



Diocese of Austin



## QUOTES ON THE FAMILY AND THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

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 which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state.

**-Vatican II: *Lumen gentium* (Nov. 21, 1964), paragraph 11**

Christian husbands and wives are cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children, and all others in their household. They are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them by word and example for the Christian and apostolic life. They prudently help them in the choice of their vocation and carefully promote any sacred vocation which they may discern in them.

It has always been the duty of Christian married partners but today it is the greatest part of their apostolate to manifest and prove by their own way of life the indissolubility and sacredness of the marriage bond, strenuously to affirm the right and duty of parents and guardians to educate children in a Christian manner, and to defend the dignity and lawful autonomy of the family. They and the rest of the faithful, therefore, should cooperate with men of good will to ensure the preservation of these rights in civil legislation and to make sure that governments give due attention to the needs of the family regarding housing, the education of children, working conditions, social security, and taxes; and that in policy decisions affecting migrants their right to live together as a family should be safeguarded.<sup>4</sup>

Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to

have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church.

**-Vatican II: *Gravissimum educationis* (Oct. 28, 1965): paragraph 3**

This mission—to be the first and vital cell of society—the family has received from God. It will fulfill this mission if it appears as the domestic sanctuary of the Church by reason of the mutual affection of its members and the prayer that they offer to God in common, if the whole family makes itself a part of the liturgical worship of the Church, and if it provides active hospitality and promotes justice and other good works for the service of all the brethren in need. Among the various activities of the family apostolate may be enumerated the following: the adoption of abandoned infants, hospitality to strangers, assistance in the operation of schools, helpful advice and material assistance for adolescents, help to engaged couples in preparing themselves better for marriage, catechetical work, support of married couples and families involved in material and moral crises, help for the aged not only by providing them with the necessities of life but also by obtaining for them a fair share of the benefits of an expanding economy.

**-Vatican II: *Apostolicam actuositatem* (Nov. 18, 1965): paragraph 11**

At different moments in the Church's history and also in the Second Vatican Council, the family has well deserved the beautiful name of "domestic Church."<sup>40</sup> This means that there should be found in every Christian family the various aspects of the entire Church. Furthermore, the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates.

In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them.

And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part. Families resulting from a mixed marriage also have the duty of proclaiming Christ to the children in the fullness of the consequences of a common Baptism; they have moreover the difficult task of becoming builders of unity.

**-Paul VI: *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Dec. 8, 1975): paragraph 70**

*The Family*: Make every effort to ensure that there is pastoral care for the family. Attend to this field of such primary importance in the certainty that evangelization in the future depends largely on the “domestic Church.” It is the school of love, of the knowledge of God, of respect for life and for human dignity. The importance of this pastoral care is in proportion to the threats aimed at the family. Think of the campaigns in favor of divorce, of the use of contraceptive practices, and of abortion, which destroy society.

-John Paul II: *Address to 3<sup>rd</sup> General Conference of CELAM* (Jan. 28, 1979): paragraph IV.1a

Children are a continual reminder that the missionary fruitfulness of the Church has its life-giving basis not in human means and merits, but in the absolute gratuitous gift of God. The life itself of innocence and grace of many children, and even the suffering and oppression unjustly inflicted upon them are in virtue of the Cross of Christ a source of spiritual enrichment for them and for the entire Church. Everyone ought to be more conscious and grateful for this fact. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that valuable possibilities exist even in the life’s stages of infancy and childhood, both for the building up of the Church and for making society more humane. How often the Council referred to the beneficial and constructive affects for the family, “the domestic Church,” through the presence of sons and daughters: “Children as living members of the family, contribute in their own way to the sanctification of their parents.”<sup>174</sup> The Council’s words must also be repeated about children in relation to the local and universal Church.

-John Paul II: *Christifideles laici* (Dec. 30, 1988): paragraph 47

The *Christian family*, as the “domestic Church,” also makes up a natural and fundamental school for formation in the faith: father and mother receive from the Sacrament of Matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children before whom they bear witness and to whom they transmit both human and religious values. While learning their first words, children learn also the praise of God whom they feel is near them as a loving and providential Father; while learning the first acts of love, children also learn to open themselves to others, and through the gift of self, receive the sense of living as a human being. The daily life itself of a truly Christian family makes up the first “experience of Church,” intended to find confirmation and development in an active and responsible process of the children’s introduction into the wider ecclesial community and civil society. The more that Christian spouses and parents grow in the awareness that their “domestic church” participates in the life and mission of the universal Church, so much the more will their sons and daughters be able to be formed in a “sense of the Church” and will perceive all the beauty of dedicating their energies to the service of the Kingdom of God [...] The more that Christian spouses and parents grow in the

awareness that their “domestic church” participates in the life and mission of the universal Church, so much the more will their sons and daughters be able to be formed in a “sense of the Church” and will perceive all the beauty of dedicating their energies to the service of the Kingdom of God.

**-John Paul II: *Christifideles laici* (Dec. 30, 1988): paragraph 62**

The Synod launched an explicit appeal for each African Christian family to become “a privileged place for evangelical witness,”<sup>174</sup> a true “domestic church,”<sup>175</sup> a community which believes and evangelizes,<sup>176</sup> community in dialogue with God<sup>177</sup> and generously open to the service of humanity.<sup>178</sup> “It is in the heart of the family that parents are by word and example ... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.”<sup>179</sup> “It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way ‘by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life and self-denial and active charity.’ Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and ‘a school for human enrichment.’”<sup>180</sup>

**-John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Africa* (Sep. 14, 1995): paragraph 92**

“God the Creator, by forming the first man and woman and commanding them to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (Gen 1:28), definitively established the family. In this sanctuary life is born and is welcomed as God’s gift. The word of God, faithfully read in the family, gradually builds it up as a domestic church and makes it fruitful in human and Christian virtues; it is there that the source of vocations is to be found. Marian devotion, nourished by prayer, will keep families united and prayerful with Mary, like the disciples of Jesus before Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14).”<sup>174</sup> [...] In order to be a true “domestic church”<sup>176</sup> the Christian family needs to be a setting in which parents hand down the faith, since they are “for their children, by word and example, the first heralds of the faith.”<sup>177</sup> Families should not fail to set time aside for prayer, in which spouses are united with each other and with their children. There is a need to encourage shared spiritual moments such as participating in the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, daily prayer in the family and practical signs of charity. This will strengthen fidelity in marriage and unity in families. In such a family setting it will not be difficult for children to discover a vocation of service in the community and the Church, and to learn, especially by seeing the example of their parents, that family life is a way to realize the universal call to holiness.<sup>178</sup>

**-John Paul II: *Ecclesia in America* (Jan. 22, 1999): paragraph 46**

I therefore invite all the Catholics of America to take an active part in the evangelizing initiatives which the Holy Spirit is stirring in every part of this immense continent, so full of resources and hopes for the future. In a special way, I invite Catholic families to be “domestic Churches,”<sup>294</sup> in which the Christian faith is lived and passed on to the young as a treasure, and where all pray together. If they live up to the ideal which God places before them, Catholic homes will be true centers of evangelization.

**-John Paul II: *Ecclesia in America* (Jan. 22, 1999): paragraph 76**

Seen through Christian eyes, the family is “the domestic Church” (*ecclesia domestica*).<sup>226</sup> The Christian family, like the Church as a whole, should be a place where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life and the gift which the family members bring to the wider community. The family is not simply the object of the Church’s pastoral care; it is also one of the Church’s most effective agents of evangelization. Christian families are today called to witness to the Gospel in difficult times and circumstances, when the family itself is threatened by an array of forces.<sup>227</sup> To be an agent of evangelization in such a time, the Christian family needs to be genuinely “the domestic Church,” humbly and lovingly living out the Christian vocation.

**-John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Asia* (Nov. 6, 1999): paragraph 46**

“The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church.”<sup>144</sup> Ultimately, the family is an image of the ineffable *communio* of the Most Holy Trinity. In the procreation and education of children the family also shares in God’s work of creation, and as such it is a great force for evangelization in the Church and beyond. “The Church and society in Oceania depend heavily on the quality of family life.”<sup>145</sup> This implies great responsibility for Christians who enter the marriage covenant, and “there needs to be suitable pastoral preparation for all couples seeking the Sacrament of Marriage.”<sup>146</sup>

**-John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Oceania* (Nov. 22, 2001): paragraph 45**

To create a much-needed pastoral program of promoting vocations, it is beneficial to explain to the laity the Church's faith regarding the nature and dignity of the ministerial priesthood; to encourage families to live as true "domestic churches," so that in their midst the variety of vocations can be discerned, accepted and nurtured; and to engage in pastoral work aimed at helping young people in particular to choose a life rooted in Christ and completely dedicated to the Church.<sup>70</sup> In the certainty that the Holy Spirit is still at work today, and that the signs of his presence are not lacking, it is mainly a question of *making the promotion of vocations a part of ordinary pastoral care*. There is a need "to rekindle a deep yearning for God, especially in young people, thus creating a suitable context in which generous vocational responses can be made[...]. It is also indispensable for priests themselves to live and work in a way consistent with their true sacramental identity. For if the image they project is unclear or indifferent, how can they attract young people to imitate them? [...] this context the Church is called to *proclaim with renewed vigour what the Gospel teaches about marriage and the family*, in order to grasp their meaning and value in God's saving plan. In particular it is necessary to reaffirm that these institutions are realities grounded in the will of God. There is a need to rediscover the truth about the family as an intimate communion of life and love<sup>148</sup> open to the procreation of new persons, as well as its dignity as a "domestic Church" and its share in the mission of the Church and in the life of society.

**-John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Europa* (Jun. 28, 2003), paragraph 41**

Sustaining and nourishing the faith necessarily begins in the family, the basic unit of society and the prime place for learning to pray.<sup>83</sup> Teaching the faith essentially takes place in the family in the form of teaching children how to pray. In praying together with their children, parents accustom them to be conscious of the loving presence of the Lord and, at the same time, they themselves become credible witnesses to their children.

**-Synod on New Evangelization: *Lineamenta* (Feb. 2, 2011), paragraph 22**

Established by the sacrament of matrimony, the Christian family as the domestic Church is the locus and first agent in the giving of life and love, the transmission of faith and the formation of the human person according to the values of the gospel. In imitating Christ, the whole Church must dedicate herself to supporting families in the catechesis of children and youth. In many cases the grandparents will have a very important role.

**-Synod on New Evangelization: Final Propositions (Oct. 26, 2012): Proposition 48: The Christian Family**

In the family, faith accompanies every age of life, beginning with childhood: children learn to trust in the love of their parents. This is why it is so important that within their families parents encourage shared expressions of faith which can help children gradually to mature in their own faith. Young people in particular, who are going through a period in their lives which is so complex, rich and important for their faith, ought to feel the constant closeness and support of their families and the Church in their journey of faith [...] Young people want to live life to the fullest. Encountering Christ, letting themselves be caught up in and guided by his love, enlarges the horizons of existence, gives it a firm hope which will not disappoint. Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God's faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness.

**-Francis: *Lumen fidei* (Jun. 29, 2013)**

The parish, in considering its catechetical programs, should give particular attention to its families. But above all it means that the family itself is the first and most appropriate place for teaching the truths of the faith, the practice of Christian virtues and the essential values of human life.

**-John Paul II: *The Parish as a Family of Families* (Sept. 13, 1987)**

The family in fact is the basic unit of society and of the Church. It is the "domestic church." Families are those living cells which come together to form the very substance of parish life.

**-John Paul II: *The Parish as a Family of Families* (Sept. 13, 1987)**

Parents and family members must, moreover, be helped and sustained in their struggle to live by the sacred truths of faith. The Church must furnish families with the spiritual means of preserving in their sublime vocation and of growing in the special holiness to which Christ calls them.

**-John Paul II: *The Parish as a Family of Families* (Sept. 13, 1987)**

I wish to encourage all families and parishes not to be inward-looking, not to dwell on themselves. Jesus commands us to serve our neighbor, to reach out to those in need. And I ask you especially to reach out to those brothers and sisters in the faith who have drifted away because of indifference or who have been hurt in some way. I invite all you who are unsure about the Church or who doubt that you will be welcomed to come home to the family of families, to come home to your parish. You belong there! It is your family in the Church, and the Church is the household of God in which there are no strangers or aliens (cf. Eph. 2:19).

**-John Paul II: *The Parish as a Family of Families* (Sept. 13, 1987)**