



Reflection 7

FOLLOWING CLELIA'S FOOTSTEPS
TOWARD THE HEART OF JESUS

Love Lived in the Family

The Holy Family is a model and source of inspiration for all families because it calls us to the essential, to those spiritual values that are often lacking but are indispensable to creating a marriage that will stand the test of time: knowledge, mutual esteem, the ability to go beyond self, to understand each other, to forgive, to cultivate common goals and ideals, to love, and more important to pray together. In the family is found a welcome, the fruit of true love; the life of the other is as precious as one's own, each cares about the wellbeing of all. In the family all is shared; in the family are talents which, if allowed to bear fruit and are shared can transform humanity. But it is necessary to be aware of this, seeking to be family.

Word of God: Mt. 7:24-27 – *“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”*

Words of Pope Francis

... you are preparing to grow together, to build this home, to live together forever. You do not want to found it on the sand of sentiments, which come and go, but on the rock of true love, the love that comes from God. The family is born from this plan of love, it wants to grow just as a home is built, as a place of affection, of help, of hope, of support. As the love of God is stable and forever, so too should we want the love on which a family is based to be stable and forever. Please, we mustn't let ourselves be overcome by the "culture of the provisory"! Today this culture invades us all, this culture of the temporary. This is not right! (*February 14, 2014*)

Jesus' description of the two houses, one built on rock and the other on sand (cf. Mt 7:24-27), symbolizes any number of family situations shaped by the exercise of their members' freedom, for, as the poet says, "every home is a lampstand." (*Amoris Letitia*, 8)

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION 'AMORIS LETITIA'

The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church. As the Synod Fathers noted, for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, "the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people, and this is an inspiration to the Church." (1)

The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon – not an idol like those of stone or gold prohibited by the Decalogue – capable of revealing God the Creator and Saviour. For this reason, fruitful love becomes a symbol of God's inner life. . . . Seen this way, the couple's fruitful relationship becomes an image for understanding and describing the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love. The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection. Saint John Paul II shed light on this when he said, "Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within

himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit.” (11)

Against this backdrop of love so central to the Christian experience of marriage and the family, another virtue stands out, one often overlooked in our world of frenetic and superficial relationships. It is tenderness. . . .Here we see a delicate and tender intimacy between mother and child: the image is that of a babe sleeping in his mother’s arms after being nursed. As the Hebrew word *gamûl* suggests, the infant is now fed and clings to his mother, who takes him to her bosom. There is a closeness that is conscious and not simply biological. (28)

Mother Clelia

“... If the people with whom you converse are disagreeable to you, know how to hide behind a gracious countenance the interior repugnance they arouse in you. Don’t allow sadness, annoyance, or austerity to be evident in your words and actions because charity obliges us to sympathize with them and to give them good example, that they might amend those defects which render them disagreeable.” (Spiritual Anthology 3.10, p. 178-179, Mg., II, p. 107)

Mother Clelia lived by love and for love of her brothers and sisters. She enfolded this command of God in its fullness, breadth, and depth. Let us listen to her: We must bear with one another. Notice her method: a pleasant look, a friendly attitude, cordial words, indulgence and amiability toward all. We must conquer self-love at all costs and accept offenses and opposition. Don’t be concerned with human judgments; humble yourself and purify yourself interiorly always. In every adversity abandon yourself to God and do His will always.

Prayer

I believe in the family, O Lord, sprung from your creative design, founded on the rock of eternal and fruitful love. You chose it as your dwelling place among us and desired it to be the cradle of life.

I believe in the family, O Lord, which you have prepared for me as a plan conceived in my youth, as a vocation before your altar, as a mission for the Church and the world.

I believe in the family, O Lord, even when the shadow of the cross enters our home, when love loses its initial charm and all becomes trying and heavy.

I believe in the family, O Lord, as a luminous sign of hope in the midst of the crises of our time, as a fount of love and life, a response to the aggression of egoism and of death.

I believe in the family, O Lord, my road to human fulfillment, my call to holiness, my mission to transform the world to the image of your Reign.

CONSIDER:

- Is your family a place of human and spiritual growth? Does love and and forgiveness reign? Do you love one another?

- Love is always life-giving. What must improve in your family for it to have more life and joy?

“God inspires us to love, and love always engages with the persons it loves. Love always engages with the persons it loves. So let us care for our families, true schools for the future. Let us care for our families, true spaces of freedom. Let us care for families, true centers of humanity.” (Pope Francis, September 22, 2017)

