

~In the School of Mary~

PAPAL DOCUMENTS

Condensed by Deacon Bill Wagner

(On Love in the Family

by Pope Francis ~ March-19-2016)

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION: *Amoris Laetitia*

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

YOUR CHILDREN ARE

AS THE SHOOTS OF AN OLIVE TREE

14. The Psalmist says that in the home where husband and wife are seated at table, children appear at their side “like olive shoots” full of energy and vitality. The children are like the “living stones” of the family. The most often used Old Testament word “child” (*ben*) is related to the verb “to build” (*banah*). Hence, Psalm 128 uses imagery drawn from the building of a house and the social life of cities: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them!” The presence of children is a sign of the continuity of the family in salvation history.

15. The New Testament speaks of “churches that meet in homes.” A family’s living space could turn into a domestic church, a setting for the Eucharist, the presence of Christ seated at its table. In the Book of Revelation, the Lord says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens, I will come in to him and eat with him.” Here we see a home filled with the presence of God, common prayer and every blessing.

16. The Bible also presents the family as the place where children are brought up in the faith. One of the Psalms celebrates the proclamation of faith within families: “All that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us, we will not hide from their children. ...He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children.” The family is the place where parents are the children’s first teachers in the faith. They learn this “trade,” passing it down from one person to another.

17. Parents have a serious responsibility for this work of education, as the Bible often remind us. Children are called to accept and practice the commandment: “Honor your father and your mother.” “Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure.”

18. The Gospel reminds us that children are not the property of a family, but have their own lives. Jesus is a model of obedience to his earthly parents, but he also shows that children’s vocation may demand

a parting for the sake of the Kingdom of God (*Lk 9:59-62*).

Deacon Bill

Wagner

Please Note: *AMORIS LAETITIA* is available through local Catholic bookstores or on the web at EWTN or the Vatican.

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

YOUR CHILDREN ARE

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18. The twelve-year old Jesus tells Mary and Joseph that he has a greater mission apart from his earthly family. Yet at the same time, in the concern he shows for children, whom the societies of the ancient Near East viewed as without rights and even as property, Jesus presents them as teachers because of their simple trust and spontaneity: “Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

A PATH OF SUFFERING AND BLOOD

19. A bitter truth found throughout sacred Scripture is the presence of pain, evil and violence that breaks up families. The word of God constantly testifies to that somber dimension already present at the beginning, when, through sin, the relationship of love between man and woman turns into domination.

20. This thread of suffering and bloodshed runs through numerous pages of the Bible, beginning with Cain’s murder of his brother, Abel. We read of the disputes between the sons and wives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the violence in David’s family, the family problems in the story of Tobias and the bitter complaint of Job.

21. Jesus himself was born into a modest family that soon had to flee to a foreign land. He visits Peter’s mother-in-law who was ill. He shows sympathy upon the deaths in the homes of Jairus and Lazarus. He hears the wailing of the widow of Nain for her dead son. There are many more examples about Jesus throughout the NT.

22. We can see that the word of God is not a series of abstract ideas but rather a source of comfort and companionship for every family. The NT shows them the goal of their journey, when God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more.” Rev. 21:4

THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS

23. At the beginning of Psalm 128, the father appears as a laborer who sustains his family. It is clear that from the very first pages of the Bible work is an essential part of human dignity. The Lord God

put man in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Man is presented as a laborer who works the earth in addition to cultivating his own gifts and talents.

THE CURRENT REALITY OF THE FAMILY

34. Certain factors affect our understanding of the family. Rights can be asserted while relationships are left to personal whim, confusing genuine freedom with the idea that each individual can act arbitrarily. The ideal of marriage, a commitment exclusively stable, is swept aside. Fear of loneliness and the desire for stable fidelity exist alongside a fear of entrapment in a relationship.

35. Christians can hardly stop advocating marriage simply to avoid contemporary sensibilities in the face of moral failings. This is to deprive the world of values that we must offer. We need an effort to present the reasons for choosing marriage and family. In this way, we help men and women better to respond to God's grace.

36. We need to be humble, realistically acknowledging that we may have contributed to today's problematic situation. We need a healthy self-criticism. Then too, we often present marriage in such a way that its unitive meaning is overshadowed by an almost exclusive insistence on procreation. Nor have we always provided solid guidance to young married couples. At times, we have also proposed a too abstract theological ideal of marriage, far removed from concrete situations.

37. We find it difficult to present marriage as a path to personal development rather than a lifelong burden. We also find it hard to make room for consciences. We are called to form consciences not replace them.

38. We are grateful that most people value permanent family relationships, marked by mutual respect. They appreciate the Church's efforts to offer guidance. Many are touched by the power of grace in Reconciliation and the Eucharist, helping them face the challenges of marriage and family. We are grateful too for the witness of marriages that have not only proved lasting, but also fruitful and loving. All these factors inspire a welcoming pastoral approach, helping a couple. Yet we are often defensive, wasting pastoral energy on denouncing a decadent world without being proactive. Many people feel that the Church's message on marriage does not clearly reflect the attitudes of Jesus. He was demanding but compassionate, close to the frailty of individuals like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery.

39. We can hardly cease warning against a cultural decline, a culture of the ephemeral. Consider the speed with which people move from one affective relationship to another. Along the lines of the social networks, love can be connected or disconnected at

a whim. There, too, are the fears associated with permanent commitment, those relationships that weigh costs and benefits. We treat affective relationships like material objects. Everything is disposable. It is exploited. Squeezed to the last drop. Then tossed. Narcissism makes for people incapable of looking beyond themselves. Yet those who use others end up used themselves, manipulated and discarded. Break-ups often occur among older adults who seek a kind of independence. They reject the ideal of growing old together supportive of one another.

40. We might say that we live in a culture that pressures young people not to start a family because they lack possibilities for the future. Yet, this same culture presents others with so many options that they too are dissuaded from starting a family. Many young people postpone a wedding for economic reasons, work or study. Others might be influenced by ideologies, the failure of other couples, social opportunities and economic benefits found in simply living together. It might also be the rejection of something conceived of as purely institutional. We need to find the right language to reach the minds and hearts of young people, touching their generosity, commitment, love and even heroism.

41. The Synod Fathers noted that today's cultural tendencies set no limits on a person's affective state, a narcissistic and unstable affectivity does not always allow for personal maturity. They expressed concern about the spread of pornography and the commercialization of the body, fostered by the misuse of the internet. Couples are often uncertain, struggling to find ways to grow, remaining in the initial stages of their affective and sexual life. A crisis in the couple's relationship may destabilize the family, leading to separation or divorce with profound consequences for adults, children and society. Failures give rise to new relationships that can be highly complex and problematic for the Christian life.

42. The decline in population, due to a mentality against having children, often promoted by world politics, creates a situation in which the relationship between generations is no longer ensured. This decline also will lead to economic impoverishment and a loss of hope in the future. Biotechnology has also had a major impact on the birthrate. Other factors such as industrialization, the sexual revolution, fear of overpopulation along with consumerism may also deter people from having children. All this, so they can maintain a certain freedom and lifestyle. The upright consciences of spouses, for sufficiently serious reasons, may limit the number of their children. However, the Church strongly rejects the forced State intervention in favor

of contraception, sterilization and even abortion. Such measures are unacceptable even in places with high birthrates.

43. The weakening of faith in some societies has an effect on families as well, leaving them more isolated. The Synod Fathers noted that the great poverty of contemporary culture is loneliness, arising from the absence of God. Families often feel abandoned due to a lack of attention on the part of institutions. The negative impact on the social order is clear, as seen by the demographic crisis, in a hesitancy to welcome new life, to see older persons as a burden, and an increase of emotional problems and outbreaks of violence.

44. The lack of affordable housing often leads to the postponement of formal relationships. The family has the right to decent housing, fitting for family life and commensurate to the number of its members. Families and homes go together. How important it is to insist on the rights of the family. The Church has always held it part of her mission to promote marriage and the family. Families have a right to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities. At times families suffer terribly due to lack health care or dignified employment. They suffer particularly from problems related to work. Workdays are long and oftentimes made more burdensome by extended periods away from home. This situation does not help family members to nurture their relationships.

45. Numerous children are born outside of wedlock. Many subsequently grow up with just one of their parents or in a blended family. Sexual exploitation of children is yet another perverse reality in today's society. Societies experiencing violence due to war, terrorism or organized crime know deterioration of the family especially in large cities. Sexual abuse of children is most scandalous where they should be most safe, particularly in families, schools, and Christian institutions.

46. Migration also effects families negatively. The recent Synod made note of this. Human mobility can be an enrichment for both families that migrate and countries that receive them. Forced migration of families because of war, persecution, poverty and injustice often puts lives at risk and destabilizes families. The Church needs pastoral programs for families of migrants and those who remain behind. Pastoral activity must respect their cultural and religious formation and the richness of their spiritual traditions. Illegal migration is destructive of families and individuals, especially when driven by networks of human trafficking, especially so, when involving women and unaccompanied children. Extreme poverty and family breakdown sometimes lead families to sell their children for prostitution or organ

trafficking. The persecution of Christians and minorities, especially in the Middle East, are a great trial for the Church as well for the entire international community. Every effort should be made to assist families and Christian communities to remain in their native lands.

47. The Synod Fathers also called attention to families of persons with special needs. They are due admiration. They render the Church and society an invaluable witness of faithfulness to the gift of life. Disabled persons are a gift to a family, an opportunity to grow in love, mutual aid and unity. In the light of faith, these will be able to recognize and ensure the value of every human life. Such an approach will promote care for the disadvantaged and encourage people to draw near to them. Concern shown for migrants and persons with special needs is a sign of the Spirit. They are a sign of our witness to mercy for the vulnerable, helping them to be part of the community.

48. Most families have a profound respect for the elderly, considering them a blessing. A special appreciation is due to those family movements committed to serving the elderly, spiritually and socially. In highly industrialized societies, where the number of older people is growing while the birthrate declines, they can be regarded as a burden. The care that they require often puts a strain on their loved ones. The elderly who are vulnerable and dependent are, at times, unfairly exploited. Still, many families show us that it is possible to approach the last stages of life by emphasizing a person's sense of fulfillment and participation in the Lord's paschal mystery. Many of these seniors are being cared for in Church institutions, living in a peaceful, family atmosphere. Even so euthanasia and assisted suicide are serious threats to families worldwide. The Church, as she firmly opposes these practices, also feels the need to assist families who care for their elderly and infirm members.

49. The problems of families living in dire poverty are often even more trying. A single working mother must often leave her children alone at home. Such children grow up exposed to all kinds of risks and obstacles to personal growth. In such tricky situations, the Church must offer understanding and acceptance rather than judgement and abandonment of a mother, who herself is called to show God's mercy. She must be offered the healing power of grace and the light of the Gospel message.

SOME CHALLENGES

50. The two pre-synodal consultations spoke of a vast variety of situations and the challenges that they pose. Many respondents pointed to the problems

families face in raising children. Many no longer even share a common meal. Distractions abound. This makes it even more difficult for parents to hand on the faith. Other responses spoke of the severe stress on families caught up in securing the future rather than enjoying the present. This is aggravated by fear of a lack of steady employment, finances and the future of their children.

51. In the pre-synodal consultations, drugs were also mentioned as one of the scourges of our time, causing great suffering and the breakup of families. The same is true of alcoholism, gambling and other addictions. We see their serious effects in families torn apart, the young uprooted and the elderly abandoned. Children become orphans of living parents. Adolescents and youths are confused and unsupported. As the Bishops of Mexico have pointed out, violence within families breeds new forms of social aggression. Such is the case with families lacking communication. Defensive attitudes dominate. Members are not supportive of one another. Family activities are absent and parental relationships are frequently conflictual and violent. Relationships between parents and children are marked by hostility. Violence within the family is a breeding ground of hatred within the most basic of human relationships.

52. The weakening of the family will not prove beneficial to society. The contrary is true. It poses a threat to the mature growth of individuals and moral progress. Only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a fulfilling role to play in society. We need to acknowledge the great variety of family situations that can offer a certain stability. However, same-sex unions may not simply be equated with marriage. No union, temporary or closed to the transmission of life, can ensure the future of society. Nowadays, who is making an effort to strengthen marriages, encouraging the stability of the marriage bond?

53. Some societies still maintain polygamy. Arranged marriages are an enduring practice in many places. Living together before marriage is widespread as well as cohabitation that totally excludes any intention to marry. In various countries, legislation facilitates a growing variety of alternatives to marriage, making marriage itself appear an outdated option. Many countries are witnessing a legal deconstruction of the family. The strength of the family is in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. For all a family's problems, it can always grow, beginning with love.

54. In this overview, we note that though advances have been made in recognition of women's rights. In some countries much remains to be done.

Unacceptable customs need to be eliminated, particularly the ill-treatment to which women are subjected. The violence that women endure in marriages contradicts the nature of the conjugal union, such as the reprehensible genital mutilation of women practiced in some cultures, the lack of equal access to work and roles of decision-making. We cannot overlook the use of surrogate mothers and the commercialization of the female body. The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear. If certain forms of feminism have arisen, considered inadequate, we must also see in the women's movement the working of the Spirit for a clearer recognition of the dignity of women.

55. Men play a decisive role in family life. The absence of a father gravely affects family life and the upbringing of children and their integration into society. This absence deprives children of a suitable father figure.

56. Another challenge is the ideology of gender that denies the difference in the nature of a man and a woman. It envisions society without sexual differences. This leads to promoting a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Human identity becomes the choice of the individual. It is a source of concern that some ideologies assert themselves as absolute even dictating how children should be raised. Biological sex and the sociocultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated. Technology has made us capable of manipulating the reproductive act independent of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. Human life and parenthood have become separable realities. It is one thing to understand human weakness and another to accept ideologies that sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality. Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. We are called to protect our humanity, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.

57. I thank God that many families live in love, fulfill their calling and keep moving forward. The Synod's reflections show us that there is no ideal family, but a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities. In every situation that presents itself, the church is conscious of the need to offer a word of truth and hope. The great values of marriage and the Christian family correspond to a yearning that is part and parcel of human existence.

THE VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

58. In families, the core of the Gospel message is the Kerygma, most beautiful, excellent and necessary. This message must occupy the center of all evangelization. It is the first and most important proclamation. Nothing is more solid, profound, and secure. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma.

59. Our teaching on marriage and the family cannot fail to be transformed by this message of love. The mystery of the Christian family can be understood only in the light of the Father's infinite love revealed in Christ. My gaze turns to Christ at the heart of so many love stories and to invoke the fire of the Spirit upon all the world's families.

60. This brief chapter will summarize the Church's teaching on marriage and the family. The Synod Fathers began with the gaze of Jesus and how he looked upon the women and men accompanying their steps in truth, patience and mercy as he proclaimed the demands of the Kingdom of God. The Lord is also with us today, as we pass on the Gospel of the family

JESUS RESTORES AND FULFILLS GOD'S PLAN

61. The New Testament teaches that everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected. Marriage is a gift from the Lord. At the same time, the New Testament strongly emphasizes the need to safeguard God's gift: "Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled." This divine gift includes sexuality.

JESUS RESTORES AND FULFILLS GOD'S PLAN

62. The Synod Fathers noted how Jesus reaffirmed the indissoluble union between man and woman. He said that it was for your hardness of heart that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. The indissolubility of marriage should not be viewed as a yoke, but as gift to those joined in marriage. God's indulgent love accompanies our human journey through grace. The Gospels clearly present the example of Jesus who proclaimed the meaning of marriage as the fullness of revelation that restores God's original plan.

63. Jesus reconciled all things in himself, restoring marriage and the family to their original form. Both have been redeemed and restored by Jesus in the image of the Holy Trinity, from which all true love flows. In this the spousal covenant takes on its full meaning in Christ and his Church. The Gospel of the family spans the history of the world, from the creation of man and woman to the fulfillment of the

mystery of the covenant in Christ at the end of time with the marriage of the Lamb.

64. Jesus' life was filled with his dealings with individuals within the context of the family.

65. The Incarnation of the Word in a human family, in Nazareth, changed the history of the world. We need to enter into the "yes" given by Mary to the message of the angel, the "yes" of Joseph, who gave a name to Jesus and watched over Mary. We need to contemplate the joy of the shepherds, the adoration of the Magi, the flight into Egypt. Jesus shared his people's experiences. We need to contemplate the religious expectation of Zechariah at the birth of John the Baptist, the fulfillment of the promises to Simeon and Anna in the Temple. We need to peer into those thirty long years when Jesus worked with his hands and was raised in his people's faith until it bore fruit in the mystery of the Kingdom. This is the mystery of Christmas and Nazareth, exuding the beauty of family life.

66. The covenant of love and fidelity lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth shapes every family. On this basis, every family, despite its weaknesses, can become a light in the darkness of the world. Nazareth teaches us the meaning of family life, a simple and austere beauty. May it teach us how irreplaceable is its training, how fundamental its role in the social order.

CHAPTER THREE

LOOKING TO JESUS: VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

THE FAMILY IN THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH

67. Vatican II, in *Gaudium et Spes*, defined marriage as a community of life and love. True love between husband and wife involves mutual self-giving, integrating its sexual and affective dimensions in God's plan. This document bases Christian spouses in Christ the Lord, who remains present to them in the sacrament of marriage, giving them the capacity to live their love. Thus, the spouses are consecrated and, through a special grace, build up the Body of Christ, forming the domestic church. In this way, Christian families manifest the Church in a real way.

68. Blessed Paul VI in the Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, brought out the intrinsic bond between conjugal love and the generation of life. Married love requires of husband and wife the full awareness of their obligations in the matter of responsible parenthood, rightly understood. Spouses are required to order rightly their duties towards God, themselves, their families and human society.

69. In his letter to families, *Gratissimam Sane* and his apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope St. John Paul II defined the family as "the way of the Church." He also offered a vision of the vocation of

men and women to love, proposing basic guidelines for the pastoral care of the family and the role of the family in society. He described how spouses, receiving the gift of the Spirit of Christ, are to live their call to holiness.

70. Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, returned to the truth of the love of man and woman, fully illuminated only in the love of the crucified Christ. He stressed that marriage, based on a definitively exclusive love, is an icon of the relationship between God and his people. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love. In *Caritas in Veritate*, he highlighted the importance of love as a principle of life in society.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

71. Scripture and Tradition tell us of the Trinity. The family is the image of God, who is a communion of persons. At Christ's baptism, the Father called Jesus his beloved Son and in this love, we recognize the Holy Spirit. Jesus returned marriage and the family to their original form and also raised marriage to the sacramental sign of his love for the Church. In the family, the image of the Trinity has been restored. Through the Church, marriage and the family bear witness to the Gospel of God's love.

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LOOKING TO JESUS: VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

72. The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses. Their mutual belonging is a real representation of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The married couple are a permanent reminder for the Church of what took place on the cross, witnesses to the familial salvation shared through the sacrament. Marriage is a vocation, a response to a specific call of conjugal love as an imperfect sign of the love between Christ and the Church. The decision to marry ought to be the fruit of a vocational discernment.

73. Mutual self-giving in the sacrament of Matrimony is grounded in the grace of baptism, the foundational covenant of every person with Christ in the Church. With Christ's grace, the engaged couple promises each other total self-giving, faithfulness and openness to new life. The Church looks to married couples as the heart of the entire family, who, in turn, look to Jesus. The sacrament is not a "thing". In it, Christ himself encounters Christian spouses. He dwells with them, giving them the strength to bear their crosses. Christian marriage is a sign of how much Christ loved his Church in the covenant sealed on the cross. By becoming one flesh, spouses

embody the espousal of our human nature by the Son of God. In the joys of their love and family life, Christ gives them a foretaste of "the wedding feast of the Lamb".

74. The sexual union, sanctified by the sacrament, is a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple. It is the "nuptial mystery". Their physical union is expressed in the words of consent, in which they accepted and offered themselves each to the other. Those words give meaning to the sexual relationship. The common life of husband and wife will be steeped in and strengthened by the grace of the sacrament. The sacrament of marriage flows from the Incarnation and the paschal mystery through Christ becoming one with us. Neither of the spouses will be alone in facing whatever challenges may come their way. They can always invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit who consecrated their union.

75. In the Church's Latin tradition, the ministers of the sacrament of marriage are the man and the woman. Their consent and their bodily union are the divinely appointed means whereby they become "one flesh".

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LOOKING TO JESUS: VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

75. By their baptism, spouses are enabled to join in marriage as the Lord's ministers. When two non-Christian spouses receive baptism, they need not renew their marriage vows. In baptism, their union automatically becomes sacramental. The natural order has been so imbued with the redemptive grace of Jesus that a valid matrimonial contract cannot exist between the baptized without it being, by that fact, a sacrament. The Church can require that the wedding be celebrated publicly. But this does not detract from the fact that the couple who marry are the ministers of the sacrament. The consent given by the spouses, of itself, establishes the sacramental bond. There is need for further reflection on God's action in the marriage rite. This is clearly manifested in the Oriental Churches through the importance of the blessing as a sign of the gift of the Spirit.

SEEDS OF THE WORD AND IMPERFECT SITUATIONS

76. The Gospel of the family also nourishes seeds that are still waiting to grow. Married couples may be led a deeper grasp and a fuller integration of the sacramental presence of Christ in their lives.

77. In the Bible's teaching that all was created through Christ and for Christ, the order of redemption fulfills that of creation. Only in

contemplating Christ, does one come to know the truth about human relationships. Christ, the new Adam, fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear. Seeing the presence of 'seeds of the Word' in other cultures also applies to marriage and the family, even if obscurely. A family that shows that the Spirit is alive and at work will encounter our gratitude.

78. Seeing with the eyes of Christ, inspires the Church's pastoral care for the faithful living together in irregular unions. She turns with love to those who participate in her life in an imperfect manner, seeking the grace of conversion for them. When a couple in an irregular union attains stability, an opportunity exists, where possible, to lead them to the sacrament of matrimony.

79. Faced with difficult situations, it is necessary that Pastors know that, for the sake of truth, they must exercise discernment. In clearly stating the Church's teaching, pastors, attentive to people's distress, are to avoid judgments.

CHAPTER THREE

LOOKING TO JESUS: VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

THE TRANSMISSION OF LIFE AND THE REARING OF CHILDREN

80. Marriage is an intimate partnership of life and love for the good of the spouses, sexuality being ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman. The conjugal union is ordered to procreation by its very nature. The child born of it does not come as something added. It springs from the heart of that mutual giving. Love refuses the impulse to close in on itself. It is open to a fruitfulness that draws it beyond itself. No genital act of husband and wife can refuse this meaning, even when it may not beget a life.

81. The child deserves to be born of that love and not by any other means. He or she is not something owed but is a gift, the fruit of the act of conjugal love. The Creator made man and woman to share in his work of creation as instruments of his love, responsible for mankind's future.

82. The Church's teaching helps couples to experience in a conscious way their communion as husband and wife responsible for procreation. We must return to the message of *Humanae Vitae*. It marks the need to respect the dignity of the person in moral methods of regulating birth. Adoption and foster parenting can also express fruitfulness. With gratitude, the Church supports families, who surround with affection children with disabilities.

83. If the family is the sanctuary of life, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is destroyed. So great is the inalienable right to life of an innocent child growing in the

mother's womb, that no alleged right to one's own body can justify terminating that life. The family protects human life in all its stages, including its last. The Church asserts the right to a natural death, without aggressive treatment and euthanasia, while it firmly rejects the death penalty.

84. The Synod Fathers also wished to emphasize the challenges of raising families made more difficult by today's cultural realities. The Church assumes a valuable role in supporting families. The education of children is a most serious duty and at the same time a primary right of parents. No one can claim to deprive them of it. The State offers educational programs in a subsidiary way. Parents themselves enjoy the right to choose the kind of education that they wish to give their children. Schools do not replace parents, but complement them. All other participants in the process of education only carry out their responsibilities in the name of parents.

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LOOKING TO JESUS: VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

THE TRANSMISSION OF LIFE AND THE REARING OF CHILDREN

84. A rift has opened between the family and society, between family and school. The educational pact today has been broken and thus the educational alliance between society and the family is in crisis.

85. The Church is called to cooperate with parents, assisting them in the fulfillment of their educational mission. She must do this by helping them to appreciate their proper role. By their reception of the sacrament of marriage, they become ministers of their children's education and accept a God-given vocation.

THE FAMILY AND THE CHURCH

86. With inner joy and deep comfort, the Church looks to the families who remain faithful to the Gospel. They bear witness to the beauty of marriage as indissoluble and perpetually faithful. Within the family, a domestic church, individuals enter upon a communion of persons that reflects, through grace, the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Here one learns endurance, generosity, forgiveness and the offering of one's life.

87. The Church is a family of families. In the sacrament of Matrimony, every family becomes a good for the Church. The interplay between the family and the Church will prove a precious gift for the Church. The safeguarding of the Lord's gift to the sacrament of Matrimony is a concern of the entire Christian community.

88. The experience of love in families is a source of strength for the Church. Through their union in love, the couple experiences the beauty of fatherhood and motherhood. They learn care for one another and mutual forgiveness. The beauty of this mutual, gratuitous gift makes the response to the vocation of the family unique and irreplaceable.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOVE IN MARRIAGE

89. Here, we must also speak of love. We cannot encourage a path of fidelity and mutual self-giving without the deepening of conjugal and family love. The grace of the sacrament of marriage is intended to perfect the couple's love. The word "love" is commonly used and often misused.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE

90. Paul says:

"Love is patient,
love is kind;
love is not jealous or boastful;
it is not arrogant or rude.
Love does not insist on its own way,
it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice at wrong,
but rejoices in the right.
Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things" (1Cor13:4-7).

Love is experienced and nurtured in the daily life of couples and their children. We must think more deeply about the meaning of this Pauline text and the concrete situations of the family.

Love is patient

91. The Greek word that Paul uses is *makrothynēi*. This does not simply have to do with "enduring all things." It refers to one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense. The God of the Covenant calls us to imitate him within the life of the family. Paul's texts using this word need to be read in light of the Book of Wisdom extolling God's restraint. God's "patience" is shown in mercy towards sinners as a sign of his real power.

92. Patience does not mean letting others mistreat us or use us. We encounter problems when we put ourselves at the center and expect things to turn out our way. Then everything makes us impatient. Unless we cultivate patience, we will always find excuses for responding angrily. Our families will become battlegrounds. Patience takes root when I recognize others' right to live in this world as well. It matters little if they unsettle my plans or they are not as I want them. Love always has a deep compassion that leads to accepting the other.

Love is at the service of others

93. The next word that Paul uses is *chresteuetai*. It is derived from *chrestos*, a good person who shows his goodness by his deeds. Paul makes it clear that "patience" is not a passive attitude but one accompanied by a dynamic interaction with others. Love is ever ready to be of assistance.

94. Paul wants to stress that love is more than a mere feeling. To love is to do good. As Saint Ignatius of Loyola said, "Love is shown more by deeds than by words, spending ourselves unstintingly, without asking to be repaid."

Love is not jealous

95. Saint Paul rejects an attitude expressed by the verb *zeloi* – to be jealous or envious. Envy is a sadness provoked by another's prosperity. We care only about our own well-being. True love values others' achievements. It frees us from envy, recognizing that everyone has gifts and a unique path in life.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE

Love is not jealous

96. Love means fulfilling the last two commandments of God's Law: "*You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife.*" Love inspires a sincere esteem for every human being. I see him or her with the eyes of God. I feel a deep sense of happiness and peace. This deeply rooted love also leads me to

reject the injustice of the over-abundance of some as opposed to the poverty of others. It moves me to find ways of helping society's outcasts.

Love is not boastful

97. The following Greek word in the text, *perpereuetai*, denotes vainglory, haughtiness and being pushy. Those who love are focused on others. They do not need to be the center of attention. The word, *physioutai*, indicates that love is not arrogant or "puffed-up." Such think of themselves as more "spiritual" or "wise." Paul uses this verb when he says that "knowledge puffs up," whereas "love builds up." Because some think themselves more knowledgeable, they want to lord it over others.

98. It is important for Christians to show their love by the way they treat family members who are less knowledgeable about the faith. Love, on the other hand, is marked by humility. If we are to understand and serve others, our pride has to be healed and our humility must increase. The inner logic of Christian love is not about self-importance. Rather, "whoever would be first among you must be your slave." In family life, the logic of competition about who is the most intelligent or powerful destroys love.

Love is not rude

99. To love is also to be gentle and thoughtful, *aschemonei*. That word indicates that love is not rude or impolite. Love abhors making others suffer. Courtesy is "*a school of sensitivity*," learning how to listen, to speak and, at certain times, to keep quiet. Every day, entering into the life of another demands a restraint that renews trust and respect.

100. To be open to a genuine encounter, "a kind look" is essential. A kind look helps us to see beyond our own limitations, to be patient and to cooperate with others. Loving kindness builds bonds, cultivates relationships, knits firm social fabric. Antisocial persons think that others exist only for their own needs. There is no room for the gentleness of love. Those who love are capable of words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement. These were the words that Jesus himself spoke: "*Take heart, my son!*" (Mat 9:2), "*Great is your faith!*" (Mt 15:28), "*Go in peace.*" (Lk 7:50), "*Be not afraid.*" (Mt 14:27), In our families, we must learn to imitate Jesus' own gentleness in our way of speaking to one another.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE

Love is generous

101. To love another we must first love ourselves. Yet, Paul's hymn to love says that love "does not seek its own interest." The Bible makes it clear that generously serving others is far more noble. Loving ourselves is important as a psychological prerequisite. "If a man is mean to himself, to whom will he be generous?" (Sir 14:5)

102. Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that "it is more proper to love than to be loved." Love can transcend and overflow the demands of justice, expecting nothing in return. The greatest of loves leads to "laying down one's life" for another. Can such generosity be possible? Yes, because it is demanded by the Gospel: "You received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 10:8)

Love is not irritable or resentful

103. Paul's hymn spoke of the need for a patience that does not react harshly. The word he uses, *paroxynetai*, has to do more with an interior indignation, a hidden irritation, provoked by something from outside. To nurture such interior hostility helps no one. It only causes hurt and alienation. Indignation is only healthy when it makes us react to a grave injustice.

104. The Gospel tells us to look to the log in our own eye. It is one thing to sense a sudden surge of hostility and another to give into it. "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph 4:26) Never let the day end without making peace in the family. A small gesture, a little caress, and harmony within your family will be restored. Our first reaction when we are annoyed should be one of heartfelt blessing. If we must fight, so be it; but we must always say "no" to violence in the home.

Love forgives

105. Once we allow ill will to take root in our hearts, it leads to deep resentment. The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, seeking to understand other people's weaknesses and to excuse them. Jesus said, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." Looking for faults, presuming all kinds of bad intentions, deepens resentment. Every lapse on the part of a spouse can harm the bond of love in the family.

106. When we have been offended, forgiveness is possible, even desirable, but no one can say that it is easy. Family communion can only be preserved through a great spirit of sacrifice. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord and conflicts attack and at times mortally wound its communion.

107. We recognize that forgiving others implies the liberating experience of understanding and forgiving others. Often criticism received from loved ones, can lead to a loss of self-esteem. We become distant from others, fearful in our interpersonal relationships. We need to pray over our history, to accept ourselves, and to live with our limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE

Love forgives

108. Forgiving others assumes we have had the experience of being forgiven by God. If we accept that God's love is without condition, that the Father's love cannot be bought, then we too will become capable of a boundless love, forgiving others even if they have wronged us. Otherwise, family life will no longer be a place of understanding, support, and encouragement.

Love rejoices with others

109. The expression, *chairei epi te adikia*, is the toxic attitude that rejoices at seeing an injustice done to others. Its opposite is, *sygchairei te aletheisa*. "It rejoices in the right." To rejoice in the right is impossible for those who are always comparing and competing, even with their spouses, secretly rejoicing in their failures.

110. Our Lord especially appreciates those who find joy in the happiness of others. If we fail to rejoice in the well-being of others, focusing primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence. The family must always be a place where, when something good happens, all celebrate it.

Love bears all things

111. Paul's list ends with four phrases containing the words "all things." Here we see the countercultural power of a love that is able to face whatever might threaten it.

112. First, Paul says that love "bears all things." "Holding one's peace" about what may be wrong with another person implies limiting judgment, not giving in to the impulse of a ruthless condemnation. God's word tells us,

"Do not speak evil against one another" (Jas 4:11). Speaking ill of another person is a way of asserting ourselves and venting resentment without concern for the harm we may do. God's word forthrightly states that the tongue "is a world of iniquity" that "stains the whole body." It is a "restless evil, full of deadly poison" (Jas 3:6-8). Love cherishes the good name of others, even one's enemies.

113. Married couples, joined by love, speak well of each other. They show their spouse's good side. They keep silent rather than speak ill of them. All this springs from a sincerely felt interior attitude. It recognizes that failings are a part of something bigger. All of us are a complex mixture of light and shadows. The other person is much more than the sum of the little things that annoy me. The fact that love is imperfect does not mean that it is untrue or unreal. It is real, albeit, limited and earthly. Love coexists with imperfections. It "bears all things" and can hold its peace before the limitations of the loved one.

Love believes all things

114. *Panta pisteuei*, "belief," is taken more in the sense of what we mean by "trust." It goes beyond presuming that the other is not lying or cheating. Basic trust recognizes God's light shining beyond the darkness like an ember glowing beneath the ashes.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE

Love believes all things

115. Trust enables a relationship to be free. It does not try to control, possess and dominate. This kind of freedom can only enrich and expand relationships. The spouses then share with one another the joy of all they have received and learned outside the family circle. This freedom makes for sincerity and transparency. Those who know that they are trusted can be open and hide nothing. Those, whose spouse is always suspicious and judgmental, will tend to keep secrets, conceal their failings and weaknesses. A family marked by loving trust helps its members to be spontaneous, rejecting deceit.

Love hopes all things

116 *Panta elpizei* describes a love that does not despair of the future. This Greek phrase speaks of the hope of one who knows that others can mature and radiate unexpected potential. It realizes that, though things may not always turn out as we wish, God may well make crooked lines straight.

117. Here hope comes most fully into its own. It embraces the certainty of life after death. Fully transformed by Christ's resurrection, every weakness, darkness and infirmity will pass away. This realization helps us, amid the aggravations of this present life, to see persons from a supernatural perspective.

Love endures all things

118. *Panta hypomenei* means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. This endurance involves a constant readiness to confront any challenge. It shows a certain dogged heroism, an irrepressible commitment to goodness. Martin Luther King said that the person who hates you most has some good in him; the nation that hates you most has some good in it; even the race that hates you most has some good in it.

119. In family life, we need to cultivate that strength of love that can help us fight every evil threatening it. The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up.

GROWING IN CONJUGAL LOVE

120. Our reflection on Saint Paul's hymn to love has prepared us to discuss conjugal love, the love between husband and wife, sanctified and illuminated by the grace of the sacrament of marriage. It is an "affective union," spiritual and sacrificial, combining the warmth of friendship and erotic passion that endures long after passion subsides. Pope Pius XI taught that this love permeates the duties of married life. Infused by the Holy Spirit, this powerful love reflects the unbroken covenant between Christ and humanity that culminated in his self-sacrifice on the cross. The Spirit creates a new heart in persons that renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ loved us.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE

GROWING IN CONJUGAL LOVE

121. Marriage is a precious sign. For "when a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is mirrored in them. Marriage is the icon (image) of God's love for us. God is also communion, in the three Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living eternally in perfect unity. This is precisely the mystery of marriage when God makes two spouses one, single existence, making visible the love of Christ for his Church.

122. There is no need to lay upon two limited persons the entire burden of reproducing perfectly the union existing between Christ and his Church. This marital sign is a dynamic process that advances only gradually, integrating God's gifts in it.

Lifelong sharing

123. Conjugal love is the greatest form of friendship on earth. It is a union possessing all the traits of a good friendship, a resemblance born of a shared life. Marriage joins to this an indissoluble exclusivity. Lovers do not see their relationship as merely temporary. Those who witness the celebration of a loving union trust that it will pass the test of time. Children not only want their parents to love one another, but also to faithfully remain together. The lasting union expressed by the marriage vows is rooted in the natural inclinations of the human person. For believers, it is also a covenant before God that calls for fidelity. *"The Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth. ...Let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord."* (Mal 2:14f)

124. A love that is weak or infirm, incapable of accepting marriage as a challenge to be fought for cannot sustain a great commitment, succumbing to a culture of the ephemeral (short-lived). If this love is to overcome all trials and remain faithful, it needs the gift of grace to strengthen and elevate it.

125. Marriage is a friendship marked by passion and directed to an ever more stable and intense union. Marriage was not instituted solely for the procreation of children but also that mutual love should grow and mature. This unique friendship between a man and a woman acquires an all-encompassing character, exclusive, faithful and open to life. The Second Vatican Council said that *"such a love leads the partners to a free and mutual self-giving experienced in tenderness and action, permeating their entire lives."*

Joy and beauty

126. In marriage, the joy of love needs to be cultivated. Joy increases our pleasure and helps us find fulfillment

even at those times of life when physical pleasure has ebbed. Marital joy can be experienced even amid sorrow. This inevitable mixture of enjoyment and struggle, always on the path of friendship, inspires married couples to care for one another, "to help and serve each other."

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Joy and beauty

127. The love of friendship is called charity when it esteems the great worth of another person. That great worth enables us to appreciate the sacredness of a person. In a consumerist society, the sense of beauty is impoverished and so joy fades. Everything is there to be possessed. Tenderness is a sign of a love free of possessiveness, with respect and a certain dread of causing harm. Loving another person involves the joy of appreciating their innate beauty that is greater than my needs.

128. The aesthetic experience of love is expressed in that gaze that contemplates other persons as ends in themselves. A look of appreciation has enormous importance. Much hurt and many problems result when we stop looking at one another. In my own home, nobody cares about me; they do not even see me. Love opens our eyes and enables us to see the great worth of a human being.

129. The joy of contemplative love needs to be cultivated. The most intense joys in life arise when we are able to elicit joy in others. It is a joy and a great consolation to bring delight to others. This joy, the fruit of fraternal love, is of lovers who delight in the good of those whom they love.

130. Joy also grows through pain and sorrow. Saint Augustine said that the greater the danger in battle the greater is the joy of victory. After suffering and struggling together, spouses can experience that it was worth it.

Marrying for love

131. Union encounters in this institution the means to ensure that love will endure. Love is much more than an outward consent. Yet it is true that choosing to give marriage a visible form shows how important it is. It manifests the seriousness of each one's identification with the other. Marriage is a means of expressing that we have left the security of our former home to take on responsibility for another person. This is much more meaningful than a mere spontaneous association for mutual gratification. As a social institution, marriage protects and shapes a shared commitment for the good of society. Its essence derives from our human nature and social character. It involves a love so serious that it is ready to face any risk.

132. Given its seriousness, this public commitment of love cannot be the fruit of a hasty decision. Committing oneself exclusively to another always involves a risk. Unwillingness to make such a commitment is selfish. It fails to recognize another person and to present him or her to society as worthy of unconditional love. When love is expressed before others in marriage, it clearly indicates and protects the yes that those persons speak freely and unreservedly to each other. This yes tells them that they can always trust one another.

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A love that reveals itself and increases

133. The love of friendship unifies all aspects of marital life, helping family members to grow constantly. In the family, three words need to be used: "Please, Thank you, and Sorry." When a family uses those words, it experiences peace and joy. Let us not be stingy with these words. The right words, spoken at the right time, daily protect and nurture love.

134. The very special form of love that is marriage is called to embody what Saint Thomas Aquinas said about charity. He said that, by its very nature, it has no limit to its increase, for it is a participation in that infinite charity, the Holy Spirit. As charity grows, so too does its capacity for an even greater increase. Saint Paul also prayed, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another. (1 Thes. 3:12) A love that fails to grow is at risk. Growth can only occur if we respond to God's grace through constant acts of love. The gift of God's love poured out upon spouses is also a summons to constant growth in grace.

135. The Bishops of Chile have pointed out that "the perfect families" proposed by deceptive consumerist propaganda do not exist. In those families, no one grows old. There is no sickness, sorrow, or death; a fantasy that has nothing to do with reality. It is much healthier to be realistic about our limits, defects and imperfections.

Dialogue

136. Dialogue is essential for experiencing and fostering love in marriage and family life. Yet it can only be the fruit of a long and demanding apprenticeship. We need to develop certain attitudes that express love and encourage authentic dialogue.

137. Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively. It requires self-discipline. We need to be sure that we have heard everything the other person has to say. This means cultivating an interior silence that listens to the other person without mental or emotional distractions. Often the other spouse does not need a solution to his or her problem, but simply to be heard; their pain, their fear, their anger, their hopes, to be acknowledged.

138. Develop a habit of giving real importance to other persons. This means appreciating them and not downplaying what they say or think. Everyone has something to contribute. We ought to acknowledge the other person's truth, their deepest concerns. We must put ourselves in their shoes as a point of departure for further dialogue.

139. Keep an open mind. Be prepared to change or expand our own ideas. The unity that we seek is not uniformity but a unity in diversity. Fraternal communion is enriched by respect for differences. We need to free ourselves of feeling that we all must be alike.

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Dialogue

139. The ability to say what one is thinking without offending the other person is important. Making a point should never involve venting anger and inflicting hurt. Many disagreements between couples are not about important things. What alters the mood is the way things are said or the attitude with which they are said.

140. Love surmounts even the worst barriers. Fearing the other person as a rival is a sign of weakness. It is important to base one's position on solid values and not on the need to win an argument.

141. For a worthwhile dialogue, we have to have something to say. This can only be the fruit of an interior richness fostered by reading, reflection, prayer and openness to the world about. Otherwise, conversations become boring and trivial. Family life becomes stifling and dialogue is impoverished.

PASSIONATE LOVE

142. The Second Vatican Council teaches that conjugal love embraces the good of the whole person. A love lacking either pleasure or passion is insufficient to symbolize the union of the human heart with God. All the mystics have affirmed that supernatural love finds the symbols that they seek in marital love. Why then should we not pause to speak of feelings and sexuality in marriage?

143. Desires, feelings, emotions, all have an important place in married life. It is characteristic of all living beings to reach out to others in basic affective signs. They ground the most elementary psychological activity. All that humans do is fraught with passion.

144. As true man, Jesus showed his emotions. He was hurt by the rejection of Jerusalem, deeply moved by the sufferings of others, wept at the death of a friend. His sensitivity showed how much his human heart was open to others.

145. An emotion is not, in itself, morally good or evil. What is morally good or evil is what we do under the influence of evil acts fueled by emotion. My being attracted to someone is not automatically good. To believe that we are good simply because "we feel good" is a tremendous illusion. Remaining caught up in our own needs and desires distracts from the highest values and conceals a self-centeredness that makes a healthy family life impossible.

146. The passion that accompanies a free act manifests the depth of that act. Marital love strives to ensure that one's entire emotional life benefits the whole family. A family is maturing when the emotional life of its members is informed by a sensitivity that enriches, perfects and harmonizes the whole.

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God loves the joy of his Children

147. This calls for a process that involves renunciation. The Church's conviction concerning this has often been rejected as opposed to human happiness. Benedict XVI summed up his response saying that although there had been exaggerations in Christian forms of asceticism, the Church's official teaching, in fidelity to the Scriptures, did not reject eros as such. Rather it declared war on warped and destructive forms of it.

148. Training of the emotions and instinct is necessary. A person can channel his passions in a beautiful and healthy way, pointing toward an integrated self-fulfillment. This can only enrich interpersonal relationships in the heart of the family. Family life is all of this, deserving to be lived to the fullest.

149 God loves the enjoyment felt by human beings. He created us, richly providing us with everything to enjoy.

Married couples respond to God's will when they take up the biblical injunction: "Be joyful in the day of prosperity." (*Ec 7:14*) Pleasure can find different expressions at different times of life in accord with the needs of mutual love. Some Eastern masters urge the expansion of our consciousness, broadening and perfecting it.

The erotic dimension of love

150. God himself created sexuality, a marvelous gift to his creatures. This gift needs to be cultivated and directed to prevent the impoverishment of an authentic value. Saint John Paul II rejected the claim that the Church's teaching is a negation of the value of human sexuality. Sexual desire is not something to be looked down upon. There can be no attempt whatsoever to call into question its necessity.

151. Saint John Paul II said that human persons are called to full and mature spontaneity in their relationships. This calls for discipline and self-mastery, since every human person must learn the meaning of his or her body. Sexuality is an interpersonal language wherein the other is taken seriously in his or her sacred and inviolable dignity. In this context, the erotic appears as a specifically human manifestation of sexuality. It enables us to discover the nuptial meaning of the body. In his catecheses on the theology of the body, Saint John Paul II taught that sexual differentiation is the source of fruitfulness and has the capacity of expressing a love in which the human person is a gift. A healthy sexual desire always involves a sense of wonder that can harmonize the impulses.

152. We cannot consider the erotic dimension of love simply as a permissible evil to be tolerated for the good of the family. It must be seen as gift from God that enriches the relationship of the spouses. As a passion respectful of the dignity of the other, it becomes a pure, unadulterated affirmation revealing the marvels of the human heart.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE GROWING IN CONJUGAL LOVE PASSIONATE LOVE

Violence and manipulation

153. Sex often becomes depersonalized and unhealthy. It can become the occasion of self-assertion and selfish satisfaction. Sexuality risks poisoning by a mentality of "use and discard." The body of the other is often viewed as an object to be used and rejected once it is no longer appealing. Can we ignore forms of domination, abuse, sexual perversion and violence that are the product of a warped understanding of sexuality?

154. Within marriage itself, sex can become a source of suffering and manipulation. A conjugal act imposed is no true act of love, and therefore offends the moral order. The acts proper to the sexual union of husband wife correspond to the nature of sexuality as willed by God when they take place in a manner that is truly human. Even St. Paul, writing in a patriarchal culture in which woman were considered completely subordinate to men, nonetheless taught that sex must involve communication between the spouses.

155. St. John Paul II subtly warned that a couple can be threatened by insatiability. They can risk effacing their differences and the rightful distance between the two.

Each possesses his or her own inalienable dignity. When reciprocal belonging turns into domination, the structure of communion in interpersonal relations is essentially changed. They negate their own dignity and their own body, taking away its deepest meaning. They end up using sex as a form of escapism and renounce the beauty of conjugal union.

156. Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected. As St. John Paul II wisely observed, "Love excludes every kind of subjection whereby the wife might become a servant or a slave of the husband. The community or unity that they should establish through marriage is constituted by a reciprocal donation of self." Hence St. Paul says that husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. The biblical text encourages constant mindfulness of the other. "Be subject to one another (*Eph 5:21*). This reciprocal submission is seen as a freely chosen mutual belonging, marked by fidelity and respect. Sexuality is inseparable from conjugal friendship. It is meant for the fulfillment of the other.

157. The rejection of distortions of sexuality and eroticism should never lead us to disparage sexuality and *eros* in themselves. We need to remember that authentic love also needs to be able to receive the other and to accept one's own vulnerability. They welcome with sincere joyful gratitude the physical expressions of love found in a caress, an embrace and in sexual union. One cannot always give, one must also receive. Still, we must never forget that our human equilibrium is fragile, subject to the most primitive and selfish tendencies.

CHAPTER FOUR OUR DAILY LOVE GROWING IN CONJUGAL LOVE PASSIONATE LOVE

Marriage and virginity

158. Many unmarried people often render great service to the Church and in their professional lives. At times their presence and contributions are over looked, causing a sense of isolation. Many put their talents at the service of the Christian community. Others remain unmarried because they consecrate their lives to the love of Christ and neighbor.

159. Virginity is a form of love that speaks of the coming of the Kingdom. St. Paul recommended virginity since he expected Jesus' imminent return and he wanted everyone to concentrate on spreading the Gospel. However, he made it clear that this was a personal opinion and not demanded by Christ. Each has his or her own special gift from God. St. John Paul II noted that the biblical texts give no reason to assert the inferiority of marriage or the superiority of virginity. It should be pointed out that the different states of life complement one another. Some can be more perfect in one way and others in another. It is not a matter of diminishing the value of matrimony in favor of continence. If one speaks of a state of perfection, this has to do not with continence in itself, but with the entirety of a life based on the evangelical counsels. Such perfection is possible and accessible to every man and woman.

161. The value of virginity lies in its symbolizing a love that has no need to possess the other. It reflects the freedom of the Kingdom of Heaven. For its part, conjugal

love symbolizes other values. being a reflection of that full unity in distinction found in the Trinity. The family is also a sign of Christ. It manifests the closeness of God who is a part of every human life. Virginity is an eschatological sign of the risen Christ. Marriage is a historical sign of the earthly Christ who gave himself up for us even to shedding his blood. To be sure, virginity and marriage are diverse ways of loving.

162. Celibacy can risk becoming a comfortable single life in the freedom to be independent. Those called to virginity can be moved to a concrete and generous availability. Many married couples remain faithful even when one fails to satisfy the other's needs, despite the voices in society that might encourage them to be unfaithful. A wife can care for her sick husband and renew her commitment to love unto death. The dignity of the true lover shines forth. We can also point to the presence in many families of a capacity for selfless service when children prove troublesome and even ungrateful. This makes those parents a sign of the free and selfless love of Jesus. Secularization has obscured the value of a life-long union and the beauty of the vocation to marriage. It is again necessary to deepen our understanding of the positive aspects of conjugal love.

CHAPTER FOUR THE TRANSFORMATION OF LOVE

163. Longer life spans now mean that close and exclusive relationships must last much longer, even to six decades or more. Spouses may no longer experience an intense sexual desire for the other but may experience the pleasure of mutual belonging. They are companions on life's journey. A couple can love one another and live as one until death do them part. The love they pledge is greater than any emotion or state of mind. Even amid unresolved conflicts at times, they daily reaffirm their decision to love, to share their lives, loving and forgiving. Love rejoices at every step and in every new stage.

164. We love the other person for who they are, not simply for their body. A spouse continues to see the beauty of that personal identity that is theirs with eyes of love. He or she reaffirms the decision to belong to the other in faithful and loving closeness. Love is a single reality, but with different dimensions and at different times. The marriage bond finds new forms of expression and constantly seeks new ways to grow in strength. This calls for daily effort. None of this, however, is possible without praying to the Holy Spirit for an outpouring of his grace, his supernatural strength.

CHAPTER FIVE LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

165. Love always gives life. Couples, in giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children.

WELCOMING A NEW LIFE

166. The family is the setting in which a new life is not only born but also welcomed as a gift of God. Children are loved even before they arrive. Here we see a reflection of the primacy of the love of God. For children are loved before having done anything to deserve it. At

the same time, children are rejected and robbed of their childhood and future. There are those who dare to say that it was a mistake to bring these children into the world. If a child comes into this world in unwanted circumstances, parents and other members of the family must do everything possible to accept that child as a gift from God. No sacrifice made by adults will be considered too costly or too great if it means the child never has to feel that he or she is a mistake. The gift of a new child, entrusted by the Lord to a father and a mother begins with acceptance and has as its final goal the joy of eternal life. For God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity.

167. Large families are a joy for the Church, an expression of the fruitfulness of love. St. John Paul II explained that responsible parenthood does not mean unlimited procreation but rather the empowerment of couples to use their inviolable liberty wisely and responsibly.

CHAPTER FIVE LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

Love and pregnancy

168. Pregnancy is a difficult but wonderful time. A mother joins with God to bring forth the miracle of a new life. Motherhood is the fruit of a creative potential of the female body. Each woman shares in the mystery of creation. The Psalmist says: "You knit me together in my mother's womb." (Ps 139:13) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." (Jer 1:5) Each child has a place in God's heart from all eternity. Let us think of the great value of the embryo from the moment of conception, seeing it with the eyes of God.

169. For nine months every mother and father dreams about their child. Once a family loses the ability to dream, life shrivels and dies. Baptism necessarily appears as a part of that dream. Parents prepare for baptism, entrusting their baby to Jesus even before birth.

170. Scientific advances allow us to know beforehand all the somatic traits of the person written in his or her genetic code already at the embryonic stage. Yet only the Father Creator fully knows the child. Expectant mothers need to ask God to know their children fully and to accept them as they are. It is important for the child to feel wanted. He or she is not an accessory or a solution to some personal need. A child is a human being of immense worth, never to be used for one's own benefit. Each is unique and irreplaceable. We love our children because they are children. The love of parents is the means by which God our Father shows his own love.

171. With great affection I urge all future mothers to let nothing rob you of the interior joy of motherhood. Do not let fears, worries, other people's comments lessen your joy at being God's means of bringing a new life to the world. Join in Mary's song of joy: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant." (Lk 1:46-48) Try to experience this serene excitement amid all your many concerns. Ask God to preserve your joy so as to pass it on to your child.

The love of a mother and a father

172. Children, once born, begin to receive the spiritual gift of knowing with certainty that they are loved. This love has shown them through the gift of a personal name. The child learns that the beauty of human relationships touches our soul, seeks our freedom, recognizes and respects others as partners in dialogue.

CHAPTER FIVE LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

The love of a mother and a father

172. Every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father. Both are necessary for a child's harmonious development. Respecting children's' dignity means affirming their need and natural right to have a mother and a father, and their mutual love, perceived as the source of one's life, the foundation of the family. Without this, a child could become a mere plaything. Husband and wife, father and mother, both cooperate with the love of God the Creator, showing their children the maternal and paternal face of the Lord. Together they teach the value of reciprocity and respect for differences. It is important to compensate for the loss of a parent for the child's proper development.

173. The sense of being orphaned is much deeper than we think. Acknowledging the legitimate need for the development of skills and goals of women, we cannot ignore the need that children have for a mother's presence. John Paul II's, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, points out how the woman stands before man as a mother, the subject of the new, human life, conceived and developed within her. The weakening of her presence poses a grave risk to our world. He adds that the grandeur of woman not only includes the rights derived from her inalienable human dignity but also from her feminine genius, essential to society. Womanhood entails a specific mission that society needs to protect for the good of all.

174. Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centered individualism. A society without mothers would be dehumanized. Mothers witness to tenderness, dedication, moral strength. Mothers often communicate the deepest meaning of religious practices. Dear mothers, thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the Church and the world.

175. A mother who watches over her child helps him/her to experience that the world is a good and welcoming place. This helps the child to develop a capacity for intimacy and empathy. A father, for his part, helps the child to perceive the limits of life, the need for hard work and strenuous effort. A father with serene masculine identity who demonstrates affection for his wife is as necessary as a caring mother. There can be a certain flexibility of roles and responsibilities. However, the clear and well-defined presence of both figures, female and male, creates the environment best suited to the growth of the child.

LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

The love of a mother and a father

176. Today, we often hear that ours is a "society without fathers." Manhood itself is seemingly being called into question. The result is confusion. At first, this was perceived as a liberation: liberation from the father as the representative of a law imposed from without, an obstacle to the emancipation of the young. In some homes authoritarianism did seem once to have reigned. However, in our day, the problem no longer seems to be the overbearing presence of the father, so much as his absence.

Fathers are often caught up in themselves, their work and their own self-fulfillment to the neglect their families. They leave the young to themselves. The presence of the father is also impacted by the amount of time given to the entertainment media. Authority is often considered suspect and adults are treated with impertinence. As a result, they begin to suffer from uncertainty and so fail to offer solid guidance to their children. Likewise, a reversal of the roles of parents and children is unhealthy, since it hinders the proper process of development, denying the love and guidance needed for them to mature.

177. God sets the father in the family so that by the gift of his masculinity he can be close to his wife, sharing all with her, while, at the same time, being close to his children. To be a father who is always present does not mean being an over-controlling father. Children need the presence of a father. They may try hard to deny it, but they need his presence. It is not good for children to lack a father, having to grow up before they are ready.

AN EXPANDING FRUITFULNESS

178. Some couples are unable to have children; a cause of real suffering for them. Even in cases where, despite the spouses' intense desire, there are no children, the marriage retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life. It preserves its value and indissolubility. Often times motherhood is not solely biological. It can be expressed in other ways.

179. Adoption, is a very generous way of becoming parents. Those who cannot have children can expand their marital love by embracing those who lack a family setting. Adopting a child is an act of love, offering the gift of a family to someone who has none. In those cases, couples, by accepting a child unconditionally, truly become channels of God's love.

CHAPTER FIVE LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

AN EXPANDING FRUITFULNESS

180. The choice of adoption and foster care expresses a particular kind of fruitfulness and not only in cases of infertility. Where a child is desired, adoption and foster care, correctly understood, manifest an important aspect of parenting. They make people aware that children are persons who need to be accepted, loved and cared for. The best interests of the child should always underlie any decision in adoption and foster.

181. Christian families should never forget that faith does not remove us from the world but draws us more deeply into it. Families should not see themselves as a refuge from society, but instead a

going forth from their homes in a spirit of solidarity with others. They become a hub for integrating persons into society. Married couples should have a clear awareness of their social obligations.

182. No family can be fruitful if it sees itself as overly different or set apart. Jesus' own family, so full of grace and wisdom, did not appear unusual or different from others. That is why people found it hard to acknowledge Jesus' wisdom: "Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Mt 13:55) His was an ordinary family, a normal part of the community. Jesus readily interacted with the wider family, the relatives of his parents and their friends. This explains how, on returning from Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph could for a whole day think the twelve-year old Jesus to be somewhere in the caravan. "Supposing him to be in their group of travelers, they went a day's journey." (Lk 2:44)

183. A married couple who experiences the power of love knows that this love is called to "domesticate" the world, helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters. Today, the everyday life of men and women shows the need for a healthy injection of the family spirit. Open and caring families find a place for the poor and build friendships with those less fortunate. They are mindful of Jesus' words: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Mt 25:40) In this, we find the secret to a happy family.

184. By their witness, families speak to others of Jesus. In passing on the faith, they reflect the beauty of the Gospel and its way of life. Their fruitfulness expands and, in countless ways, makes God's love present in society.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

AN EXPANDING FRUITFULNESS

Discerning the body

185. We do well to take seriously the biblical text (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34) with its direct meaning that is markedly social. We see here that the wealthier members of the community tended to discriminate against the poorer ones at the *agape* meal that accompanied the celebration of the Eucharist. The rich enjoyed their food. The poor looked on in hunger. Paul was wont to ask: "Do you despise the Church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?" (1 Cor 21-22)

186. The Eucharist demands that we be members of the one body of the Church. Those who approach the Body and Blood of Christ may not wound that same Body by scandalous distinctions and divisions. This is what it means to "discern" the body of the Lord. Those who fail to do so eat and drink judgment against themselves. The celebration of the Eucharist thus becomes a constant summons for

everyone "to examine themselves", to open the doors of the family to greater fellowship with the underprivileged. It is in this way that we receive the sacrament of that eucharistic love that makes us one body. When those who receive it turn a blind eye to the poor and suffering, the Eucharist is received unworthily. Families, who are properly disposed and receive the Eucharist regularly, reinforce their social consciousness and their commitment to those in need.

LIFE IN THE WIDER FAMILY

187. The nuclear family needs to interact with the wider family made up of parents, aunts and uncles, etc. This greater family may have members who require assistance, companionship, or consolation in suffering. Individualism can lead to creating small nests of security, where others become bothersome or even a threat. Such isolation cannot offer peace or happiness. It straitens the heart of a family and makes its life all the narrower.

Being sons and daughters

188. Jesus told the Pharisees that abandoning one's parents is contrary to God's law. (cf. Mk 7:8-13) Each of us is a son or daughter. Underneath all the honored responsibilities of adult life, there still is the identity of a child. We are all sons and daughters. We did not give ourselves life but received it. The great gift of life is the first gift that we all received.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

AN EXPANDING FRUITFULNESS

Discerning the body

189. The fourth commandment asks children to honor father and mother. It comes right after those dealing with God himself. It has to do with the sacred, something at the very basis of human respect. The virtuous bond between generations is the guarantee of the future of a humane society. A society with children who do not honor parents is a society without honor.

190. The word of God tells us, "a man leaves father and mother". Parents must not be abandoned, but marriage itself demands that they be "left" so that the new home will be a true hearth and the couple becomes "one flesh," growing in trust and communication. Marriage challenges husbands and wives to find new ways of being children.

The elderly

191. Just as God asks us to be his means of hearing the cry of the poor, so too he wants us to hear the cry of the elderly. We must reawaken our sense of appreciation, that makes the elderly a living part of the community. Our elderly are fathers and mothers, who came before us in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life.

192. St. John Paul II asked us to be attentive to the role of the elderly in our families. There are cultures that set the elderly aside in unacceptable ways. The elderly help us to appreciate the continuity of the generations. Very often it is grandparents who ensure that the most important values are passed down. Their words, their affection or simply their presence help children to realize that history did not begin with them. They are now part of an age-old pilgrimage that came before them. Those who would break all ties with the past will find it difficult to realize that reality is bigger than they are. Attention to the elderly makes the difference in society. A society that respects the wisdom of the elderly will move forward.

193. Lack of historical memory is a serious shortcoming in our society. A mentality that can only say, "That was then, now is now," is immature. Memory is necessary for growth. Listening to the stories of the elderly is good for children. It connects them to the living history of their families. A family that fails to respect its grandparents is already in decline. A family that remembers has a future. A society that has no room for the elderly has a deadly virus. Our contemporary experience challenges us to make our families places where children can sink roots in the rich soil of a collective history.

Being brothers and sisters

194. Relationships between brothers and sisters deepen with the passing of time. In the family, we learn how to live as one. The family itself introduces fraternity into the world. From this initial experience, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole of society.

195. Growing up with brothers and sisters makes for a beautiful experience of caring for and helping one another. Having a brother or a sister who loves you is a profound and unique experience. Children need to be taught to treat one another as brothers and sisters. It is a true school of socialization. Where it has been possible to have only one child, ways have to be found to ensure that the one child does not grow up alone or isolated.

A big heart

196. Beyond the small circle of the couple and their children, there is the larger family that cannot be overlooked. The love between husbands and wives and the love between members of the same family is given life and sustenance by an unceasing inner dynamism leading the family to an ever-deepening communion that is the foundation of the community of marriage and the family. Friends and other families are a part of this larger family.

197. This larger family should provide love and support to teenage mothers, children without parents, single mothers left to raise children and many other similar types of situations. It should also embrace even those who have made shipwreck of their lives. This wider family can help make up for the shortcomings of parents and provide wholesome love and family stability in cases where parents have proven incapable.

198. We cannot forget that this larger family includes the "in-laws" and all the relatives of the couple. One aspect of love is learning not to view these relatives as somehow competitors, threats or intruders. The conjugal union demands respect for them all and their backgrounds.

CHAPTER SIX SOME PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES

198. The dialogue that took place during the Synod raised the need for new pastoral methods. Without claiming to present a pastoral plan for the family, I would now like to reflect on some of the more significant pastoral challenges.

CHAPTER SIX SOME PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF THE FAMILY TODAY

200. The Synod Fathers emphasized that Christian families, as domestic churches, are the principal agents of the family apostolate. It is important that people experience the Gospel of the family as a joy. We are all called to help sow seeds. The rest is God's work. In her teaching on the family, the Church is a sign of contradiction. The Church wishes, with humility and compassion, to reach out to families. It is not enough to show generic concern. Enabling families to take up the role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for an effort at evangelization inside the family.

201. This effort calls for a conversion by everyone, not a merely theoretical message. The Gospel of the family responds to the deepest desires of the human person. This consists not merely of rules, but values that are clearly needed today. Evangelization needs to denounce cultural, social, political and economic factors that prevent authentic family life. Dialogue and cooperation need to be fostered and encouragement given to lay people involved in the cultural and sociopolitical fields.

202. The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish, the family of families. Along with a pastoral outreach to families, more adequate training of priests, deacons, religious, catechists and others is needed. Synodal worldwide consultation indicated that ordained ministers often lack this training.

203. Seminarians should receive more interdisciplinary formation in the areas of engagement and marriage. Some, themselves, come from troubled families. Their formation should enable them to attain maturity and psychological balance. It is important that families be part of this process. It is helpful for seminarians to combine time in the seminary with time spent in parishes. The presence of lay people, families, and especially women, in priestly formation promotes appreciation of the diversity and complementarity of vocations in the Church.

204. The synodal consultation insisted on the need for training lay leaders in the pastoral care of families. Professionals, with practical experience, also help keep pastoral initiatives grounded in the concrete concerns of families. Good pastoral training is important. All this complements the fundamental value of spiritual direction and sacramental Reconciliation.

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