

The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Family

Q. 233. What is the purpose of conjugal love and family life?

Conjugal love, and the family life which results from it, have this purpose: that the married couple be ready to cooperate generously with the love of the Creator and the Savior, Who through them will increase and enrich His own family day by day.

The most complete expression of the unity of the spouses is the sexual act, the fulfillment of the mutual love which Jesus so desires for them. The union of husband and wife in Christian marriage reflects the union between the risen Christ and His Church.

The married couple has the responsibility to determine, in the light of all the circumstances of their married life, what is the unique creative partnership that God invites them to share with Him. With an attitude of openness for life, they plan their family through a conscientious assessment of what they can do to further the good of their whole family and of society.

In this task, couples are helped by prayer, the Church's teachings, their own knowledge of themselves and their family situation, and the example of other faithful Christians. As in all of life's decisions, here too, the spouses should pray and make their decisions according to well-informed Christian consciences.

Sacred Scripture

And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." *Genesis 1:28*

Choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days. *Deuteronomy 30:19-20*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2370 Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality.¹ These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. In contrast, "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil:² "Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality... The difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle... involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality."³

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr: John Vianney and Fr: Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

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Vatican Council II

In virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony by which they signify and share (cf. Eph. 5:32) the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing of their children. Hence by reason of their state in life and of their position they have their own gifts in the People of God. (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7) From the marriage of Christians there comes the family in which new citizens of human society are born and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, those are made children of God so that the People of God may be perpetuated throughout the centuries. *The Church, 11*

As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society. It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism. In it, also, they will have their first experience of a well-balanced human society and of the Church. Finally it is through the family that they are gradually initiated into association with their fellow-men in civil life and as members of the People of God. Parents should, therefore, appreciate how important a role the truly Christian family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God. *Christian Education, 3*

Summary Prayer

God of goodness and mercy, to Your fatherly protection we commend our family, our household, and all that belongs to us. We entrust all of them to Your love and keeping. Fill our home with Your blessings as You filled the Holy House of Nazareth with Your presence. Above all else, keep far from us the stain of sin. We want You alone to reign over us. Help each one of us to obey Your holy laws, love You sincerely, and imitate Your example, the

example of Mary, Your Mother and ours, and the example of Your holy guardian, Saint Joseph. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Q. 234. What is every family's calling?

Every family's calling is to share their lives with one another, with deep love and respect according to the Will of God. The family, or the domestic church, is the most sacred of all societies. In His love for us, God gives us life and the care we need as children through our parents. Character, beliefs, thoughts, and virtues should be nurtured by good, loving parents. The family members form a community and share their lives together on a deep, personal level. Through a truly Christian marriage, the family can function perfectly as a community which is open to the Church and to the world. Although problems and misunderstandings should be expected in sacramental marriage, for it is a union of two sinful human beings, Christ gives husband and wife the power to deal with these tensions, and the grace to destroy the sins which cause them.

Sacred Scripture

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. *Colossians 3:18-21*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2226 *Education in the faith* by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.¹ The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.



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For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr: John Vianney and Fr: Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 234. Eph 4:1-3; 1 Pet 3:8-9.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 234. Paragraphs 1646-1651, 2201-2206, 2214-2225, 2227-2231, 2364-2365.

Vatican Council II

The family is the place where different generations come together and help one another to grow wiser and harmonize the rights of individuals with other demands of social life; as such it constitutes the basis of society. Everyone, therefore, who exercises an influence in the community and in social groups should devote himself effectively to the welfare of marriage and the family. *Modern World*, 52

Summary Prayer

Lord, preserve us and our home from all evils and misfortunes, but grant that we may be ever resigned to Your divine will, even in the sorrows which it may please You to send us or in any crosses You may permit to come to us, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Q. 235. How does the Christian family show the Savior's living presence in the world?

The Christian family shows the Savior's living presence in the world through (1) the mutual love of the husband and wife, (2) the spouses' generous fruitfulness, (3) their fidelity and unity, and (4) the loving relationships among its members.

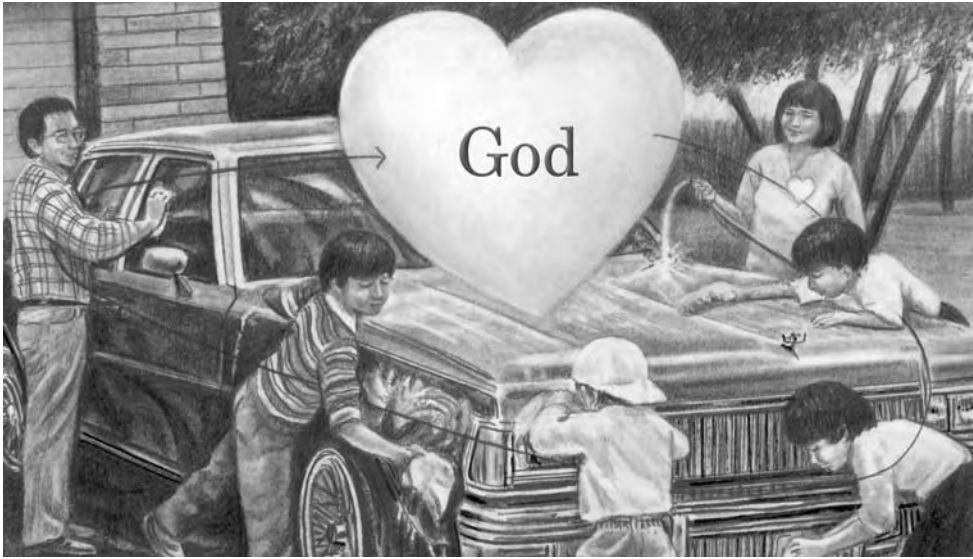
1. The Christian family shows the Savior's living presence in the world through the mutual love of husband and wife.

The sacrament of Matrimony is a life-long partnership of love. Since our Lord raised Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament for the baptized, the spouses, living in Christ's grace, imitate and represent Christ's love for His Church. By their love for each other, they manifest to the world our Savior's living presence.

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2. The Christian family shows the Savior's living presence in the world through the spouses' generous fruitfulness.

Children are the greatest blessing in the sacrament of Matrimony. They enrich the love of husbands and wives and so fulfill one of the purposes of Matrimony.

The Holy Spirit unites man and woman in the sacrament of Matrimony, and consecrates them so that they may bring Christ's three-fold mission of prophet, king and priest into family life. The spouses build up the Church by teaching, guiding, and sanctifying their children and one another. If husbands and wives cooperate generously with God according to His will by enlarging His family on earth, they will be blessed in this life and especially in heaven. Their fruitfulness is a sign of Christ's presence in the world.

3. The Christian family shows the Savior's living presence in the world through the spouses' fidelity and unity.

Through their loving union and faithful love, Christian marriage teaches the importance of self-giving and sacrifice. When the spouses are of one mind and heart, a caring atmosphere is created for the raising and educating of children. Witnessing the loving union and fidelity of their parents, children are taught to cooperate with and have concern for others. This can be accomplished only with the help of Christ's grace.

In order to carry on Christ's mission, couples must strive to be truly united, as one in Christ. They can grow closer to each other with the help of actual graces of the Holy Spirit, given in the sacrament of Matrimony. The Spirit gives them power to be faithfully dedicated to each other and to overcome any obstacles to their unity, obstacles such as indifference to each other's needs, hurting each other's feelings, and failing to understand.

4. The Christian family shows the Savior's living presence in the world by the loving relationships among its members.

Anything expressive of love is already a reaching out to God. God uses our efforts of self-giving within the family to draw us ever more deeply into His own life.

In making it a sacrament, our Lord gave Matrimony a new beauty and a new power to sanctify. Sacramental marriage is not merely the lawful union of man and wife; it is a source of holiness—a means of closer union of a man and woman with God, and with each other. This union of husband and wife is a life-giving union which imparts grace to them and to their children. As the Christian family lives together in loving support of one another, they bring Christ's living presence into the world.

Sacred Scripture

Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays he will be heard. Whoever glorifies his father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother; he will serve his parents as his masters. Honor your father by word and deed, that a blessing from him may come upon you." *Sirach 3:3-8*

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother...", that it may be well with you and that you may live long on earth." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. *Ephesians 6:1-4*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2205 The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.



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Vatican Council II

The mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family by God himself. This mission will be accomplished if the family, by the mutual affection of its members and by family prayer, presents itself as a domestic sanctuary of the Church; if the whole family takes its part in the Church's liturgical worship; if, finally, it offers active hospitality, and practices justice and other good works for the benefit of all its brothers suffering from want. *Lay People, 11*

The Christian family springs from marriage, which is an image and a sharing in the partnership of love between Christ and the Church; it will show forth to all men Christ's living presence in the world and the authentic nature of the Church by the love and generous fruitfulness of the spouses, by their unity and fidelity, and by the loving way in which all members of the family cooperate with each other. *Modern World, 48*

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. In what ways does the Christian family show the living presence of Christ in the world?
2. How can you help your family become a more loving and caring community?
3. On Sundays, try to attend Mass as a whole family, spend time with each other at home, and reach out to other families.

#M5-20

**Chapter Summary Prayer**

Jesus, bless and protect our family. Mary, Mother of grace and mercy, defend us against the wicked spirits, reconcile us with your Son, and entrust us to His keeping, that we may be made worthy of His promises.

Give all of us the grace to live in perfect harmony and charity toward our neighbors. Grant that every one of us may deserve, by a holy life, the comfort of the holy sacraments at the hour of death.

Saint Joseph, foster-father of our Savior; guardian of His holy Mother; head of the Holy Family, intercede for us, bless us, and defend our home at all times. Saint Michael, defend us against all evil that might threaten our souls. Saint Gabriel, make us understand the holy will of God. Saint Raphael, keep us free from all sickness and from every danger to our lives. Our holy Guardian Angels, keep us safely on the path of salvation. Our holy Patrons, pray for us at the throne of God.

Bless our home, God the Father, Who created us, God the Son, Who suffered for us upon the Cross, and God the Holy Spirit, Who sanctified us in Baptism. May the one God in three divine Persons preserve our bodies, purify our minds, direct our hearts, and bring us all to everlasting life.

Lord, our God, we offer You our hearts, united in the strongest and most sincere love. We pray that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar may be the daily food of our souls and bodies, and that Jesus may be the center of our affections, just as He was for Mary and Joseph. Finally, Lord, let sin never disturb our union on earth. May we be eternally united in heaven with You and all Your saints. Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son, and glory be to the Holy Spirit! Amen.

#F1-69



Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 65

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 233. What is the purpose of conjugal love and family life?

Gospel of Life, John Paul II, sect. 26;

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11;

On Human Work, John Paul II, sect. 19;

On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 39;

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 40;

The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, John Paul II, sect. 3, 11-22, 28;

To the Youth of the World, John Paul II, sect. 10.

Q. 234. What is every family's calling?

Catechesis in Our Time, John Paul II, sect. 68;

Gospel of Life, John Paul II, sect. 11;

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 40, 59;

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), *Vatican II*, sect. 11;

On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 71;

The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, John Paul II, sect. 3, 17-23, 25-29, 31-63.

Q. 235. How does the Christian family show the Savior's living presence in the world?

On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 21;

On Reconciliation and Penance, John Paul II, sect. 12;

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 40.

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), *Vatican II*, sect. 11;

The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, John Paul II, sect. 49-55.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 233: The bishop of a diocese is the principal person responsible for the pastoral care of families. Why?
- Q. 234: A. Isn't it true that many apparently sacramental unions have been declared invalid by Church courts?
B. Shouldn't invalid unions be made valid whenever possible?
- Q. 235: A. How important is family prayer?
B. What type of prayer or prayers are appropriate for families?
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