

Revisiting the key points of "Amoris laetitia"



Theologian says Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation from 2016 is an encouragement for families to be a model of love, hope and fraternity

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on marriage and family life, *Amoris laetitia*, is a resource for all families. He has even nourished this text from 2016 with his own family experience, recalling the tenderness of his grandmother, but also the difficulties of his family members who were in a situation of rupture. The love of which he speaks is not idealized, but incarnate, steeped in daily experience. At the Synod of Bishops' second assembly on the family in 2015, the working atmosphere actually changed after the bishops shared their own family experiences. The first word that characterizes love, according to *Amoris laetitia*, is joy. In the

apostolic exhortation, the pope invites us to hope in the strength of love. To live love in families on a daily basis, he also urges to adopt a benevolent gaze, just as Jesus did when he "looked upon the women and men whom he met with love and tenderness, accompanying their steps in truth, patience and mercy" (AL 60).

Saying thank you

The third landmark, after joy and a benevolent gaze, is patience, which is cited twenty times. This does not mean that we must put up with the unbearable; it would be a mistake to be patient in the face of conjugal violence. The fourth quality, gratitude, is the fuel of the family relationship. Francis encourages us to often say these three simple things: "Thank you", "I'm sorry" and "please" (AL n. 133). The exhortation also invites us to very concretely take care of one another: "The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures" (AL n. 315).

The Church as a field hospital.

Next, the pope paradoxically invites us to a fraternal way. The family is a first experience of fraternity in daily life, which he takes up again in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. This fraternity extends to the "great heart" of a hospitable family, upon which he calls to welcome the isolated, the separated, the widowed and the lonely. Finally, in chapter 8, the call to the Church also goes to families who can accompany one another, discern together, integrate those who are different, handicapped or in different marital situations. According to the pope's formula, the family, like the Church, is called to be a field hospital." The Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems" (AL n.310).

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