



Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life

POINTS OF REFLECTION FOR A SYNODAL JOURNEY WITH FAMILIES

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. [...] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it". (1 Cor 12:13 and 27)

Co-responsibility for the common mission calls families to cooperate in building the fabric of the Church. Let us give them space and a listening ear so that they can participate in the synodal journey, showing the *"family face"* of the Church. The Church, in fact, is a *"family among families"*. (FT 276)

This aid is intended to help the particular Churches understand how to involve families in the synodal process, as families.

The synodal journey does not ask us to reflect now only on the needs and requirements of families, but on the contribution that the family in itself can make to the synodal journey of the Church, as a pastoral subject.





AN INTIMATE AND MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY

- **"The Church is God's family in the world"** (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 25), and "She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family". (GS 40)
- "In this way, the spouses are consecrated and **by means of a special grace** build up the Body of Christ and form a domestic church (cf. LG 11), so that the Church, in order fully to understand her mystery, looks to the Christian family, which manifests her in a real way". (AL 67)
- The Second Vatican Council renewed **the image of the family as a "domestic Church"** (LG 11; AA 11), which was present in the first centuries of Christianity. (cf. St. John Chrysostom)
- **The family stands at the intersection of the Church and the world** with the task of *familiarizing humanity, of "'domesticating' the world"* with the power of love. (AL 183).





Guiding Questions

- In what ways can our particular Church **look to the family to fully understand itself**, its mystery?
- What aspects of synodality do families particularly reflect? **What can family life teach us** about living synodality in our community?
- How can the Church **help families to be aware** of their being "leaven in the transformation of society"?





SEEING THE SYNODAL CHURCH AS A FAMILY

- **Communion in the Church** finds an eloquent expression in the **unity of the family**. Families are living icons of the Trinity, in which the communion of the Church finds its deep roots: *"The triune God is a communion of love and the family is its living reflection"*. (AL 11)
- Building the Church by looking at the family opens the Church to **new ways of living communion, participation and mission**.
- The family is *"the way of the Church"*. (Gratissimam sane 2)





Guiding Questions

➤ The family is a model of synodality. **What can the Church learn from the family?**

- o How does the family know how to make **discernment** in its daily life?
- o How does it **know how to listen to itself** internally?
- o How do various members of the family **know how to welcome each other**?
- o How can charity enter into ecclesial discernment, as it does in family life?
- o How do parents, children, siblings and relatives try **to love each other with their frailties**, vulnerabilities, conflicts and different points of view?

➤ The specific mission of each family is to pour God's love into the world. This leads to fraternizing with other families and welcoming each person as a child and brother. How do our Christian communities manage **to live fraternity in the wider human family**?





THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE SYNODAL CHURCH

- The family is an active subject of the Church's mission and synodality. (cf. AL 200)
- *"The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, the protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those most in need, commitment to the promotion of the common good and the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives, through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy". (AL 290)*
- *"The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church". (AL 88)*
It is therefore by making **the kerygma resonate in every family** that *"will the Church's pastoral care for families enable them to be both domestic churches and a leaven of evangelization in society". (AL 290)*





Guiding Questions

- **What role can the family play in the process of building a more synodal Church?**
 - as a domestic Church
 - in its interaction with the world
- How are families a key point of communion in the Church - on the one hand, **within themselves** and, on the other, beyond themselves in the larger community?
 - How is communion experienced within the family?
 - How do families contribute to the building of communion in the Church?
 - How can they be given more space for this?
- **Are families listened to within the Church?** How can they be heard in this synodal process?
- How can this synodal process help us to better understand, promote and empower **the mission of the family within the Church and in the world**, as "a leaven of evangelization in society?". (AL 290)
- How can **families be protagonists** in our local Churches?
- How can the family help the Church **reach out to the peripheries**? How can the Church reach the peripheries through families?





IN SUMMARY:

For a "walking together" with families:

1. Discern how **the Spirit calls families, not just individuals**, to be vehicles of fraternity in the synodal journey.
2. Live a participatory and inclusive ecclesial process that **offers spouses and families the opportunity to express themselves and be heard.**
3. **Recognize and value in pastoral action the richness and variety of the gifts of families**, for the good of the community.
4. **Experiment with participatory ways for families** to be present and exercise their ecclesial responsibility, trying to convert prejudices and ineffective practices into new methods **that are also based on the proposals of families.**
5. How can we consider the home as a place for pastoral ministry and proclamation?
6. Accredite **the family as a credible subject.**
7. **Regenerate relationships among families** through friendship and sharing.
8. Encourage **the formation of families to communion** within themselves and in the ecclesial community, putting into dialogue the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*.
9. **Involve schools** in order to make the synodal path reach even where families are far from the Church.

