



On 8 April saw the light *Amoris Laetitia*, a publication pontifical which involves "the first great pastoral revolution" in the Church - according to Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family - because the Post-Synodal Exhortation does not claim simply "an adjustment of the pastoral care of the family, but a change of all pastoral care to make sure that the Church is a mother, father, sister and a friend". Let us see what exactly this change.

Monsignor Paglia ensures with enthusiasm that it is an exhortation "historic, because it calls for a new form of church: requests that the Church itself is a family that does not leave out to none, which is moved by all, who cares for those who are a bit far away, who goes in search of who is lost". Therefore, summarizes with an image based on the parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15, 4 -7), the Church that the Pope Francisco dreams in the: "Not only is the shepherd who has to exit, the ninety-nine sheep become pastors and leave to search for the lost sheep. No one should stay within to deal with an 'Organization'". All the sheep are put in the way, such as a father or a mother of a family made with each of their children, without exception, when they are in difficulties.

And therein lies the essence of this exhortation, "because if it is true that the marriage is indissoluble, is still more indissoluble the relationship of the Church with the people. People can surrender, but the Church can never surrender in his love and concern for their children," says Bishop Paglia. However, this new approach in the pastoral care of the family "has not come for an intuition of the Pope - explains Juan Jose Pérez-Soba, Professor of Pastoral Care of the family of the John Paul II Institute at the Pontifical Lateran University to mission. Responds to a process of pastoral conversion that the Pope has promoted, and to which the whole Church has responded". Thus, the document is the result of a process of the synod outstanding it has lasted two years and three years of reflection of the whole Church: a Consistory (February 2014), more than thirty catechesis of the Pope on the family and two queries to the universal Church. As a perfect finale to this process, to, in

the words of the Pope, gathers all these contributions and adds other considerations that he has seen necessary "to guide the discussion, dialog, or the pastoral practice"

### **Rethink the challenges of families**

The bishop of Bilbao, Archbishop Mario Iceta, chairman of the Subcommittee on Family and Life of the Spanish Episcopal Conference and who was also Synod father, adds that what makes the is "response to the new challenges that we find after the last Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris consortio, in the year 1981. At this time, situations have arisen which must be faced, giving new lights and pastoral approaches renewed". Such situations referred to Monsignor Iceta are basically three: "de facto couples, i.e. those who have not married, many times by ignorance of what it means to the canonical marriage; people who do not access the canonical marriage and, on the other hand, civil marriage; and marriages that have been broken and are in new unions". In these cases, which are abundant today, Pérez-Soba ensures that "nothing, nor in the doctrine or discipline, has changed; all things remain exactly the same in regard to the condition of access to the sacraments in irregular situations, but what there is, above all, is a conviction to say: marriage is the source where the love of God can regenerate the world".

Under this perspective, the Apostolic Exhortation invites the theology to renew their reflection, at the same time that impels the Church, in the various dioceses of the world, to assume the responsibility to meet the challenges of the families in each social and cultural context. The Pope has put a special emphasis on that each situation in its context and therefore the Gospel must get to the: "I cannot speak in Italian if i go to Madrid; I cannot speak in English if I am going to China," says Bishop Paglia. In each country or region - the Pope writes - "You can search for solutions more in to, attentive to the traditions and the local challenges" (AL, n. 3). "It is not therefore possible to a fixed rule - explains Bishop Paglia-, but a way, an itinerary that help everyone to live that love is robust and strong that speaks to".

In this way, the exhortation delivery to the bishops the full responsibility to bring home to the lost sheep, since "the Bishop is a judge in its quality of pastor", says Bishop Paglia. And the pastor - insists-, cannot leave any sheep to their own fate under the excuse that "she has sought," he points out.

### **"The joy of love"**

But, while it is true that the apostolic exhortation tends his hand to those who are in situations of fragility (and that, in reality we are all), which beats throughout the text is an impulse to reaffirm the great heritage that involves

the family for the life of the Church and the entire society: "All the text pages, impregnated by a great sympathy for the families, reaffirm the greatness of the mission entrusted to them by the Lord: 'In any way the Church must renounce propose the ideal full of marriage, the project of God in all its grandeur' (when, n. 307)", judgment Monsignor Paglia.

The very title of the exhortation, *Amoris laetitia* or the joy of love, manifests this aspiration of the Pope: "The strength of the family 'reside essentially in his capacity to love and teach them to love. By very wound that can be, can grow thanks to love'(AL, n. 53)". Thus, the exhortation seeks to "recover the dream of marriage and the family to avoid that is an unbearable weight". And this is achieved by showing that "love is not the romantic sentiment that responds only to the individual satisfaction. It is not love, is another thing. The love of the spoken is a vocation, a commitment to change history," says Bishop Paglia. "It is to go beyond the romanticism, because we are in the heart of a dream that life is worth living, because if this dream is upset, society is upset," concludes the cardinal.

For its part, Monsignor Iceta encourages all to receive with an open heart this exhortation, which it describes as "a precious instrument to renew the family apostolate in the Church and for the family to be the institution most valued by the entire world, capable of generating life, brotherhood and justice, and to renew the Church and to society".

## Reading keys

Who is it aimed at? Bishop Vincenzo Paglia said that "when is a large cupboard with nine doors - its nine chapters - in which there are clothing for all the family: for small, the Baby booties; the jeans, for young people; the handkerchief, for the grandmother; the clothes of mourning, for when it is in mourning...". Therefore, encouraged to read it to all because "it is a text that each of you can take something," says.

What's essential? Archbishop Mario Iceta recommended read complete, but to the spouses are encouraged to read the chapter 4 and 5, "on conjugal love in its two aspects: the unitive dimension (chap. 4) and the dimension of life generator (chap. 5). Chapter 6.º, to those who have pastoral ministry; 7.º, educators; and 9.º, Boyfriends and Husbands, to put a background to a spirituality as familiar".

Where do you begin? Juan Jose Pérez-Soba suggests making a first general reading, that will help other readings, although also warns that there is to read the "within the tradition of the Church and therefore, in the light of other documents" as *Deus Caritas est*, Benedict XVI, which gives a substrate more deeply the gospel to the theme of love; the catechesis of San Juan Pablo II on human love; and, without doubt, *Familiaris Consortio*, because they do not set

in a systematic way the pastoral care of the family, but that makes generic indications.

### **Cover the fragility**

Monsignor Paglia explains that, in this new approach to the pastoral care of the family, "Families are pushed to open themselves to the Christian community to not be alone. And the Christian community is invited to be family and not to stay alone as an institution. This new alliance family-community allows it asks for the Pope: accompany, discern and integrate, the three key words in the last part of the Exhortation":

Accompany: means, according to Monsignor Iceta, put to walk to step of each person, "because the Lord interested in all the people, therefore, all the situations have been enlightened by the Gospel". In this coincides with Pérez-Soba, who adds that, in addition to "not to leave the people alone, must be conducted in the processes of life to a fullness".

Discern: consists in "see what is the truth before God in every situation," explains Monsignor Iceta. That truth, according Pérez-Soba, is "truth of the marriage bond, because all the pastoral care of marriage is a pastoral of the link, i.e. of the covenant that God has made with the husbands".

Integrate: it is to achieve the "participation in the Church of each person in the extent to which they see that it is possible to integrate it into the Christian community", explains Monsignor Iceta. Because "the Church has received the mandate of the Lord to be brave and to protect the weak, forgiving the debts and heal the wounds, starting with those who recognize prisoners of their own guilt and are desperate for having failed in their lives," adds Monsignor Paglia. Thus, the Church wants to accompany all until the full integration into the Body of Christ.

### **Satisfy the thirst for true love**

The eighth chapter of the exhortation is, according to Monsignor Iceta, "the most complex of read and requires the management of theological concepts". That is why we asked the theologian expert in pastoral care of the family, Pérez-Soba, how to deal with it. In this regard, and as a first key, he recommends to understand "in the light of Chapters 4 and 5, where it speaks of true love". And cited as an example the conversation of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "Jesus finds a person away, but with internal thirst for true love..." therefore, to those people who have experienced failures in his life, which sometimes what the Church presents them as full find it difficult and distant, Amoris laetitia offers "that accompaniment which makes it possible to so many things". It should also be borne in mind that "mercy distinguishes between the condemnation of sin and the invitation to conversion of the sinner. This, with the Samaritan woman, Jesus Christ makes it saying: "Is not thy husband, therefore, the life that you have is not the true life, but you have

a true love that I take and make my own". To reach this point it does lack time, because the Church knows that if a person has had a failure, are interior wounds. "The indication of the exhortation in this sense is that, according to the teaching of the Church and under the direction of Bishop, little by little, will be giving the appropriate means to respond with mercy and pastoral closeness to all cases", clarifies Pérez-Soba.

## **Very close to all**

### The pregnant women

To pregnant women, who suffer the own annoyances of this stage, the Pope invited to look her motherhood with the illusion of God: "Every child is in the heart of God always, and at the time it is conceived to meet the eternal sleep of the Creator. Think how much it is worth that embryo from the moment in which it is conceived. There are to look it up with those eyes of love of the Father, which looks beyond all appearances (n. 168)".

### On the grandparents

To reminds us of the importance of grandparents in the family and invites us not to leave them marginalized because they ensure the transmission of the great values of the grandchildren: "Your words, their caressing or its presence alone help children recognize that history does not begin with them that are heirs to an old road (n. 192)".

### When death occurs

The Pope gives his voice of encouragement to those who suffer the loss of a loved one: "I understand the anguish of those who have lost a loved one, a spouse with whom he has shared so many things. Jesus himself was shocked and was crying in the wake of a friend (cf. Jn 11,33.35). And how not to understand the lament of who has lost a son? (n. 255)". However, to them, the Pope says that "with a sincere and patient way of prayer and inner liberation, peace returns". And he adds: "At some time in the duel there are to help discover that we who have lost a loved one we still have a mission to fulfill (n. 255)".

### Affective-sexual education

To claim to attach importance to the affective-sexual education, "a relatively new subject in the pastoral work of the Church," says Bishop Paglia. The post-synodal exhortation affirms the need to provide this education in "an era in which sexuality tends to trivialize and impoverishment". It also indicates that the affective-sexual education "can only be understood in the framework of education for love, for the mutual donation (n. 280)".

### To marriages

To promote the closeness of all marriages to the Church, because it happens all too often that "a marriage with problems, takes only", explains Pérez-Soba. Therefore, the exhortation invites marriages to "LEFT ACCOMPANY because, share the problems with other families and see that they are the same helps to put them in perspective," says Pérez-Soba.

### To immigrant families

In AL, migrations are recognized as a sign of the times that it is necessary to confront and understand. Therefore, the appeal calls for an accompaniment to migrants that requires a specific pastoral care, addressed both to the families who migrate as to members of the families that remain in the places of origin. "This must be carried out while respecting their culture [...] as well as the spiritual richness of their rites and traditions" (n. 46).

### To the bride

And groom to the bride and groom that coexist, to the calls to make public his love through the sacrament of marriage: "opt for marriage [...] expresses the real and effective decision to convert two paths into a single path, whatever happens and despite any challenge. For the seriousness that has this public commitment of love, cannot be a hasty decision, but for that very reason, nor can postpone indefinitely". Insists to the bride and groom in that the refusal to take on this commitment is selfish, interested and not just to recognize the rights of the other because it involves no submission to society as worthy of being loved unconditionally. (n. 132).

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