

FAMILY: A GIFT OF DIVINE FILIATION

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

There are just a few days left in the *Amoris Laetitia Year of the Family* which concludes on June 26. And as you well know, June 26 is also the feast day of St. Josemaria. For that reason, we can begin this time of prayer thinking of that Gospel passage that will be read all over the world, so many Masses on the- for the Feast of St. Josemaria where the Lord says to the Apostles, launch out into the deep. All this past year, the Lord has been urging us to launch into the deep during this *Year of the Family* in order to discover his view of the human family. We need that view because the Lord's- his vision of the family with so many dimensions vastly exceeds a merely human vision.

Perhaps you will recall that great point in *The Way*, number 279: "Most people have a plane-like vision stuck to the Earth of two dimensions. But when you live a supernatural life, God will give you the third dimension, height; and with it perspective, weight and volume." How sad to go through life with a merely two-dimensional vision, a vision that is basically limit- limited to thinking well, I fall in love, I get married, I have kids, I pay bills, I retire, I die, the end. That, of course, is no way to live. We want to go far beyond that which is why we spend time each day meditating in order to seek our life from God's point of view. And at the very core of his vision is our divine filiation, the fact that we are his children. We are his beloved children sent out into the field of life with a mission. The family life is a major ingredient of this mission.

Let us bring to mind right now our own family situation. I am a beloved child of God. Every single member of this family is equally loved by the Lord. The bonds of love that tie us together are not merely circumstantial, but rather those bonds are part of a divine plan. It's crucial that we approach every aspect of our family life looking at our divine filiation, the fact that we are children of God. To the extent that this truth sinks in, we can then go about being a family, making family happen, so to speak, with enthusiasm and with a sense of mission. Those words of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple then resonate with us in a most direct way, "I must be about my Father's business." It's a great question, what is my business? Years ago, a business guru underlined the importance for any enterprise, the importance of clearly answering that question, what is my business? What is our

business? Because only then can that company or that family pursue the business with clear direction.

Families just don't happen. Or, to put it more accurately, families don't just happen. They require much thought and prayer in order to thrive. Within the walls of that home, a school of life can take place where each family member acquires a deeply Christian style of life. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, why didn't we hear this thirty years ago? The kids have flown the coop. They have no interest whatsoever in acquiring a deeply Christian style of life. Well, this might be the case. But let's face it, the new generation of young parents needs to be exposed to these ideas.

What are some of the values that the young ones need to receive? Well, let's start with a life of prayer. We cannot imagine how much our Father God longs to hear from us each day through our prayer. You may have heard that St. Josemaria insisted often that, "We need to help young people become souls of prayer or we will have wasted our time lamentably." Granted, this consideration of Opus Dei's Founder was made in the context of giving formation to high school students. But, it can still make us realize the importance of putting much effort into instilling a deep life of piety at an early age.

Realizing that each of us is a child of God will lead us to see everyone else around us as a brother, as a sister. As one author puts it, "The answer of Jesus to the question, who is my neighbor, demolishes the walls imprisoning our heart. We are then faced with a boundless charity, a charity limited neither by bonds of blood nor any natural community, nor a specific affinity to another person. And this Christian charity then will show in the tone of dinner table conversations." What a powerful opportunity to convey to the young ones your greatness of heart. May your conversation be uplifting, positive, and open to different viewpoints because if it is, as the months and years go by, the children will absorb that vision of those around them and that vision of world events.

Another consequence of our divine filiation is the awareness that we have a deep need to serve others. Each of you can no doubt think of thoughtful and generous gestures that you can make to other family members or neighbors. It is vitally important that the young ones learn to put down their toys and do a favor for their grandparents, for example.

Another key aspect of divine filiation within the family setting, what is God's plan for each one of us? One day a young girl was sitting pensively and suddenly piped up and asked her mother what she should become when she got older. Her mother looked at her thoughtfully and then said, well, that's the kind of question you need to ask God because he is the one who made you. That little girl never forgot that answer. Our divine filiation will fill us with great confidence because we know

who we are, members of the royal household. For that reason, there's no need to imitate the way others dress or behave.

We were saying at the beginning of this meditation that our faith provides so many more dimensions to our existence. Let us ask God right now to expand our vision of the family so that we can inject into our daily interactions with the children a sense of adventure. We will then be equipped to transmit so much through those daily gestures, conversations, trips to the hardware store, and so forth.

Illness is a universal experience. When someone in the family becomes sick, we can show the young ones how a child of God responds to an unexpected curveball. A soul of faith accepts rather than rebels. It will be helpful to call to mind these words of St. Josemaria regarding sickness. As you know, he was intimately familiar with illness. And so, he wrote in a collection of homilies called *Friends of God*, "When we are sick, we can get very tiresome. We can end up thinking, they aren't looking after me properly, nobody cares about me. I'm not getting the attention I deserve. Nobody understands me. The devil, who is always on the lookout, can attack from any angle. When people are ill, the devil's tactics consist in stirring up a kind of psychosis so that in order to draw them away from God and fill the atmosphere with bitterness. Therefore, if God wills that we be struck down by some affliction, take it as a sign that he considers us mature enough to be associated even more closely with his redeeming Cross."

Well, finally, for those of you who have reached this point in the meditation, a little added attraction. After all, we are coming to an end of the year of *Amoris Laetitia*, the *Year of the Family*. There is a remarkable consideration at the very end of *Amoris Laetitia*. I offer this just as a little appetizer because the entire paragraph is rather long and quite- quite fruitful. The Holy Father writes speaking about the concept of what he calls healthy autonomy: "There comes a point where a couple's love attains the height of its freedom and becomes the basis of a healthy autonomy. This happens when each spouse realizes that the other is not his or her own but as a much more important master, the One Lord. No one but God can presume to take over the deepest and most personal core of the loved one. God alone can be the ultimate center of their life."

Well, speaking of our divine filiation and of the family, we turn to the Mother of God as we finish this time of prayer. Mary, we ask you to help us to go into the deep, even deeper, to help us to see on a daily basis the enormous opportunities we have to develop a genuine Christian style of life. And in so doing, to seek sanctity, to reach the heights of sanctity ourselves, and to make it that much more easy for those around us to become holy.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. God bless you.



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