

JUNE – SELF-GIVING LOVE

The form of marital and family love is given by God himself, who is love. The Christian family, the domestic church, has been entrusted with the irreplaceable vocation of being the first school of human and divine love.

Breaking Open the Theme

The domestic church is meant to be the primary place for education. Education should be concerned with the whole person and include moral, intellectual, spiritual and physical development.⁶¹

As the primary educators of their children, mothers and fathers have many responsibilities. One of the most fundamental practices they must teach is self-giving love.⁶² Self-giving love not only places the good of another ahead of one's personal good, but also sees another's good as one's own good. In its fullness, self-giving love gives totally, without reservation, like Christ gave himself completely on the cross.

By embracing the vocation to the sacrament of marriage with its inherent openness to life,⁶³ a husband and wife are prepared by God to be teachers of this kind of love. The most fundamental lessons of love are taught through ordinary daily life in the rhythm of a home in which God is loved and adored above all things. Through the struggles of daily life, acts of service and kind words, children learn the language of love from their mother and father. Every Christian family, as a domestic church, has been entrusted with the vocation to become a school of authentic love or, as St. John Paul II once put it, "a school of a deeper humanity".⁶⁴

June is traditionally devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated each year as a solemnity on a Friday 19 days after Pentecost. The Sacred Heart devotion reveals the burning love of God in Jesus Christ, a love which is stronger than death and given to us in the sacraments. By teaching children about Jesus Christ through devotions like the Sacred Heart, families personally connect to the source of life and love itself.

Meditation

From an article by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori

Parents have, or should have, a unique relationship with their children. They have been called by God to love their child with the same faithful, self-giving love in which the child was conceived. ... To be sure, the notion of "self-giving love" is not an idealistic or naive concept dreamed up by theologians. It is demanding and sacrificial. Self-giving love has its source in the Trinity and is revealed most fully by Jesus on the

Cross. It requires what Pope Francis calls “an exodus from self” so that we might focus on the needs of others, even when that causes disruption in our lives. ...

Most fundamentally, teaching children the “art of living” involves lessons of faith and character. Parents teach children their first prayers, bring them to Mass on Sunday, and help them develop a basic sense of right and wrong coupled with a sense of responsibility. They also teach gratitude and generosity by helping their children learn to take care of their possessions; to not always expect to have the latest and best of everything; and to grow in the habit of sharing what they have with others. Moreover, parents help their children learn to handle life’s inevitable disappointments, including the invidious comparisons that are part of the highly competitive and materialistic culture in which we live. Such lessons are best learned at home, in an atmosphere of respect and love. ...

As Pope Francis said, “Parents are called ... not only to bring children into the world but also to bring them to God” (*Lumen Fidei*, 43).⁶⁵

1. What do we learn from our family? Have we learned “the art of living”? If so, of what does this “art of living” consist?
2. What is self-giving love?
3. How have we learned about self-giving love from our family?

Scripture Reading — Psalm 119:1-3, 9-12, 33-38, 105-108

A prayer to God, the Lawgiver

Blessed those whose way is blameless,
 who walk by the law of the LORD.
Blessed those who keep his testimonies,
 who seek him with all their heart.
They do no wrong;
 they walk in his ways.
How can the young keep his way without fault?
 Only by observing your words.
With all my heart I seek you;
 do not let me stray from your commandments.
In my heart I treasure your promise,
 that I may not sin against you.

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Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes.
LORD, teach me the way of your statutes;
I shall keep them with care.
Give me understanding to keep your law,
to observe it with all my heart.
Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for that is my delight.
Direct my heart toward your testimonies
and away from gain.
Avert my eyes from what is worthless;
by your way give me life.
For your servant, fulfill your promise
made to those who fear you.
Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path.
I make a solemn vow
to observe your righteous judgments.
I am very much afflicted, LORD;
give me life in accord with your word.
Accept my freely offered praise;
LORD, teach me your judgments.

Family Project

An important part of love consists in doing things out of love for others, even things that we may find unpleasant. To encourage these little sacrifices, research and make sacrifice beads (also known as “good deed beads”), inspired by a practice that St. Therese of the Child Jesus used to do when she was a child. Sacrifice beads are essentially a way of helping the family look for opportunities to make little offerings of love to God through small acts of self-giving service.