and is carried out concretely in the realities proper to their conjugal and family life. This gives rise to the grace and requirement of an authentic and profound conjugal and family spirituality that draws its inspiration from the themes of creation, covenant, cross, resurrection, and sign.

Just as husbands and wives receive from the sacrament the gift and responsibility of translating into daily living the sanctification bestowed on them, so the same sacrament confers on them the grace and moral obligation of transforming their whole lives into a "spiritual sacrifice."

In our age, as in the past, there is no lack of witness to the "gospel of the family," even if they are not well known or have not been proclaimed saints by the Church. In the Church, the treasure of the family has been entrusted first and foremost to witnesses: to those fathers and mothers, sons and daughters who, through the family, have discovered the path of their human and Christian vocation, the dimension of the "inner man" (Ephesians 3:16) of which the Apostle Paul speaks, and thus have attained holiness. The Holy Family is the beginning of countless other holy families. And, holiness is the vocation of all the baptized.

--Pontifical Council for the Family