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Section 36

“The Experiences and Challenges of Families”

Part 2: Social structures jeopardizing family life.

In the second chapter regarding the actual situation of families, the Pope intends “*to keep firmly grounded in reality*”. He underlines the fact that in today’s society family life receives “*less support from social structures than in the past*” (AL 32), and he warns “*against a cultural decline that fails to promote love or self-giving.*” (AL 39).

For instance, concerning young people and their attitude towards marriage, the Pope states: “*At the risk of oversimplifying, we might say that we live in a culture which pressures young people not to start a family, because they lack possibilities for the future. ... In some countries, many young persons postpone a wedding for reasons, such as the desire to avoid the failures of other couples, the economic benefits associated with simply living together, the fear of losing their freedom and independence, and the rejection of something conceived as purely bureaucratic*” (AL 40).

Also, the Pope continues, “*the weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has an effect on families, leaving them more isolated amid their difficulties*” (AL 43). And “*one symptom of the great poverty of contemporary culture is loneliness, arising from the absence of God in a person’s life and the fragility of relationships*” (AL 43)

Regarding the many problems that families throughout the world have to cope with, the Pope states, “*each country or region can*

seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs (AL 3). However, no one should be “*content to proclaim a merely theoretical message without connection to people’s real problems*” (AL 201).

On the contrary, everyone in the Church must be concerned “*to offer understanding, comfort and acceptance, rather than imposing straightaway a set of rules that only lead people to feel judged and abandoned by the very Mother called to show them God’s mercy*” (AL 49). Moreover, the best way the Church may act in response to the many challenges families have to cope with is by promoting the “*values that are clearly needed today, even in the most secularized of countries,*” (AL 201). The Church is also called to continue proclaiming the Good News of family life itself, which “*responds to the deepest expectations of the human person*” (AL 201).

A reflective Moment

*“The situations that concern us are challenges.
We should not be trapped
into wasting our energy in doleful laments,
but rather seek new forms of missionary creativity.
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.”*
(Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, n.57).