



LOVE IS OUR MISSION – THE FAMILY FULLY ALIVE Part IV

CREATING THE FUTURE

When spouses become parents, the inner dynamic of God's creation and the marriage sacrament is made visible in a beautiful and particularly clear way. When a husband and wife have children after the pattern of Christ's love for us, this same love also orients the new parents to their children's education and spiritual formation. The same love that sweeps up men and women, teaching them the ways of the covenant and bringing them to the Sacrament of Marriage, leads a couple to become a family.

The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation proper to each of them. It is a mother's and a father's responsibility to be with children at home and in church and pray together regularly. They will not learn how to do it if they are not taught.

The domestic church implies a relationship to the universal Church: "The family, to be a 'little Church,' must be well integrated into the 'big Church,' that is, into the family of God that Christ came to form. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the parish as a "family of families" which is "able to share with each other, not only the joys but the inevitable difficulties of initiating family life.

Children need to see their parents and other adults in their lives demonstrating solidarity with the poor and doing things which serve the poor. Parishes and eparchies can help provide these occasions. The domestic church serves the parish and is served by the parish. For a parish to actually be a "family of families" calls for concrete actions of hospitality and generosity. No one, especially a child, parents struggling with unexpected crises, vulnerable elderly people, or anyone who is suffering, should be lonely in a parish family. How lay people treat each other will determine whether a parish is fulfilling its mission in this way. The challenges of family life require support — no family can flourish on its own. To flourish, families need their parishes, and their parishes need them. We ought to ask ourselves:

1. Have you ever prayed with a child? How about reading the Bible with a child, or discussing some other aspect of the faith?
2. If you are not a parent yourself, are there children in your life who could use a friend and mentor?
3. What is a domestic church? How does the parish serve the family, and how does the family serve the parish?

We pray that you and your family will enjoy these summer months and that you find time to vacation with God. May you experience the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit as you continue in your journey in becoming the "family of families" We will resume our articles in September. In the meantime, all of you will be remembered in our prayers.