



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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The Church at the Service of the Family

The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of the institution of the family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life. Finally, there are others who are hindered by various situations of injustice in the realization of their fundamental rights.

(Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1)

Like many other institutions in the modern world, the family has also been affected by the changing attitudes of our culture and society. For them, the uncertainty and bewilderment over their role has made finding its identity and mission especially challenging. Yet, the role that God the Creator calls the family to perform specifies both its dignity and responsibility. Adults in every society want to share with their young the wisdom they have gained from living and from reflecting on their life experiences. This is, of course, the special privilege and responsibility of families, but it is also the responsibility of the whole community to support their efforts.

Much of the writing in the Wisdom books of the Old Testament reflects this desire to teach the art of daily living. Wisdom, whether it be from the time of the Old or New Testament, is generally based on the human experience of believers. The writers of many of the Wisdom Books seldom speak of the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, and the teachings of Moses. They understood that the message of revelation was known; they wanted to communicate what had been learned through their long experiences in daily life. They firmly believed that God, who had placed intelligence in human beings, could also make his ways known through intelligent reflection on life.

Here, the wisdom drawn from Christian human experiences helps families to reflect on their own relationships. Teaching children about the revealed will of God is an essential aspect of life, helping them be more receptive to God's will and to value their lives as unique manifestations, created in his image and likeness. When considering the Church at the service of the family, Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, developed the ecclesiality of the family, telling families to "become what you are"(17). Pope Benedict XVI continued this legacy, and Pope Francis frequently uses the term of the *Domestic Church*, most notably in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, which beautifully praises the Christian family as a way to holiness.

In today's world full of families suffering from separation, estrangement and alienation, the invocation of the Holy Family to help all Christian families realize their vocation is needed more than ever. As we approach Family Day later this month, let us remember that this day is more than just a holiday or time away from work; it is a time for families to reflect on their life experiences; to develop and nurture relationships, and to find and sustain their identity and mission in the plan of God the Creator.

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