



THE INTERCESSORS' QUARTERLY LETTER

THE FAMILY, A CHALLENGE TODAY

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Dear Intercessor Brothers and Sisters,

Throughout the world families are confronted with challenges on a daily basis, in particular those families who seek to lead a Christian and holy life. This quarterly letter suggests some ideas to reflect on in the face of the current challenges to families. Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p., Spiritual Counsellor to the International Intercessors' Team (EIAI), put the family back at the heart of God, the creator and source of all love; the family is a place of forgiveness, selflessness, welcoming, a place where our limits and weaknesses are accepted. Already in 1954, Father Henri Caffarel wondered about the way in which families lived their faith: with a purely moralistic approach or in a profound search for God? Pope Francis' message at the IX World Meeting of Families in 2018 invites families to live their vocation of Christians assembled in the Church, to rely on the sacrament of their baptism to move forward towards holiness, just as Father Henri Caffarel often recalled. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let us unite our prayer, in particular in the prayer of intercession, so that families remain united in Christ and journey in search of justice and holiness.

Cristiane & Brito, EIAI – Responsible Couple of the America Zone.

THE SPIRITUAL LETTER OF FATHER PAUL-DOMINIQUE MARCOVITS, O.P.



What is a challenge? A problem, a difficult in a given situation that we must overcome. Life is full of such challenges: in work, politics... The family

is also a challenge today and has always been. There are many reasons for this, the character of each member or the social environment that is rife with counter currents.

The family, a challenge today? Here is an important truth to announce: God is the source of life, and not us. God is the creator of everything that exists and he is also the saviour of everything. *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."* (Eph 1:4) The first challenge that we have to win is that of faith, of the certainty that we are not the source of ourselves: it is God, the source of love, marriage, the family and our children. This filiation is received, is learnt and is, sometimes, the object of fights. So many of us do not like or love each other, despise each other because they doubt the depths of themselves and therefore of God who loves them. "No, the Father himself loves you..." (Jn 16:27) said

Jesus to his disciples who are about to abandon him when he will be arrested. This love will rebuild each person. Another challenge: every family is *"a little church"* (Vatican II). It is a synthesis of the big Church that is God's home. It is the place where praise, forgiveness, offering up of oneself and adoration are constantly renewed. Parents offer their children so that their humanity may develop in the service of the city and the glory of God. Praise, forgiveness are the fruit of faith's daily fight. Yet another challenge: a living family of God, for God, is, of itself, missionary. A united family shines and becomes a light for others who like being with this smiling and welcoming family. Hospitality is the main apostolate of couples and families. Because God shines there.

Do we live and experience all this? Everyone can only see their poverty. The main thing is not that we are perfect. Through our weaknesses, because of them, the Lord joins our human brothers and sisters who also seek to love. They may be touched and moved by our great desire to do good.

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p., Spiritual Counsellor to the Intercessors

(1) Father Henri CAFFAREL, *Amour qui es-tu ?* Paris, 1971, Éditions du Feu Nouveau, p. 105.



Married Christians, like the others, like monks, are called to holiness... because it is possible to become holy in and through the state of marriage... Christ proposes two means to those who wish to seek perfection: love and self-sacrifice. God wishes the Christian to be perfect, the couple to be perfect, he wishes every human being to become perfect, they will only become so by being faithful to love and self-sacrifice, that is to say, by giving themselves and forgetting themselves. Love and self-sacrifice are the two sides of the coin, no love without self-sacrifice, and a self-sacrifice which is not a self-sacrifice made out of love is a self-sacrifice which is impossible in practice..

Source: "The Founding Charisma," Father Henri Caffarel's Speech to Responsible Couples from the European Regions and Sectors in Chantilly, France, 1987.

"WE'RE SUFFOCATING..."

FATHER HENRI CAFFAREL, *L'ANNEAU D'OR*,

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"So many couples, it is true, believe themselves to be truly Christian and yet they only experience a curtailed, reduced type of Christianity. Their whole religion comes down to the practice of virtue. The sacraments themselves are only a means for them to achieve that. What energy they spend in acquiring and safeguarding their virtues! They are also devoted, imperturbably devoted (...). But, above all, and this is true, they are terribly boring. And although people do admire them—for there is a greatness in such a life—no one wants to imitate them.

In their presence, Péguy's words irresistibly come back to me, "Morality was invented by the sickly, and Christian life was invented by Jesus Christ." All religious life, indeed, if one does not take care of it, undergoes the law of the degradation of energy. Soon we will only remember Christian morality when speaking of Christian life. And Christian morality itself is not slow to deteriorate into a kind of natural morality that turns you into austere and inflexible puritans...

Christianity is not primarily morality, it is not the cult of the god Duty, a faceless divinity, it is a religion... It is a life with God, a *community of love* with him. "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and each with that person, and they with me." (...) Even more

than a community, Christian life is a *communion*. Through faith—meaning a living faith—the Christian enters into communion with divine thinking; they participate, say the theologians, in the knowledge that God has of himself. And through charity, they love God with the very Heart of God, they are associated vitally with the act by which God loves himself.(...)

However, there are Christians who take these supernatural realities seriously, and live by them. Their faith is a passion to know, to know God and his thoughts. They strive to keep it alive and progressing, through meditation on the divine Word, as well as by paying attention to what God wants to say to them in everyday events. Their young and alert faith penetrates ever deeper into the "endless riches of Christ." (...) "And so we know and believe the love that God has for us."

They work at loving God—all love is a work before being possession. This love gradually becomes the energy behind all their acts, their reason for living. As St Paul wrote, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (...) With these Christians, there is no risk of suffocating. They are free, free with the freedom of God's children. They make you want God."

PRAYER TO THE HOLY FAMILY



Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendour of true love, to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously bear our prayer.

Prayer for Families offered by Pope Francis on the Feast of the Holy Family 2013.



I am grateful to all of you for your warm welcome. It is good to be here! It is good to celebrate, for celebration makes us more human and more Christian. It also helps us to share the joy of

knowing that Jesus loves us, he accompanies us on our journey of life, and each day he draws us closer to himself.

The Church is the family of God's children. A family in which we rejoice with those who are rejoicing, and weep with those who grieve or feel knocked down by life. A family in which we care for everyone, for God our Father has made all of us his children in Baptism. That is one reason why I keep encouraging parents to baptize their children as soon as possible, so that they can become part of this great family of God. We need to invite everyone to the party, even the smallest child!

You, dear families, are the vast majority of the People of God. What would the Church look like without you? God wants every family to be a beacon of the joy of his love in our world. What does this mean? It means that we, who have encountered God's saving love, try, with or without words, to express it in little acts of kindness in our daily routine and in the most hidden moments of our day.

It is called *holiness*. I like to speak of the saints "next door", all those ordinary people who reflect God's presence in the life and history of our world. The vocation to love and to holiness is not something reserved for a privileged few. No. Forgiveness is a special gift from God that heals our brokenness and draws us closer to one another and to him. Small and simple acts of forgiveness, renewed each day, are the foundation upon which a solid Christian family life is built. They force us to overcome our pride, our aloofness and embarrassment, and to make peace. It is true that I like to say that in our families we need to learn three words. Ghislain, you spoke those three words. They are "sorry", "please" and "thank you". Before the day is done, make peace. Do you

want to know why it is necessary to make peace before ending the day? Because if you don't make peace, the next day you have a "cold war" and that is very dangerous! Watch out for cold wars in the family! Maybe you get mad sometimes and are tempted to sleep in another room, all by yourself. If you feel that way, just knock on the door and say: "Please, can I come in?" All it takes is a look, a kiss, a soft word... and everything is back to the way it was! I say this because when families do this, they survive. There is no such thing as a perfect family; without the practice of forgiveness, families can grow sick and gradually collapse.

To "forgive" means to "give" something of yourself. Jesus always forgives us. By the power of his forgiveness, we too can forgive others, if we really want to. Isn't that what we pray for, when we say the *Our Father*? Children learn to forgive when they see their parents forgiving one another. If we understand this, we can appreciate the grandeur of Jesus' teaching about fidelity in marriage. Far from a cold legal obligation, it is above all a powerful promise of God's own fidelity to his word and his unfailing grace. Christ died for us so that we, in turn, might forgive and be reconciled with one another. In this way, as individuals and as families, we can know the truth of Saint Paul's words that, when all else passes away, "love never ends" (1 Cor 13:8).

Families can connect through the internet and draw nourishment from it. Social media can be beneficial if used with moderation and prudence. For example, all of you gathered for this World Meeting of Families have formed a spiritual network, a web of friendship; social media can help you to maintain this connection and expand it to even more families throughout the world. It is important, though, that these media never become a threat to the real web of flesh and blood relationships by imprisoning us in a virtual reality and isolating us from the concrete relationships that challenge us to grow to our full potential in communion with others. When you use the social media too much, you "spin into orbit". When at table, instead of talking to one another as a family, everyone starts playing with his or her cell phone, they "spin into orbit". This is dangerous. Why? Because it takes you away from the *concrete reality* of the family and into a life of distraction and unreality. Be careful about this.

In every society, families generate peace, because they teach the virtues of love, acceptance and forgiveness that are the best antidote to the hatred, prejudice and vengeance that can poison the life of individuals and communities.

Good night and rest well! See you tomorrow!

POPE FRANCIS INTENTION

JULY: The Integrity of Justice

That those who administer justice may work with integrity, and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word.

AUGUST: Families, Schools of Human Growth

That families, through their life of prayer and love, become ever more clearly "schools of true human growth."

SEPTEMBER: The Protection of the Oceans



THE INTERCESSORS

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KEEP WATCH AND PRAY

GENERAL INTENTIONS

For families who are tested in their daily lives, may they always turn to God for the necessary love to overcome all the challenges.

For separated or torn apart families, may the Lord be a source of peace so that they find the path of forgiveness and unity.

For families weakened by illness, unemployment, difficulties... may the Holy Spirit be their strength and consolation and guide them towards holiness.

For the Catholic Church, that God may always be the first thing that this great family spread out across the world seeks.

Holy Family of Nazareth, graciously bear our prayer.

TESTIMONIALS FROM INTERCESSORS FROM THE AMERICA ZONE

ZUYENIFFER & CARLOS CANADA REGION



Although Father Caffarel called for volunteers to pray in 1960, it was only in 2017 that we received the call and that we accepted

with pleasure to belong to this service. **The power of prayer is important because we know that it is based on the Lord, who listens and responds.** Prayer enables us to get in touch with God the Almighty, and we should expect powerful results. The Intercessors' service is relatively new in Canada; we prayed to be able to gather together faithful Intercessors, and God heard our prayer! In May, we received the intentions from all over the Region and have begun to distribute them to our Intercessors. **"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."** (Mt 21:22)

SONIA & EIYTI BRAZIL SUPER-REGION

In August 2018, we were invited to become part of the support group of the Collegiate of the Brazil Super-Region. We were already in the service of the Movement as coaches for

couples in new Teams. We did not hesitate in responding to the invitation and said 'yes' immediately because everything that we do for the Movement is insufficient in comparison to the benefits we receive from it.

In the beginning, we had not imagined the scale of the task of being the Responsible Couple for the Intercessors in the Brazil Super-Region. We asked God to give us the grace to pray for those who entrust themselves to our prayers. **We believe that God entrusted this mission to us, so that we could pray even more and also to show us the importance of prayer.** For us, knowing that we have about 2200 Intercessor brothers and sisters united in prayer is a tremendous richness! All the testimonials that we receive

move us and reinforce us in our mission.



SANDRA & FRANCISCO GRAU HISPANO-AMERICA SUPER-REGION

During the last few months of 2018, our mission was to train and form the Responsible Couple for the Intercessors of the Hispano-America Super-Region. In the beginning we

were afraid that we would be unable to accomplish this service that God had entrusted to us. But once again, we realised that in prayer and with the Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary, we were able to move forward on this path. There are 1539 Intercessors in 17 countries of the Hispano-America Super-Region. An activities plan as well as a WhatsApp group were suggested as means to spread this apostolate, so that we could remain in contact with all the Correspondents, who receive urgent requests for prayer and to be able to pass them along to the Intercessors in all the regions, thereby creating a great prayer chain, just as Father Caffarel had imagined when he created the Intercessors, with the idea of praying for each other, getting close to each other and becoming close to the Lord by relying on his infinite mercy. We feel blessed with this apostolate, motivated and moved by the numerous requests for prayer. We pray every Thursday in front of the Holy Sacrament and with great faith, we ask for Father Caffarel's intercession to obtain favours and graces from our Lord.

