VIRTUES OF FAMILY LIFE FROM SAINT PAUL'S EPISTLE

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Beloved in Christ the Lord! Today, on the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, a feast that reminds us that the human family, which has its source already in the natural law, is a union of a man and a woman whose purpose is to ensure the survival of the human race and the raising of children. Thanks to the mystery of the Incarnation of the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, this union has been raised to the dignity of the sacrament of matrimony, through which the spouses are to sanctify one another, and at the same time to provide for the populating of the kingdom of heaven, by raising their children in the holy Catholic faith.

And as soon as we realize how fundamental a significance the family, and marriage, has in God's order, in God's plan, it becomes clear to us that, as part of this divine order, the family is hated by the evil spirit. This community, which was sanctified by the 30 years of the so-called hidden life of our Lord Jesus Christ in Nazareth, is constantly the object of attacks by Satan and his servants. And so it should not surprise us Catholics that again and again new diabolical assaults appear whose aim is the destruction of the family. And these assaults, my dear brethren, as you can see perfectly well all around you, have in recent years grown extraordinarily in strength. Today we observe practically every day how the marriage vow is treated lightly and trampled underfoot, how men grow effeminate and women lose their feminine gentleness, how parents teach their children evil and children despise their parents.

THE CROSS OF MARRIAGE

Dear faithful, we Catholics, on this Feast of the Holy Family, should remember that marriage and the raising of children is a cross, that it involves a series of sacrifices and difficulties, that it requires the taming of our human pride. And this cross of married and family life may with the passing years become heavier and heavier, ever harder to bear. And then Satan attacks us human beings all the more, and whispers into our ear an encouragement to rebellion, to rejecting this cross, to trampling on the marriage vow, to despising the duties that parents have toward their children, and children toward their parents.

Can we save ourselves from this? Is it still possible in the twenty-first century for our families to be Catholic, to be God's? Most certainly yes, my dear

Why is this happening? Dear faithful, we must realize that the modern world, and together with it the Bergoglian neo-church, present to people a completely false and erroneous vision of marriage and the family, a vision of marriage and the family straight out of Disneyland. And so, my dear brethren, the family in the understanding of modern man is a union of two persons, no longer of a man and a woman, a union of two persons which is formed on the basis of feelings, emotions, and also the equality of the sexes, the sexes which after all were created by God as entirely distinct and at the same time complementary, sexes which are by their nature different. As for the raising of children, as you see perfectly well, today's liberal ideologues no longer want to raise them, no longer want to show children that they are to use their reason to seek the truth and their will to choose what is good. Today, my dear brethren, children are not raised but bred like animals, without any principles, without any reference to truth, to the moral law.

And so, my dear brethren, we are surrounded by a world that we could call one great pathology, because when feelings end, when desire ends, one can then without any problem, to the applause of this world, replace one's partner, for that is how one should speak of a spouse according to the rules of political correctness, simply with another, new model. When a child does wrong, the parent has no right whatsoever to chastise him or admonish him. And when a parent falls ill and becomes a burden, the child has every right to put such a parent to death, so that he does not stand in the way of his enjoying the pleasures of this world.

brethren, because God's grace works even in the greatest darkness. And a help to all who lead married and family life is today's lesson taken from the Epistle of Saint Paul, a lesson in which the holy Apostle describes in a few concise sentences the virtues of family life, virtues that are indispensable if families are to live according to God's will, to grow in holiness, to have God's peace reign in them, peace.

And so Saint Paul calls us to be full of tender mercy. Look, my dear brethren: God knows perfectly well that we are all weak, that our human nature has been crippled by original sin, and we feel so painfully every day the consequences of this original sin, the weakening of our human nature. And yet we so often forget our human weakness, and after all neither we nor those closest to us are either saints or angels. Our weaknesses and imperfections, which we manage somehow to mask and hide from the outside world — we are really quite good at it — in family life unfortunately come to the surface and often become very painful and burdensome for those closest to us. And that is why our human weaknesses so often lead to quarrels, to misunderstandings. And rightly the holy Apostle calls on us: "Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another: even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also." Every day you repeat in the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." If God forgives us, then we too have the duty to forgive those who have done us wrong, but who are sorry for that wrong and apologize for it.

We must remember that mercy, true mercy, does not consist in accepting evil. That is why Saint Paul speaks of another virtue, kindness, that is, the desire for the good. True love for parents and for children does not consist in permitting, in accepting their sins. On the contrary, my dear brethren: in family life the same rules bind us that apply to our relations with our neighbours, with all neighbours, that is: sinners are to be admonished, the ignorant instructed, and the doubtful given good counsel. For it is so easy, my dear brethren, for us modern Catholics, who remain, whether we want it or not, under the overwhelming influence of the modern liberal world, it is so easy for us to close our eyes to the sins of those closest to us, even the gravest ones. But in this way do we really show them true love of neighbour? Do we do them good in this way? Absolutely not, my dear brethren, because when we confirm them in error, when we allow evil, we become co-responsible for it, and in this way we expose both them and ourselves to God's wrath. Today a warning for all of us is the story of the Old Testament high priest Heli, who did not want to punish his sons for their sins, which grew heavier and heavier, and in the end God punished with death not only the sinful sons but also their father, who neglected to carry out his parental duties.

HUMILITY, PATIENCE, COMMON PRAYER

Dear faithful, since, however, we ourselves are far from perfection, from the holiness to which we should all strive with all our strength, we must remember always to strike first our own breast, and not another's, always to keep before our eyes our own sinfulness and frailty. And hence the further virtues of which the holy Apostle Paul writes: humility, meekness and patience. For there is nothing heavier for a man than life surrounded by proud people, people who see the speck in another's eye but cannot perceive the beam in their own. There is nothing more burdensome and unpleasant for a man than life among spiteful and impatient people, who often mask their spite, impatience and pride with an artificial smile. So many liberals, my dear brethren — look — smile at everyone every day, try to be nice and sweet, but as soon as they hear something about God, about the moral law, they turn into predatory wolves who can leap at your throat and tear you apart.

Remember, then, that a gentle and humble man will always be the heart of the family, because he does not seek his own good but cares with true love for his neighbours. Without humility, without patience, without forbearance, no one will be able to keep faithful to the marriage vow made before God's altar: "I promise you marital love, fidelity and honesty, and that I will not leave you until death."

My dear ones, gazing today at the Holy Family of Nazareth, let us pray for our families. Let us pray that the members of our families and we ourselves may grow in virtue and holiness, and in this way form a shield that will protect against the attacks of the evil spirit. And may this prayer of ours not be limited only to this Feast of the Holy Family. May this

prayer, my dear brethren, last every day. Best of all, let it be a common prayer, led by the father of the family, who is its head, because a family that prays together will never lack what it needs on the way to heaven, namely God's grace and the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. But where common prayer is lacking, there will live spiritual orphans, whom perhaps a common table may still unite, perhaps a common mortgage, but there will be no God's grace there, without which it is impossible to bear the cross of married and family life.

And so, aware of how much our families are attacked today, how much Satan hates the family as an element of God's order and tries at all costs, by the hands of men, including those who wear chasubles and mitres, to create today a satanic parody, let us raise to heaven today the prayer appointed precisely for this feast of the Holy Family: Lord Jesus Christ, who in obedience to Mary and Joseph hast sanctified family life with ineffable virtues; grant, through the intercession of them both, that we may take example from this Holy Family and at the same time be able to dwell with it forever. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.