

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

Rome June 22-26, 2022



**« May I, thank you, pardon me »**

Catechesis No. 7

## «May I, thank you, pardon me»

«Indeed, these expressions open up the way to living well in your family, to living in peace. They are simple expressions, but not so simple to put into practice! They hold much power: **the power to keep home life intact even when tested with a thousand problems**. But if they are absent, little holes can start to crack open and the whole thing may even collapse»<sup>1</sup>.

As we can see from experience, the life of every family is not characterized only by wonderful and enlightening moments. Often, in fact, the difficulties and trials of life and history make the experiences of families dark and difficult. Sometimes it is because they struggle to live together, sometimes because their relationships are not always easy and carefree, sometimes because the couple's relationship goes through moments of disappointment and frustration and the relationship between the spouses is marked by «*a thousand forms of abuse and subjugation, misleading seduction and humiliating ignorance, even the most dramatic and violent kind*»<sup>2</sup>.

In order to obtain the fullness of Love it is necessary to follow a slow and gradual path, which is most often tiring and demanding, and which requires a process of growth in which each day one must humbly and perseveringly accept the Grace of Christ. This Grace, which husband and wife already invoke on the day of their Matrimony as an essential element of their union, is the principal support of spouses. It is only with Christ's help that one can in fact come to love fully, to renounce to continual demands, to reject the ambition of controlling every aspect of reality, to leave aside the desire to dominate the lives of others. Only He has the power to "change the hearts of human beings and render man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us" (cf. FC 13). In fact, it is in the nature of Love (Christ) to always go beyond oneself, to love the other person with all his or her limits and respect his or her freedom.

If this is fundamental in every human relationship, it becomes even more so in the family: none of us alone are enough for ourselves. In fact, we are in such a condition of fragility that we constantly need to be supported in the fight against our own *ego*, which struggles to be self-giving and recognize its very limits.

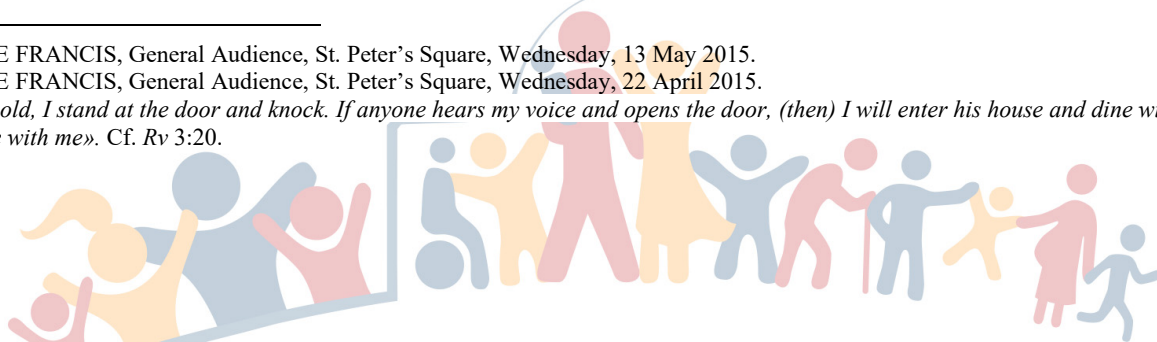
By embracing these three words - **may I, thank you, pardon me** - each member of the family is in a position to **recognize his or her own limits**. Acknowledging one's own weakness leads each of us to not dominate over the other, rather to be respectful and not claim possession over him or her.

*May I, thank you and pardon me* are three very simple words, that guide us in taking very concrete steps along the path of holiness and in growing in love. Besides, they were words typical of the style of Jesus Christ, who *asks permission to enter*<sup>3</sup>, who continually thanks the Father, who teaches us to pray, saying: «forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us» (Mt 6:10).

<sup>1</sup> POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 13 May 2015.

<sup>2</sup> POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 22 April 2015.

<sup>3</sup> «Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me». Cf. Rv 3:20.





**Accepting that we alone are not enough for ourselves and leaving a place for others** is the way to live not only love in the family, but the experience of faith as well.

Besides, every human being has been *wounded by love* during their life. Even in the family it can occur that words, actions or omissions have deeply *mortified love*.

Generally speaking, such an attitude or behavior that is created between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, between uncles and aunts, between grandparents and grandchildren, instead of expressing love, can harm or even destroy it.

It must also be noted that there are some wounds, such as illness and grief that are beyond our control, leaving us powerless and often deeply troubled.

These are experiences that sometimes seem to contradict God's promises and to deny His infinite and eternal Love. However, when lived in faith and openness to others, they are just as many opportunities for feeling loved and cared for by God and by others and being the object of their attention.

These are often difficult and painful moments, but they also turn out to be favorable privileged periods in which the Lord comes to visit us, because *«the love of Jesus was in giving health, doing good: this always takes priority!»*<sup>4</sup>.

Each of these hard, difficult and painful experiences become the concrete example of our path to holiness; opportunities that do not prevent us from loving anyhow and from remaining in His love.

However, without presumptions: the vulnerability and hardship of existence are embedded in life and do not allow us to move easily and quickly towards magical or unrealistic solutions. We need to be helped and to help.

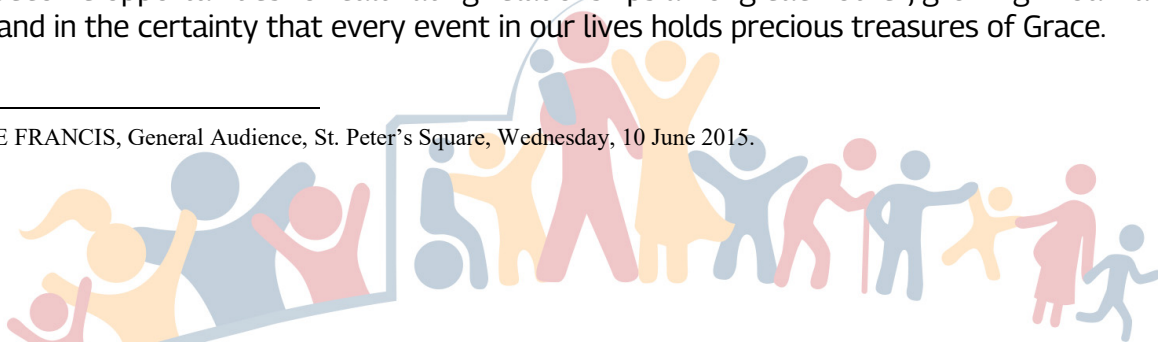
In the midst of this hardship, the Holy Spirit accompanies us and does so many times thanks to our family members, our friends, and the people who show us their love: the endurance of love is the beginning of hope and makes us desire that the very Lord manifest Himself as the Love we need most.

*«Set me as a seal on your heart,  
as a seal on your arm;  
**For stern as death is love,  
relentless as the nether world is devotion;**  
its flames are a blazing fire.  
Deep waters cannot quench love,  
nor floods sweep it away» (Song 8:6-7).*

The faith and charity of the Gospel are not life guarantees, nor do they preserve us from the suffering and pain that characterize human existence. They do not ensure our immunity from evil and hardship. Rather, they are a light that brightens our lives in moments of darkness and affliction. Therefore, even the most painful and sad situations, lived in unison with Jesus Christ, can become opportunities for cultivating relationships among each other, growing in our faith in God and in the certainty that every event in our lives holds precious treasures of Grace.

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<sup>4</sup> POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 10 June 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**

- Give examples where we could learn to say in our families:
  - May I
  - Thank you
  - Pardon me
- When did I say, "May I", "thank you", "pardon me" today?

### **Points of discussion within the community**

- Are we capable of saying "May I," "thank you," "pardon me" in our community, in our relationships with one another?

### **For more details:**

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150513\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150513_udienza-generale.html)

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150422\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150422_udienza-generale.html)

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150610\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150610_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

