



Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Amoris Laetitia”
Of the Holy Father Francis. To Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, Consecrated
Persons, Christian Married Couples, and all the Lay Faithful.

On Love in the Family

March 19, 2016. On the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy

Introduction:

[5] This Exhortation is especially timely in this Jubilee Year of Mercy. First, because it represents an invitation to Christian families to value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience. Second, because it seeks to encourage everyone to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy.

Chapter 4: Love in Marriage [90-119]

- >**Love is patient...** The first word used is *makrothyméi*. Clarified by the Greek translation of the Old Testament, where we read that God is “slow to anger” (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18). It refers, then, to the quality of one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense. Unless we cultivate patience, we will always find excuses for responding angrily, unable to control our impulses, and our families will become battlegrounds. The word indicates that love benefits and helps others. For this reason it is translated as “kind”; love is ever ready to be of assistance.

- >**Love is not jealous...** I love this person, and I see him or her with the eyes of God, who gives us everything “for our enjoyment” (1 Tim 6:17). As a result, I feel a deep sense of happiness and peace. This same deeply rooted love also leads me to reject the injustice whereby some possess too much and others too little.

- >**Love is not boastful...** Some think that they are important because they are more knowledgeable than others; they want to lord it over them. Yet what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak. Elsewhere the word is used to criticize those who are “inflated” with their own importance (cf. 1 Cor 4:18)

- >**Love is not rude...** An essential requirement of love, “every human being is bound to live agreeably with those around him”. A kind look helps us to see beyond our own limitations, to be patient and to cooperate with others, despite our differences. Loving kindness builds bonds, cultivates relationships, creates new networks of integration and knits a firm social fabric.

- >**Love is generous...** Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that “it is more proper to charity to desire to love than to desire to be loved”; indeed, “mothers, who are those who love the most, seek to love more than to be loved”. Consequently, love can transcend and overflow the demands of justice, and the greatest of loves can lead to “laying down one’s life” for another (Jn 15:13).

- >**Love is not irritable or resentful...** the word Paul uses after patience – *paroxýnetai* – has to do more with an interior indignation provoked by something from without. It refers to a violent reaction within, a hidden irritation that sets us on edge where others are concerned. To nurture such interior hostility helps no one. It only causes hurt and alienation.

- >**Love forgives...** When we have been offended or let down, forgiveness is possible and desirable, but no one can say that it is easy. The truth is that “family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires, in fact, a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation. All this assumes that we ourselves have had the experience of being forgiven by God, justified by his grace and not by our own merits.

- >**Love rejoices with others...** *sygchaírei te aletheía*: “it rejoices in the right”. In other words, we rejoice at the good of others when we see their dignity and value their abilities and good works. The family must always be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that others will be there to celebrate it with them.

- >**Love bears all things...** Married couples joined by love speak well of each other; they try to show their spouse’s good side, not their weakness and faults. Far from ingenuously claiming not to see the problems and weaknesses of others, it sees those weaknesses and faults in a wider context. It recognizes that these failings are a part of a bigger picture. We have to realize that all of us are a complex mixture of light and shadows.

- >**Love believes all things...** *Panta pisteúei*. Here “belief” is not to be taken in its strict theological meaning, but more in the sense of what we mean by “trust”. Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything. This freedom, an openness to the world around us and to new experiences, can only enrich and expand relationships.

- >**Love hopes all things...** *Panta elpízei*. Love does not despair of the future. This realization helps us, amid the aggravations of this present life, to see each person from a supernatural perspective, in the light of hope, and await the fullness that he or she will receive in the heavenly kingdom, even if it is not yet visible.

- >**Love endures all things...** *Panta hypoménei*. This means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. This “endurance” involves not only the ability to tolerate certain aggravations, but something greater: a constant readiness to confront any challenge. In family life, we need to cultivate that strength of love which can help us fight every evil threatening it. The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up.

Please make time to read Pope Francis full exhortation on this and other chapters in the document.