Chapter Nine: The Spirituality of Marriage and the Family

The ninth chapter is devoted to marital and family spirituality, which “is made up of thousands of small but real gestures”. The Pope clearly states that “those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union”. Everything, “moments of joy, relaxation, celebration, and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection”. Here, the Pope speaks of prayer in the light of Easter, of the spirituality of exclusive and free love in the challenge and the yearning to grow old together, reflecting God’s fidelity. In the spirituality of care, consolation and incentive, the Pope teaches that “all family life is a ‘shepherding’ in mercy. Each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others”. It is a profound “spiritual experience to contemplate our loved ones with the eyes of God and to see Christ in them”.

Finally, in the last paragraph the Pope affirms: “No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse. Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us”.

Conclusion

The apostolic exhortation concludes with a Prayer to the Holy Family:

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
in you we contemplate the splendor of true love;  
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may families never again experience violence, rejection and division;  
may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.
Holy Family of Nazareth, 
make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, 
and its beauty in God’s plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

As can readily be understood from a quick review of its contents, the apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia seeks emphatically to affirm not the “ideal family” but the very rich and complex reality of family life. Its pages provide an open-hearted look, profoundly positive, which is nourished not with abstractions or ideal projections, but with pastoral attention to reality. The text is a close reading of family life, with spiritual insights and practical wisdom useful for every human couple or persons who want to build a family. Above all, it is the result of attention to what people have lived over many years. Indeed, the exhortation Amoris Laetitia: On love in the family speaks the language of experience and of hope.

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