

29. December

**Fifth day of the Christmas Octave
"The Holy Family"**

By being born into a human family, God strengthened the nucleus of society and left us His example to imitate. Through His Incarnation, God wished to penetrate all the spheres of human life, among which the family occupies a privileged place.

The love between husband and wife gives us a glimpse of the mystery of the love between God and the soul, as Saint Paul so aptly describes in the Letter to the Ephesians: *"As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (...). This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."* (Eph 5:24-25, 32).

The attraction between man and woman reminds us of the attraction of love between God and us. God loves us, and our soul loves God. And when we are united to Him in love, a new life is born, which is the life of God. In the same way, the love between a man and a woman brings forth new life, which is children.

Although the world has departed greatly from God's original plan for the family, this plan is still in force and shines eminently in the Holy Family. In the case of the Holy Family, something extraordinary also happens, because the Divine Child, although He wanted to come into the world as one of us, was conceived in the womb of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit.

What message does this give us for the human family?

Thanks to the presence of the Divine Child, natural marriage is elevated. It no longer corresponds only to God's plan for creation, but also has its place in the order of salvation. Christian marriage has a fundamental place in the life of the Church. Parents should not be concerned only with providing food and a home for their children; their first duty is to see that they grow and mature in the Christian faith.

This is why it is said that families are called to be "domestic churches".

In order to fulfil this mission, parents must also be very attentive to discover if a vocation arises among their children, seeing themselves called to serve the Church as a priest or religious. Holy families, in which sacramental grace flows, become missionary signs, and in them the foundations are laid for the sanctification and healing of other families. The fact that God entrusted His Son to a human family shows the dignity of the family and its supernatural mission. Families are called to be sanctuaries of life, where life is born and grows, bearing witness to the Son of God in the world.

This was true of the Holy Family, and it must be true of all Christian families, reborn in Baptism, who wish to respond to the mission entrusted to them by God through the sacrament of marriage.