

Catechesis in preparation for the  
**10th World Meeting of Families**

Rome June 22-26, 2022



**“Fathers and mothers”**

Catechesis No. 5

## Fathers and mothers

### The power of a love that generates

The path to holiness taken by a father or mother involves growing in their love for each other and in the love they give to their children.

There is such a beautiful and powerful calling in becoming fathers and mothers. This call consists in **sharing with God the power of a love that generates life**, in the flesh and in the spirit. The call lasts a lifetime and under all circumstances. The love of a man and a woman is always fruitful, even when there are no children or when the parents become elderly. In fact, spouses can always create children of God.

### A merciful and gracious love

In the book of Exodus, after the Jewish people had worshipped the golden calf, the Lord revealed to Moses the quality of His Love:

*«Having come down in a cloud, the LORD stood with him there and proclaimed his name, "LORD." Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, **a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity**, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin" » (Ex 34:5-7).*

Let us dwell on these two words: *merciful* and *gracious*. In Hebrew, these are *raham* and *hesed*; both mean love, mercy, but with important differences that can give us insight into what the path to holiness is like, through the love of a father and mother.

*Hesed* is the most commonly used term in the Old Testament for mercy and love. It means tenderness made up of faithfulness, assurance, initiative and trust that affirms and accompanies, that does not abandon, that remains steady, that conveys reassurance.

*Raham* comes from "*rehem*" which in Hebrew means the womb, the place in which the life of the child is formed and grows: it is a love that forms the body, that preserves, that protects, that nourishes and welcomes the existence of another person.

Two dimensions of God's love are thus revealed to us: one that is paternal-masculine and another that is maternal-feminine. Masculine love is imbued with a tender but powerful, operational energy; feminine love, on the other hand, generates, builds and nourishes from a visceral bond. Mother and father are for their children the manifestation of this love.

*« The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For **as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him**; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*





**As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; or he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust» (Psalm 103:8-14).**

The love of a father and a mother eager to embrace their call to holiness, goes so far as to perform acts that only God is capable of: to **create** and **forgive**.

In the Old Testament, in fact, two actions are reserved exclusively to God: 'creating' [br'] and 'forgiving' [slh].

Every time a father and mother welcome a life and cherish it, every time they forgive each other and resume their journey, **they bring Heaven to earth**. For in that moment it is the Holy Spirit who has acted in them.

*«The first need, then, is precisely this: **that a father be present in the family**. That he be close to his wife, to share everything, joy and sorrow, hope and hardship. And that he be close to his children as they grow: when they play and when they strive, when they are carefree and when they are distressed, when they are talkative and when they are silent, when they are daring and when they are afraid, when they take a wrong step and when they find their path again; a father who is always present. To say "present" is not to say "controlling"! Fathers who are too controlling cancel out their children, they don't let them develop. [...] A good father **knows how to wait and knows how to forgive** from the depths of his heart. Certainly, he also knows how to correct with firmness: he is not a weak father, submissive and sentimental. The father who **knows how to correct without humiliating** is the one who knows how to protect without sparing himself»<sup>1</sup>.*

*«Being a mother doesn't only mean bringing a child to the world, but it is also a life choice. What does a mother choose, what is the life choice of a mother? The life choice of a mother is **the choice to give life**.*

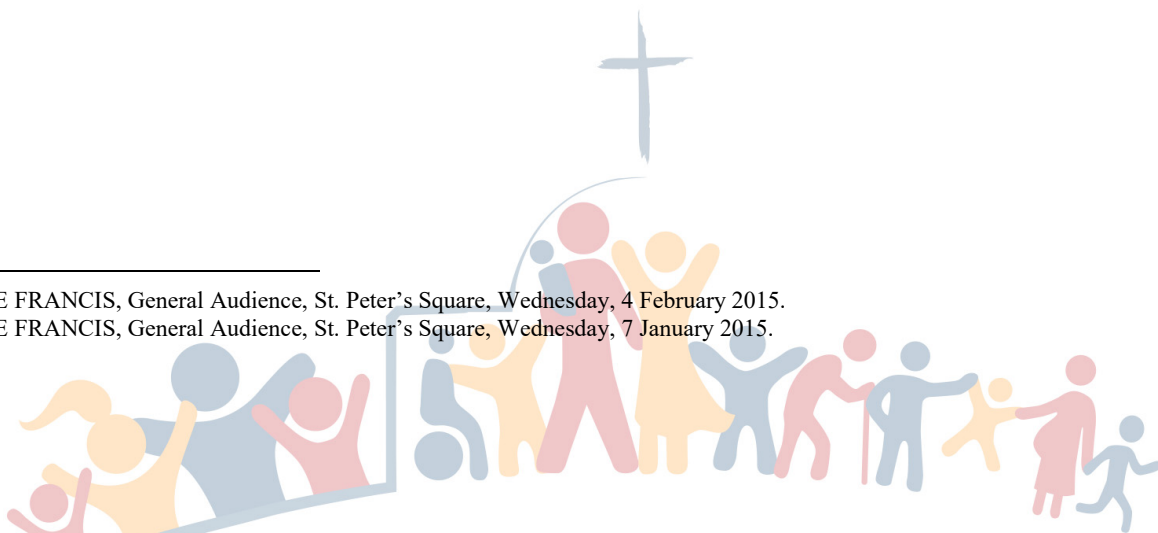
*And this is great, this is beautiful.*

*A society without mothers would be a dehumanized society, for mothers are always, even in the worst moments, witnesses of **tenderness, dedication and moral strength**. Mothers often pass on the deepest sense of religious practice: in a human being's life, the value of faith is inscribed in the first prayers, the first acts of devotion that a child learns. It is a message that believing mothers are able to pass on without much explanation: these come later, but the seed of faith is those early precious moments. Without mothers, not only would there be no new faithful, but the faith would lose a good part of its simple and profound warmth»<sup>2</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 4 February 2015.

<sup>2</sup> POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 7 January 2015.





**It is advisable that each person have the time to reread the catechesis, and to reflect on what resonates in his or her heart in a particular manner.**

**Points of discussion for couples/for families and within the community**

- Let us reread the words of Pope Francis and reflect on our being a father or a mother.
- The love of a married couple also bears fruit in generating God's children, in being spiritual fathers and mothers of their own children and of every person we meet, giving them the tender, welcoming, firm and sure Love of God the Father. Who are the spiritual children that God is entrusting to us at this moment of our lives?

**For more details:**

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150204\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150204_udienza-generale.html)

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150107\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150107_udienza-generale.html)





## Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

Heavenly Father,  
We come before You to praise You  
and to thank You for the great gift of the family.  
We pray to You for all families  
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.  
May they rediscover each day  
the grace they have received,  
and as small domestic Churches,  
may they know how to witness to Your presence  
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.  
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering  
caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.  
Sustain them and make them aware  
of the path to holiness upon which You call them,  
so that they might experience Your infinite mercy  
and find new ways to grow in love.  
We pray to You for children and young people:  
may they encounter You and respond joyfully  
to the vocation You have in mind for them;  
We pray for parents and grandparents: may they be aware  
that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God  
in caring for the children who, in body and spirit, You entrust to them;  
and for the experience of fraternity  
that the family can give to the world.  
Lord, grant that each family  
might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church  
as a call to become missionary disciples,  
in the service of life and peace,  
in communion with our priests, religious,  
and all vocations in the Church.  
Bless the World Meeting of Families.  
Amen.

Official prayer for the *X World Meeting of Families*  
22-26 June 2022

