

A Concrete Proposal To Be A “Domestic Church”

« The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families,
with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes»
(*Amoris Laetitia*, 315)

A Hidden Treasure

In the Church we've a hidden treasure: the family. The Lord has always accompanied every crisis of his people with extraordinary messages and seems to do so also in the face of this pandemic, which compels all of us to a forcefully isolation in our homes. Celebrations are suspended, many Churches are closed and anyway it is risky to reach them. We feel alone, isolated and it is precisely in this isolation that the Spirit suggests us to rediscover the sacrament of marriage, by virtue of which our homes, due to the constant presence of Christ in the consecrated relationship of the spouses, are small domestic Churches.

Christ's Presence

In fact, in their homes the spouses guarantee the presence of Jesus twenty-four hours a day. A truth that Pope Francis emphasizes in *Amoris Laetitia* at nr. 67: «Christ the Lord 'makes himself present to the Christian spouses in the sacrament of marriage' (48) and remains with them». Jesus does not leave, but remains with the spouses and he is present in their home not only when they are gathered and pray, but at all times.

Christ's Body

By virtue of this reality, we can put to fruit this particular time as the time in which every Christian family can rediscover what it is: a genuine manifestation of the mystery, which is *the Church as the body of Christ*. In fact, the spouses "build up the Body of Christ and form a domestic Church " (*Amoris Laetitia* 67). Each family is an essential part of this body, which is built starting from the small daily gestures, where Jesus is permanently present.

Time of Training

It is a *time of training*, that the Lord is offering us, waiting to defeat this evil. A time in which, living close in our homes, we are called to do continuous exercises of love. How many times a day in these hours the Lord gives us the opportunity to look with tenderness at our children, with loving patience at our spouse; to moderate the tone of the voice even if an unexpected untidiness reigns around us; to educate our children to a good use of this dilated time at home, which seems never to pass; to educate them to a dialogue made of listening given to others, of inner calm, of respect, even if the other is different from what I would like him to be? This is a time of growth for each of us, in which we've to learn to mark the rhythm of the days, no longer controlled by the hectic work and family management dominated by "doing".

It's a time given to our ability to leave space to the other within the narrow walls of our homes. How important it is, in this new dimension in which we are thrown, that husband and wife are able to look each other in the eyes and talk to each other, planning together the hours of the day, aware that into their home there is an amazing Presence that springs from their relationship: Jesus. Because this is not only a human training time, but also a spiritual one. It is a time of pre-evangelization, in our home and through our home, as in the time of the first Christian communities, during which the Lord invites us to gather as families, to pray together, around a burning candle, to remind us that there is Someone who holds us together and who, in this situation of bewilderment, loves us. A time that will then allow us to return to celebrate in the Churches, more aware and stronger of the presence of Jesus in our daily lives.

Domestic liturgy

Let us therefore strive to grasp the invitation that the Lord addresses us in our homes: let us gather as a family, on Sunday, to celebrate in a more solemn way that *domestic liturgy* which usually, by virtue of the presence of Jesus, takes place through the gestures between the spouses (signs of love shown throughout married life become an "uninterrupted continuity of liturgical language" and "conjugal life becomes in a certain sense liturgical" ». *Amoris Laetitia* 215)

How to do it is simple: we can gather all together in a room, recite a Psalm of praise, ask each other for forgiveness with a word or a gesture between spouses and between parents and children, read the Sunday Gospel, express a thought on what the Gospel inspires in each one, to formulate a prayer for the needs of the family, of those we love, of the Church and of the world. Finally, entrust to the care of Mary our family and every family we know.

All families can do this, because Jesus said: "where there are two or three gathered in my name, there I am among them" Mt 18,20. And why not trying to make community, praying on Sundays with other families, on Skype, or with other audio or video conferencing systems, taking advantage of modern technology? We can take turns making our children read, or alternating the voices of couples and families connected.

Paschal Mystery

Let us remember that the spouses are the sign of the Paschal Mystery that is celebrated in every Eucharist («The married couple are therefore a permanent reminder for the Church of what took place on the cross» *Amoris Laetitia*, 72); they are prophecy, announcement incarnated in a daily life made of small gestures, which express the gift of the self, as Jesus did. Let us take advantage of this somewhat strange time to welcome and live the Spirit in our homes and rediscover the wealth and the gift of our domestic Churches together with Jesus, who lives with us.

+ Kevin Card. Farrell

Prefect

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