

Adult Catechism May 9, 2016

IS MY FAMILY A "SCHOOL OF MERCY"?

Part 1: Scripture Readings:

Hebrews 4: 16: Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Matthew 9: 13: But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Psalms 25: 6-7: Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.

Part 2: COLF (Catholic Organization for Life and Family) MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL WEEK FOR LIFE AND THE FAMILY 8-15 MAY 2016

Every year the Church in Canada sets aside one week as a special time for prayer and reflection on life and the family. During this year of Mercy, it is particularly appropriate that we turn our attention to the privileged role of the family as the first and most important school of mercy – the place where parents sustained by God's grace, are meant to become icons of Divine Mercy.

As followers of Christ, each of us—whatever our vocation—is called to imitate Him in His self-giving merciful love. Yet we can only give away that which we have received. It is God's will that the family be the place where we first encounter unconditional love. Nevertheless, no family is perfect! Only by cultivating an intimate relationship with Christ in prayer and the sacraments, can our weaknesses be healed and our shortcomings overcome, so that we can become the loving and merciful spouses, parents and friends that the Lord calls us to be and on which the future wellbeing of humanity depends. Pope Francis invites us, "Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth . . ."

Recent developments in our country relative to the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide reveal the degree to which we are suffering from a "failure to love" and the very real urgency of our calling. Sadly, many of our contemporaries appear to believe that some lives are simply not worth living. It is difficult to imagine any person who feels loved and wanted drawing such a conclusion or choosing to end life prematurely. As long as we live we can both give and receive love. Let us recall the words of Blessed Mother Teresa, "If you want to bring happiness to the whole world, go home and love your family."

Many ask: "What kind of a world are we bequeathing our children?" Let us rather ask: "What kind of children are we bequeathing to our world?" Reflecting on the state of our society, it is time for each of us to ask ourselves, "Have I loved well enough?" If I have failed to love as Christ bids me perhaps it is only because I have failed to draw from the transforming and merciful love that flows freely from His heart. During this year's Week for Life and the Family let us turn to the Lord with confidence and ask him to make our homes and families schools of His merciful love. Let us not forget that with the Lord's help, all things are possible!

Part 3: Suggestions and Reflections about Catholic Family Life

Jesus ascends to the Father in order to send the Holy Spirit, who makes present the Father's mercy -- allowing us to be transfigured into the image of His Son;

We are all called to imitate the example of Christ's self-giving love; we succeed only by allowing ourselves to be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit; the difficulties and challenges of family life can be met mercifully only if mercy has been received;

It is God's will that the family be the "locus" in which we first experience unconditional love, the kind of love which inspires us to act selflessly toward others;

The Hebrew words for womb and mercy share a common root; mercy is thus the source of new life, life is nourished by mercy; life flourishes in the presence of mercy;

Respect for human life at every stage of development, from conception to natural death, is learned through example, example fueled by the activity of the Holy Spirit;

As long as we live we can receive and give love . . . God is Love!

Those who have not received unconditional love are seldom if ever able to extend unconditional love to another, or even to recognize the "lovability" of those the world sometimes considers unlovable;

Jesus is the source of infinite love which He offers as mercy to all who approach Him; the Incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ are, fundamentally, acts of mercy as is the sending of the Holy Spirit;

The Holy Spirit convicts us of the truth; depending on and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit will lead us to the truth regarding the real meaning of marriage and the family;

The Holy Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth; the Church is the last and only possible bastion against the culture of death. Only the Church can uphold God's vision of the human person. This is possible only because the Holy Spirit abides with the Church;

The Holy Spirit grants wisdom, allowing us to identify the right priorities for our life and our families;

The Holy Spirit grants understanding, enabling us to recognize the truth regarding our call as individuals and as families even in the midst of a world and a culture seduced by lies about the human person;

The Holy Spirit gives us Counsel or right judgment and knowledge, allowing us to know the difference between right and wrong and strengthening our wills to avoid sin;

The Holy Spirit gives us the fortitude necessary to overcome our fears and to maintain our commitment to Christ and His vision of marriage and family;

We create homes and families which model selfless love only by depending on the grace of the Sacraments (which are made fruitful by the action of the Holy Spirit) and by remaining open to the movement of the Spirit.