

Amoris Laetitia - Chapter Five: "Love Made Fruitful"

In chapter five the Holy Father speaks in both a spiritual and psychological tone about welcoming new life, about the waiting, expectant time of pregnancy, about the love of a mother and a father.

The Pope states: "For 'children are a gift. Each one is unique and irreplaceable... We love our children because they are children, not because they are beautiful, or look or think as we do, or embody our dreams. We love them because they are children'" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 170).

"Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism... It is they who testify to the beauty of life". Certainly, "a society without mothers would be dehumanized, for mothers are always, even in the worst of times, witnesses to tenderness, dedication and moral strength. ... Without mothers, not only would there be no new faithful, but the faith itself would lose a good part of its simple and profound warmth... Dear mothers: thank you! Thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the Church and the world" (AL, 174).

We often hear that ours is 'a society without fathers'. In Western culture, the father figure is said to be symbolically absent, missing or vanished. Manhood itself seems to be called into question" (AL, 176).

God sets the father in the family so that by the gifts of his masculinity he can be "close to his wife and share everything, joy and sorrow, hope and hardship. And to be close to his children as they grow – when they play and when they work, 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 stray and when they get back on the right path". ... It is not good for children to lack a father and to grow up before they are ready (AL, 177).

Pope Francis also speaks of the expanded fruitfulness of adoption, inviting families to promote a "culture of encounter."

Adoption is a very generous way to become parents. I encourage those who cannot have children to expand their marital love to embrace those who lack a proper family situation. They will never regret having been generous. Adopting a child is an act of love, offering the gift of a family to someone who has none (AL, 179).

He also speaks of family life in a broad sense, which includes aunts and uncles, cousins, relatives of relatives, and friends. Beyond the so-called "nuclear" family, the Holy Father sees the family as a network of many relationships. "The nuclear family needs to interact with the wider family made up of parents, aunts and uncles, cousins and even neighbours. This greater family may have members who require assistance, or at least companionship and affection, or consolation amid suffering" (AL, 187).

For him, the spirituality of marriage has a deeply social character. And within this social dimension Pope Francis emphasizes the specific relationship between youth and the elderly, as well as the relationship between siblings as a training ground for relating with others.

We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elderly feel like the living part of the community. Our elderly are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life. Indeed, "how I would like a Church that challenges the throw-away culture by the overflowing joy of a new embrace between young and old" (AL, 191).

Father Julian Bilyj