

***Amoris Laetitia* - The Joy of Love**

Beginning this month, we will be sharing articles on the post-Synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* - The Joy of Love, on love in the family, signed on March 19th, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, which brings together the results of the two Synods on the family convoked by Pope Francis in 2014 and 2015.

Introduction

The Apostolic Exhortation is striking for its breadth and detail. Its 325 paragraphs are distributed over nine chapters. The seven introductory paragraphs plainly outline the complexity of a topic in urgent need of thorough study. While the interventions of the Synod Fathers form a “multifaceted gem” whose value must be preserved, the Pope cautions that “not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium”. Indeed, for some questions, each country or region can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs. In his address at the end of the 2015 Synod, the Pope said very clearly: “What seems normal for a bishop on one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous for a bishop from another; what is considered a violation of a right in one society is an evident and inviolable rule in another; what for some is freedom of conscience is for others simply confusion”. Indeed, the Pope clearly states that we need to avoid demands for change and the general application of abstract norms. He writes: “The debates carried on in the media, in certain publications and even among the Church’s ministers, range from an immoderate desire for total change without sufficient reflection or grounding, to an attitude that would solve everything by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations”.

Chapter One: In the light of the Word

Following this introduction, the Pope begins his reflections with the Holy Scriptures in the first chapter, which unfolds as a meditation on Psalm 128: *“Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways. You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel”* (Psalm 128: 1-6). Because the Bible “is full of families, births, love stories and family crises”, this impels us to meditate on how the family is not an abstract ideal but rather like a practical “trade”, which is carried out with tenderness, but which has also been confronted with sin from the beginning. Thus, the Word of God “is not a series of abstract ideas but rather a source of comfort and companionship for every family that experiences difficulties or suffering for it shows them the goal of their journey.”