

Couple Saints

The parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux, Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin, will be canonized by Pope Francis during the coming synod, on Sunday Oct 18 2015. It is said that the Martins had 'two hearts in one, welded together by conjugal love'. As the Bishop of Seez put it, their lives were given to God, to each other, to their children, to the Church and the society of their day'.

The reliquary of another 'Couple Blessed', Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, will be in the Synod chapel during the proceedings. They "lived an ordinary life in an extraordinary way. Among the joys and concerns of a normal family life, they had an extraordinarily rich spiritual life." - Pope John Paul II

Mission

Love is our mission ... the only way we can be fully alive and be who we were created to be. This love should be taught, shared and communicated in and through the family, the domestic church (Catechesis, VIII World Meeting of Families 2015)

Marriage: a sacrament that makes the Church

Christian marriage is a sacrament that takes place in the Church, and which also makes the Church by giving rise to a new family community. The love between spouses is an image of the love between Christ and his Church (Eph 5:32).



Families & Pope Francis

Two BIG Events!

On Sunday, 27th Sep, at the 8th World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, Pope Francis will celebrate the concluding Mass with a huge gathering of families from around the world. The theme is 'Love is our Mission: the family fully alive'.

One week later, the Synod on the Family will begin in Rome and will continue in prayerful discernment over the following 21 days.

As we pray in solidarity with these two great events of the Universal Church, let's also reflect on Pope Francis' many suggestions for family life.

The hidden beauty and power of the family

Pope Francis reminds us that "God chose to come into the world in a human family .. in a remote village of the Roman empire", and that the first 30 years of his life were spent in the mundane things of family life.

"Our society might say, 'What a waste!' But what was important there was the family! And this is not a waste! Each Christian family can first of all – as Mary and Joseph did – welcome Jesus, listen to him, speak with him, guard him, protect him, grow with him; and in this way improve the world". - Pope Francis



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Affirm the Heroes

Regular men and women who care for their infirm loved ones, miss a night of sleep and still roll into work the next day are the 'hidden heroes' and the 'hidden saints' of today. These models of caring are all around us. Let's not forget to affirm them as we learn what it means to live a life of service for others.

"My friend Jack never enjoyed his work but it was the best job that he could get. He never complained. He just stuck to it till the day of his retirement just so that he could provide for his family all those years." Bob

"After I'd known Mary for a couple of years I discovered that in 27 years of marriage, she and her husband had never lived on their own. Mary's Dad was a cranky individual but he needed help and they lovingly cared for him in their own home till the day he died." Sue

XIV Ordinary Synod of Bishops

4-25 Oct 2015

Theme: The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World

So what is a Synod of Bishops?

It's a coming together (usually every 3 years) of the Pope with Bishops from around the world to discuss important issues facing the Church.

So why all the attention on this Synod?

It has attracted far more attention than any other Synod in living memory, probably because...

1. The topic, that is the family, is where we live our most intimate relationships
2. There are massive sociological changes that families face
3. There is wide interest in Pope Francis.

The Pope sees sharing 'the joy of the Gospel' as both affirming the goodness of faith-filled families and welcoming in a non-judgemental manner those who live outside these families. This is a huge challenge that families face daily. It may require a shift in Church attitudes at many levels.

A two-year process

In fact the Pope considers this so important that he has convened **two** synods on the topic, each with worldwide consultations. The first, held last year, will be used as the starting point for the coming XIV Ordinary Synod in October. So this is really a two-year listening process and we are called to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit through this careful process. Let's pray specially for our two attending Australian Bishops, Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane and Bishop Eugene Hurley of Darwin.

Finally, the Pope is expected to publish his conclusions.

"The family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world; it is the leaven of society"
Pope Francis

Parents, don't forget to kiss!

Love is contagious. Kissing in front of children is "a beautiful witness", he said. "When they see that Dad and Mum love each other, the children grow in that climate of love, happiness and security."

Children, talk to your best friend

Be apostles of peace at home & school, the Pope told children. "Talk to your best friend, Jesus", he said. "Remind your parents, brothers and sisters and friends that misunderstandings can be overcome - when we are united with Jesus everything is possible".

Tips from Pope Francis

Grandparents, know how much you are needed

Kids need the most important gifts that grandparents can give: encouragement, wisdom, hope and faith and especially their prayers.

The engaged

Engagement needs to be a time of getting to know one another and sharing a plan. Learn from Christian spouses, rediscover the Bible, prayer and the Sacraments. Prepare to truly receive one another "with the grace of Christ" and fraternity with the poor. And ... enjoy the journey!

1

May I?

Before doing anything in your family, ask: "Do you mind if I do this?" This is full of love and respect for others. This does so much good for families.

The Three Expressions

Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us of three things we need to say to each other daily in our families.

Thank You

2

A Christian who does not know how to thank has lost the very "language" of God. This is terrible! Gratitude stands at the very core of the faith of the believer. This really is something beautiful.

Pardon Me

3

Not always easy to say, but so necessary. So many wounds are the result of a lack of these precious words: "I am sorry". When it is lacking, little cracks begin to open up and can even become enormous sinkholes. Don't let the sun go down on your family without having made your peace.

And, he adds, parents, should lead the way!