



DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

100th Anniversary of the birth of St. John Paul II

May 18, 2020

The 100th anniversary of the birth of St. John Paul II comes at a very special time of the year: a few days after the International Day of Families celebrated by the United Nations, and during the month dedicated to Mary, which in the exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, St. John Paul II proclaimed Mother of the “Church of the home.” It is to her that he entrusted the first element of society, aware that the future of the world and of the Church itself would pass through the family.

St. John Paul II passionately dedicated large sections of his Magisterium to show the world the beauty and centrality of the family. In 1993, he had the extraordinary intuition of instituting the World Meeting of Families, which, since 1994, takes place every three years in a different country, to nourish the beating heart of families in the Church providing an ecclesial and pastoral encounter. “The Family, the Heart of the Civilization of Love” was the theme of the first meeting. Following the same path, 28 years later, the next meeting, convened by Pope Francis in Rome, 2022, will be on the theme “Family Love: Vocation and Way of Holiness.”

Fundamentally, the Magisterium of St. John Paul II, with his Letter to Children, Letter to Women, his unforgettable catechesis on human love, on marriage, on the irreplaceable role of fathers and mothers has been a hymn to life, to the motherhood of every woman, to the generative task of the families and of every human person who says yes to his or her vocation. It is this vocation that we have to continue to appeal to make our young people, our children, happy.

The first lines in *Familiaris Consortio* were addressed precisely to them, to the young people who are beginning their journey towards marriage and family life, to help them to discover the beauty and *grandeur* of the vocation to love and the service of life. (FC 1).

It is a message that is not only timely but is continuously reinforced by Pope Francis when he reminds us that Christian families are not called to propose an abstract and unattainable ideal in itself. But to give a simple and direct testimony to the Grace that permeates their daily life, with the hardships, sorrows, joys, and conquests of each day, of which wedding bands are a sign and a symbol.

In his exquisite play “The Jeweler’s Shop,” Karol Wojtyła explained that the wedding bands are an expression of fidelity to one’s vocation, despite all the difficulties

of life, not because the spouses decide so, but because they are “shaped by the jeweler,” – by God. He is the author of the Grace that sustains; He is the first to be faithful to the love that unites spouses and families. This is the power of the sacrament that we must continue to propose even to this day. In ancient times, the *Sacramentum* was the military seal printed with fire on the soldier’s arm, signifying that he belonged to the army and could never abandon it. Similarly, the Christian family bears the sign of God.

This is one of the legacies that St. John Paul II has left us. We have the privilege of being able to lift them up to restore – he would say – the Christian family of today, tempted by despair and anguished by difficulties, reasons for trusting in themselves, in the mission God entrusted to them. “Families of today must be called back to their original position!”

May this anniversary be the occasion to ignite in the hearts of all of us, especially our pastors, the love for families, working for them, caring for them, and supporting them as the Lord does for his People.

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