

Section 32

“In the Light of the Word”

Part 1: The family, a dwelling place of the Lord

The Bible is full of stories about families, births and love affairs, as well as stories about family crises (AL 8). All these stories, the Pope states in the first chapter of his letter ‘Amoris Laetitia’ (AL), are presented rather as “*a source of comfort and companionship for every family that experiences difficulties or suffering*” (AL 22). However, besides the “*bitter truth ... of pain, evil and violence that break up families*” (AL 19), Scripture presents the ideal picture of the family as well. In this section 32, we will focus on the positive dimension of family life, as presented in Scripture and related by Pope Francis; the next section will go into other aspects.

The Book of Genesis tells us that God created man and woman “*in his own image.*” And God blessed them and ordered them to, “*be fruitful and multiply*” (Genesis 1: 26-28). This is the Scripture’s way of indicating that the fruitful love of a married couple, including sexual, corporeal and self-giving love, reveals God’s inner life. Pope Francis reminds us that in the Christian vision God is contemplated as a communion of love between Father, Son and Spirit. Therefore, he states, a loving family, being an image of God, is an outstanding demonstration of God’s loving presence on earth (AL 11). The Pope insists, “*the Trinity is present in the temple of marital communion*” and “*dwells deep within the marital love*” (AL 314).

It is good to keep in mind that by saying so, the Pope refers to the daily life of normal families. He states: “*The Lord’s presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes.*” And he adds, saying: “*The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures. In that variety of gifts and encounters, which deepen communion, God has his dwelling place*” (AL 315).

Man and wife express their conjugal love through so many everyday ways. In fact, God’s love comes alive “*with a word, a look, a helping hand, a caress, an embrace*” (AL 321). In that way, the Pope states, “*Spirituality becomes incarnate in the communion of the family.*” (AL 316).

Besides showing positive aspects of family life, Pope Francis also indicates that Scripture gives witness to the fact that marriage and family life may become a source of suffering and pain. We will follow the Pope’s reflections on that dimension of family life in the following sections

A Reflective Moment

**Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening faith
in God's loving presence in the family.**

*"A few minutes can be found each day
to come together before the living God,*

*to tell him our worries,
to ask for the needs of our family,
to pray for someone experiencing difficulty,
to ask for help in showing love,
to give thanks for life and for its blessings,
and to ask Our Lady to protect us
beneath her maternal mantle.*

*With a few simple words,
this moment of prayer
can do immense good for our families.*

*The various expressions of popular piety
are a treasure of spirituality for many families."*

(Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* n. 318)