

COMPENDIUM
OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE
OF THE CHURCH

PART TWO

Chapter Five: passages from the Document

THE FAMILY, THE VITAL CELL OF SOCIETY

<p>I. THE FAMILY, THE FIRST NATURAL SOCIETY</p>	<p>* <i>The importance and centrality of the family with regard to the person and society is repeatedly underlined by Sacred Scripture. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). From the texts that narrate the creation of man (cf. Gen 1:26-28, 2:7-24) there emerges how — in God's plan — the couple constitutes “the first form of communion between persons”. Eve is created like Adam as the one who, in her otherness, completes him (cf. Gen 2:18) in order to form with him “one flesh” (Gen 2:24; cf. Mt 19:5-6). At the same time, both are involved in the work of procreation, which makes them co-workers with the Creator: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). The family is presented, in the Creator's plan, as “the primary place of ‘humanization’ for the person and society” and the “cradle of life and love.” (209)</i></p> <p>* <i>It is in the family that one learns the love and faithfulness of the Lord, and the need to respond to these. Because of all this, the Lord himself is the guarantor of the love and fidelity of married life (cf. Mal 2:14-15). Jesus was born and lived in a concrete family, accepting all its characteristic features and he conferred the highest dignity on the institution of marriage, making it a sacrament of the new covenant (cf. Mt 19:3-9). (210)</i></p> <p>* <i>The Church considers the family as the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the centre of social life. The family, in fact, is born of the intimate communion of life and love founded on the marriage between one man and one woman. It possesses its own specific and original social dimension, in that it is the principal place of interpersonal relationships, the first and vital cell of society. The family is a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order. (211)</i></p>
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<p>b. The sacrament of marriage</p>	<p>mutual, irrevocable and public consent. This commitment means that the relationships among family members are marked also by a sense of justice and, therefore, by respect for mutual rights and duties. (215)</p> <p>* Notwithstanding the numerous changes that have taken place in the course of the centuries in the various cultures and in different social structures and spiritual attitudes, in every culture there exists a certain sense of the dignity of the marriage union, although this is not evident everywhere with the same clarity[478]. This dignity must be respected in its specific characteristics and must be safeguarded against any attempt to undermine it. Society cannot freely legislate with regard to the marriage bond by which the two spouses promise each other fidelity, assistance and acceptance of children, but it is authorized to regulate its civil effects. (216)</p> <p>* <i>The characteristic traits of marriage are: totality</i>, by which the spouses give themselves to each other mutually in every aspect of their person, physical and spiritual; <i>unity</i> which makes them “one flesh” (<i>Gen 2:24</i>); <i>indissolubility and fidelity</i> which the definitive mutual giving of self requires; the <i>fruitfulness</i> to which this naturally opens itself. (217)</p> <p>* <i>In its “objective” truth, marriage is ordered to the procreation and education of children.</i> The marriage union, in fact, gives fullness of life to that sincere gift of self, the fruit of which is children, who in turn are a gift for the parents, for the whole family and all of society. <i>Nonetheless, marriage was not instituted for the sole reason of procreation.</i> Its indissoluble character and its value of communion remain even when children, although greatly desired, do not arrive to complete conjugal life. In this case, the spouses “can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others.” (218)</p> <p>* At the centre of the revelation of the divine plan of love is the gift that God makes to humanity in his Son, Jesus Christ, “the Bridegroom who loves and gives himself as the Saviour of humanity, uniting it to himself as his body. It is in the spousal love of Christ for the Church, which shows its fullness in the offering made on the cross that the sacramentality of marriage originates. The grace of this sacrament conforms the love of the spouses to the love of Christ for the Church. Marriage, as a sacrament, is a covenant in love between a man and a woman. (219)</p> <p>* <i>The sacrament of marriage takes up the human reality of conjugal love in all its implications</i> and “gives to Christian couples and parents a power and a commitment to live their vocation as lay people and therefore to ‘seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.’” Intimately united to the Church by virtue of the sacrament that makes it a “domestic Church.” Conjugal charity, which flows from the very charity of Christ, offered through the sacrament, makes Christian spouses witnesses to a new social consciousness inspired by the Gospel and the</p>
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	<p>Paschal Mystery. By their very lives they are called to bear witness to and proclaim the religious meaning of marriage, which modern society has ever greater difficulty recognizing, especially as it accepts relativistic perspectives of the natural foundation itself of the institution of marriage. (220)</p>
<p>III. THE SOCIAL SUBJECTIVITY OF THE FAMILY</p> <p>a. Love and the formation of a community of persons</p>	<p>* “Love causes man to find fulfilment through the sincere gift of self. To love means to give and to receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually.” From love arise relationships lived in gratuitousness. The existence of families living this way is “the first and irreplaceable school of social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love.” (221)</p> <p>* Love is also expressed in the generous attention shown to the elderly who live in families: their presence can take on great value. “Not only do they show that there are aspects of life — human, cultural, moral and social values — which cannot be judged in terms of economic efficiency, but they can also make an effective contribution in the workplace and in leadership roles. In short, it is not just a question of doing something for older people, but also of accepting them in a realistic way as partners in shared projects — at the level of thought. If the elderly are in situations where they experience suffering and dependence, not only do they need health care services and appropriate assistance, but — and above all — they need to be treated with love. (222)</p> <p>* <i>The human being is made for love and cannot live without love.</i> In a society that tends more and more to relativize and trivialize the very experience of love and sexuality, exalting its fleeting aspects and obscuring its fundamental values, it is more urgent than ever to proclaim and bear witness that the truth of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of unity and fidelity. (223)</p> <p>* <i>Faced with theories that consider gender identity as merely the cultural and social product of the interaction between the community and the individual, independent of personal sexual identity without any reference to the true meaning of sexuality, the Church does not tire of repeating her teaching: “Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.</i> According to this perspective, it is obligatory that positive law <i>be conformed</i> to the natural law, according to which sexual identity is indispensable, because it is the objective condition for forming a couple in marriage. (224)</p> <p>* <i>The nature of conjugal love requires the stability of the married relationship and its indissolubility.</i> The stability and indissolubility of the marriage union must not be entrusted solely to the intention and effort of the individual persons involved. The responsibility for protecting and promoting the family as a fundamental natural institution, precisely in consideration of its vital and essential aspects, falls to the</p>

whole of society. The need to confer an institutional character on marriage, basing this on a public act that is socially and legally recognized, arises from the basic requirements of social nature. *The introduction of divorce into civil legislation has fuelled a relativistic vision of the marriage bond* and is broadly manifested as it becomes “truly a plague on society.” (225)

* *The Church does not abandon those who have remarried after a divorce.* For their part, these persons, insofar as they are baptized, can and indeed must participate in the life of the Church. Acting in this fashion, **the Church** professes her fidelity to Christ and to his truth. With steadfast trust **she believes that even those who have turned away from the Lord's commandment, and continue to live in that state, can obtain from God the grace of conversion and salvation,** if they persevere in prayer, penance and charity. (226)

* **De facto unions, the number of which is progressively increasing, are based on a false conception of an individual's freedom to choose and on a completely privatistic vision of marriage and family.** *Making “de facto unions” legally equivalent to the family would discredit the model of the family.* (227)

* *Connected with de facto unions is the particular problem concerning demands for the legal recognition of unions between homosexual persons.* It is opposed, first of all, by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being. Another obstacle is the absence of the conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical-biological and the eminently psychological levels. **Homosexual persons are to be fully respected in their human dignity and encouraged to follow God's plan with particular attention in the exercise of chastity.** “If, from the legal standpoint, marriage between a man and a woman were to be considered just one possible form of marriage, the concept of marriage would undergo a radical transformation, with grave detriment to the common good. **By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties.**” (228)

* *The solidity of the family nucleus is a decisive resource for the quality of life in society, therefore the civil community cannot remain indifferent to the destabilizing tendencies that threaten its foundations at their very roots.* Although legislation may sometimes tolerate morally unacceptable behaviour, *it must never weaken the recognition of indissoluble monogamous marriage as the only authentic form of the family.* **It is the task of the Christian community and of all who have the good of society at heart to reaffirm that “the family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity,** which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential

<p>b. The family is the sanctuary of life</p>	<p>for the development and well-being of its own members and of society.” (229)</p> <p>* <i>Conjugal love is by its nature open to the acceptance of life.</i> The dignity of the human being, called to proclaim the goodness and fruitfulness that come from God, is eminently revealed in the task of procreation. <i>Procreation expresses the social subjectivity of the family and sets in motion a dynamism of love and solidarity between the generations upon which society is founded.</i> (230)</p> <p>* <i>The family founded on marriage is truly the sanctuary of life</i>, “the place in which life — the gift of God — can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth.” <i>Christian families have then, in virtue of the sacrament received, a particular mission that makes them witnesses and proclaimers of the Gospel of life.</i> It is for this reason that “serving the Gospel of life ... means that the family, particularly through its membership in family associations, works to ensure that the laws and institutions of the State in no way violate the right to life, from conception to natural death, but rather protect and promote it.” (231)</p> <p>* <i>The family contributes to the social good in an eminent fashion through responsible motherhood and fatherhood, the spouses' special participation in God's work of creation.</i> The motivations that should guide the couple in exercising responsible motherhood and fatherhood originate in the full recognition of their duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards society in a proper hierarchy of values. (232)</p> <p>* <i>Concerning the “methods” for practising responsible procreation, the first to be rejected as morally illicit are sterilization and abortion.</i> The latter in particular is a horrendous crime and constitutes a particularly serious moral disorder. Also to be rejected is recourse to contraceptive methods in their different forms: this rejection is based on a correct and integral understanding of the person and human sexuality and represents a moral call to defend the true development of peoples. <i>The judgment concerning the interval of time between births, and that regarding the number of children, belongs to the spouses alone.</i> This is one of their inalienable rights, to be exercised before God with due consideration of their obligations towards themselves, their children already born, the family and society[528]. The intervention of public authorities within the limits of their competence to provide information and enact suitable measures in the area of demographics must be made in a way that fully respects the persons and the freedom of the couple. Such intervention may never become a substitute for their decisions. (234)</p> <p>* <i>The desire to be a mother or a father does not justify any “right to children”, whereas the rights of the unborn child are evident. The unborn child must be guaranteed the best possible conditions of existence through the stability of a family founded on marriage, through the</i></p>
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<p>c. The task of educating</p>	<p><i>complementarities of the two persons, father and mother. It must be repeated that the ethical unacceptability of all reproductive techniques. Avoiding recourse to different forms of so-called “assisted procreation” that replace the marriage act means respecting — both in the parents and in the children that they intend to generate — the integral dignity of the human person. On the other hand, those methods that are meant to lend assistance to the conjugal act or to the attainment of its effects are legitimate. (235)</i></p> <p><i>* An issue of particular social and cultural significance today, because of its many and serious moral implications, is human cloning. This term refers per se to the reproduction of a biological entity that is genetically identical to the originating organism. From an ethical point of view, the simple replication of normal cells or of a portion of DNA presents no particular ethical problem. Very different, however, is the Magisterium's judgment on cloning understood in the proper sense. Such cloning is contrary to the dignity of human procreation because it takes place in total absence of an act of personal love between spouses, being agamic and asexual reproduction. (236)</i></p> <p><i>* “Fatherhood and motherhood represent a responsibility which is not simply physical but spiritual in nature; indeed, through these realities there passes the genealogy of the person, which has its eternal beginning in God and which must lead back to him.” Welcoming human life in the unified aspects of its physical and spiritual dimensions, families contribute to the “communion of generations” and in this way provide essential and irreplaceable support for the development of society. (237)</i></p> <p><i>* In the work of education, the family forms man in the fullness of his personal dignity according to all his dimensions, including the social dimension. With education, certain fundamental values are communicated and assimilated. (238)</i></p> <p><i>* The family has a completely original and irreplaceable role in raising children. The parents' love, placing itself at the service of children to draw forth from them (“e-ducere”) the best that is in them, finds its fullest expression precisely in the task of educating. The right and duty of parents to educate their children is “essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others”. Parents have the duty and right to impart a religious education and moral formation to their children. (239)</i></p> <p><i>* Parents are the first educators, not the only educators, of their children. It belongs to them, therefore, to exercise with responsibility their educational activity in close and vigilant cooperation with civil and ecclesial agencies. Parents have the right to choose the formative</i></p>
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<p>d. The dignity and rights of children</p>	<p>tools that respond to their convictions and to seek those means that will help them best to fulfil their duty as educators, in the spiritual and religious sphere also. Public authorities have the duty to guarantee this right and to ensure the concrete conditions necessary for it to be exercised. In this context, cooperation between the family and scholastic institutions takes on primary importance. (240)</p> <p>* <i>Parents have the right to found and support educational institutions.</i> Public authorities must see to it that “public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom” (241)</p> <p>* <i>The family has the responsibility to provide an integral education.</i> This integrality is ensured when children — with the witness of life and in words — are educated in dialogue, encounter, sociality, legality, solidarity and peace, through the cultivation of the fundamental virtues of justice and charity. (242)</p> <p>* <i>Parents have, then, a particular responsibility in the area of sexual education.</i> It is of fundamental importance for the balanced growth of children that they are taught in an orderly and progressive manner the meaning of sexuality and that they learn to appreciate the human and moral values connected with it. Parents have the obligation to inquire about the methods used for sexual education in educational institutions in order to verify that such an important and delicate topic is dealt with properly. (243)</p> <p>* <i>The Church's social doctrine constantly points out the need to respect the dignity of children.</i> “In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. <i>The rights of children must be legally protected within juridical systems.</i> In the first place, it is necessary that the social value of childhood be publicly recognized in all countries. The first right of the child is to “be born in a real family”, a right that has not always been respected and that today is subject to new violations because of developments in genetic technology. (244)</p> <p>* The situation of a vast number of the world's children is far from being satisfactory, due to the lack of favourable conditions for their integral development despite the existence of a specific international juridical instrument for protecting their rights, an instrument that is binding on practically all members of the international community. Moreover, some serious problems remain unsolved: trafficking in children, child labour, the phenomenon of “street children”, the use of children in armed conflicts, child marriage, the use of children for commerce in pornographic material, also in the use of the most modern and sophisticated instruments of social communication. (245)</p>
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<p>V. SOCIETY AT THE SERVICE OF THE FAMILY</p>	<p><i>wage</i>, a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently. Such a wage must also allow for savings that will permit the acquisition of property as a guarantee of freedom. (250)</p> <p>* <i>In the relationship between the family and work, particular attention must be given to the issue of the work of women in the family</i>, more generally to the recognition of the so-called work of “housekeeping”, which also involves the responsibility of men as husbands and fathers. The work of housekeeping, starting with that of the mother, precisely because it is a service directed and devoted to the quality of life, constitutes a type of activity that is eminently personal and personalizing, and that must be socially recognized and valued, also by means of economic compensation in keeping with that of other types of work. (251)</p> <p>* The starting point for a correct and constructive relationship between the family and society is the recognition of the subjectivity and the social priority of the family. Their intimate relationship requires that “society should never fail in its fundamental task of respecting and fostering the family”. Society, and in particular State institutions, respecting the priority and “antecedence” of the family, is called to guarantee and foster the genuine identity of family life and to avoid and fight all that alters or wounds it. Therefore, neither society nor the State may absorb, substitute or reduce the social dimension of the family; rather, they must honour it, recognize it, respect it and promote it according to the principle of subsidiarity. (252)</p> <p>* <i>Society's service of the family becomes concrete in recognizing, respecting and promoting the rights of the family. This means that authentic and effective family policies must be brought about</i> with specific interventions that are able to meet the needs arising from the rights of the family as such. In this sense, there is a necessary prerequisite, one that is essential and indispensable: the recognition — which entails protecting, appreciating and promoting — the identity of the family, the natural society founded on marriage. (253)</p> <p>* <i>The recognition on the part of civil society and the State of the priority of the family over every other community, and even over the reality of the State, means overcoming merely individualistic conceptions and accepting the family dimension as the indispensable cultural and political perspective in the consideration of persons</i>. This is not offered as an alternative, but rather as a support and defence of the very rights that people have as individuals. (254)</p>
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Charismatic Reflection

Seeing and Understanding

The way in which we see reality impacts everything about how we relate to it. Therefore, it is essential that **we be intentional about the process of seeing**. We are called to take a good look at our own lives, at our shared experience of groups and Lay Canossian Association to ensure that our witness to justice, peace and the integrity of creation is credible and coherent. At the same time, we are aware of the cry of the poor, and that their good **“is the only aim of our Institute”**.

**Thus, we focus our gaze on the plight of the poor,
even as we recognize our own poverties.**

In order to be transformative, we must be able to see not only the lived experience of the poor, but also the

“explanation of why things are the way they are”.

It is only in seeing from this level that we can consider truly transformative and thus preventive responses that will eventually make our lives more human.

Openness to Truth Wherever it is Found

While aware of the many destructive results of the French Revolution, Magdalene was open to the truth of its motivations. She read in the slogan of “liberty, equality and fraternity” its Christians meaning that can bring about concrete responses to the problems of the people.

We too are open to the seeds of truth in various religious, social, political and cultural viewpoints as we consider our realities. We thus form ourselves for more intentional seeing of our realities.

Seeing the Signs of the Times

Magdalene in all her writing invites us to be sensitive to the **“cry of the poor”** that represent the majority of the world population. Today, her beloved poor challenge us to be as sensitive to the new conditions that affect their lives so that we can effectively proclaim **the story of God’s love to them**.

*Ours is a new age of history with critical and swift upheavals
spreading gradually to all corners of the earth ...
At all times the Church carries the responsibility
of reading the **signs of the time** and interpreting them
in the light of the Gospel
if it is to carry out its task.
In language intelligible to every generation,
she should be able to answer
to ever recurring questions that people ask about the meaning
of this present life and of the life to come; and how one is related to the other.*
Vatican Council II

As an **International Canossian Family**, we are confronted by the rapid changes and contrasting realities of the world, characterized and shaped by the phenomenon of globalisation.

Social Problems

Numerous social problems exist in our world. While these are not new, the forces of economic globalisation and the social inequalities that continue to grow have exacerbated many of them. It bears repeating that those listed below are not comprehensive, but merely highlight several important trends.

Discrimination, racism and xenophobia continue,
Urbanization, the uncontrollable growing population at the edges of the cities and in shanties are reinforcing the gap between the rich and the poor,
Violence, continue to plague the world,
Addictions, afflict millions of people, cutting across race, class and culture,
Communications technology and the Media, and the spread of pornography,
Lack of Health Care, governments do not spend enough on overall health,
Other Human Rights Violations, military abuses, unjust imprisonment and detention,
Vulnerable Groups, women, children and youth, and families.

Families

Each of the realities already discussed has an impact not only on individuals but also on entire families, contributing to **the breakdown and disintegration of family life**. Immigration and refugee situations literally destroy family groupings.

Many women carry by themselves the responsibilities of the family. **The elderly and the disabled** are often marginalized, as society increasingly values only those who “produce”; they are often tolerated more than helped lovingly.

The family, recognized as the first line in protection of its members, is itself threatened by many forces.

These highlights of the social dimension and effects of globalisation prompt a wider and deeper research, study, reflection and prayer if we are to be faithful in heeding Magdalene’s recommendation to take care of her “beloved poor”.

Spirituality and Globalisation

The promises of a global economic and materialistic world-view have not provided men and women with real happiness and serenity. Instead their demands have reduced time and human energies into commodities that cannot be wasted in “non-productive pursuits”.

At the same time, these realities have given rise to **a re-birth of spirituality** throughout the world. More and more people are seeking the **quiet solitude** of various forms of **meditation**, and **disciplined practices** to connect with the **Transcendent Other**. The sense of global **solidarity** is growing. Spiritualities that explore the manifestations of God in creation, and in the realities of the oppressed continue to develop.

As Lay Canossians, **it is our task to read the realities of our world, and its promises and challenges, in the light of faith**. In this way we are able to tell faithfully and boldly the story of God’s love, and to journey with our sisters and brothers as they discover the unfolding of that story in their own lives.

- **In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**
- **Amen**

Introduction

Trust in God is the source of the joy of living, it is the strength of overcoming difficulties. In the family life it is important to encourage people with the light of faith, so that the uncertainties of the journey may not be an obstacle, but a stimulus to accomplish greater good.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

The Lord is my Shepherd:

I lack nothing;
in meadows of green grass he lets me lie,
to the waters of repose he leads me.
There he revives my soul.
He guides me by paths of virtue for the sake of his name.

Though I pass through a gloomy valley,

I fear no harm;
beside me your rod and your staff
are here, to hearten me.

You prepare a table before me

under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil,
my cup brims over.

Ah, how goodness and kindness pursue me,

every day of my life;
my home, the house of Yahweh,
as long as I live!

Psalm 22

FROM THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

Three days later there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. When they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the wedding was all finished, the mother of Jesus said to him: "They have no wine." Jesus said, "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants: "Fill the jars with water", and they filled them to the brim. "Draw some out now", he told them, "and take it to the steward."

They did this; the steward tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from – only the servants who had drawn the water knew – the steward called the bridegroom and said, “People generally serve the best wine first, and keep the cheaper sort till the guests have had plenty to drink; but you have kept the best wine till now.”

This was the first of the signs given by Jesus: it was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen, and the disciples believed in him.

Jn 2,1-11

Letter of Pope John Paul II to families, n° 5

At Cana in Galilee, where Jesus was invited to a marriage banquet, his Mother, also present, said to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn 2:5*). Now that we have begun our celebration of the Year of the Family, Mary says the same words to us. What Christ tells us, in this particular moment of history, constitutes a forceful call to a greater prayer with families and for families. The Virgin Mother invites us to unite ourselves through this prayer to the sentiments of her Son, who loves each and every family. He expressed this love at the very beginning of his mission as Redeemer, with his sanctifying presence at Cana in Galilee, a presence which still continues.

Let us pray for families throughout the world. Let us pray, through Christ, with him and in him, to the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (*Eph 3:15*).

As God's family, hand in hand, let us pray together:

OUR FATHER ...

FINAL PRAYER

God, Trinity of love,
may every Christian family
rediscover its dignity
and live its responsibility
as a small domestic Church,
a seed of the new humanity.

May it grow every day
in faith, hope and love.

May it know how to share its bread
with those who are hungry,
and give love to those who are small, poor, sick,
forgotten and abandoned.

AMEN.

*I beg you to recommend me to the Lord,
and remember also my sister-in-law and my family
to God, so that He may bless them all.*

Magdalene of Canossa

Personal and Group Reflection

1. **Read with attention and care** the Fifth Chapter of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church or the above passages of the same Document.

2. **Reflect personally and with your Group of the Lay Canossians**, underlining the main interesting points.

3. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine, in its fifth chapter, defines family, according to the Creator's design, as **"the primary place of 'humanization' for the person and society ... the primary place of personal relationship."**

A question: Are our families, even religious families, really "cradles of love"? What are the inalienable values to be laid as the foundation of our communities, in order that they may be families?

4. "The institution of marriage ... has its stability in the divine decree." "The Church does not abandon divorced people ... she encourages them, sustains them" The human being is made for love and without love he cannot live ... Let us analyse our modern society.

Three questions: What threatens, even in Christian marriages, the characteristic traits of union: totality, unity, fidelity, indissolubility and fruitfulness? Are our Christian communities attentive to our brothers and sisters who are living difficult situations because of their marriage failure? How do you help them? Which initiatives can be organized in the family, at school, in the parish, so as not render banal the experience of love and sexuality?

5. "Family is the sacred place of life".

Two questions: how can we sensitize families on the theme of bioethics in order to spread the Gospel of life? At which level is our commitment,

as individuals and as an Association, in order to defend children, their education and their integral promotion?

6. **Try** to enter your innerself, to discover your deepest aspirations and your social responsibilities.

Meet with Jesus Christ: the Son in Whom you are a son, a brother/sister for others.

7. **Please send** to the Lay Canossian International Coordinating Team your reflections which may help to implement our actions. We will share them with all our Lay Canossians to obtain greater commitment and solidarity for a civilization of love.


