



International Day of Families May 15th 2004

Theme: A Framework for Action

The International Day of Families was inaugurated by the United Nations in 1994. Each year a different theme is explored as a means to highlight family issues and to inspire appropriate action. As Catholics our "framework for action" is our particular understanding of the Christian family: at the heart of every people and culture, the family is also the way of the Church.

Family, become what you are: The Church in the home

The Christian family is a sanctuary of love and a community of the baptised. Jesus shows us the way of love, rooted in self-giving service to each other and to the world. As the Church in the home the family is the foremost educator of children, but the family is also a place of adult learning. Despite difficulties, the family reflects God's tenderness, faithfulness, forgiveness and mercy. The family become messengers of the compassionate love of Christ, for each other first of all but also for the rest of humanity. The family truly is a house of God.

Family, become what you are: A sanctuary of life

By welcoming children, by birth and by adoption, as gifts of God, the Christian family is the foundation, the living stones, both of society and the Church. In caring for the aged, the sick and the vulnerable among them, families proclaim the gospel of life. Through words that teach and by daily gestures of kindness, tenderness and forgiveness, the family cultivates in one another a sense of the fullness and richness of God's life. So Christian families are places where faith and values are passed on and developed across the generations.

Family, become what you are: Salt of the earth, light of the world

God entrusted the world's garden to a family, so that life, justice and peace could grow there. In loving others the family makes the compassion of Christ real in the world. Rooted in Jesus Christ, the family is called to transform the world: to recognise God in every moment and in every thing; to contemplate God in every person; to seek God's will in all that happens. It is in the rhythm of daily life that families humbly but radically change the world, as they seek to follow Jesus. Day by day, through simple gestures that brighten the lives of others, they bring to the heart of the world the Christian values of generosity and love.

Family, become what you are: "Good News" for all the world

Difficulties, exhaustion, conflicts and daily worries are part of life for all families. When parents - despite their troubles and despite their imperfections and weaknesses - choose kindness over aggression, tenderness over violence, forgiveness over bitterness, the family proclaims the victory of love, the victory of the Cross. When this happens, family members become witnesses to the incredible news of Jesus Christ, in whom love triumphed over death, once and for all. Such is the mystery of family life - human beings who transform the world by living the life of Jesus, a full life that fulfils the deepest hopes. Not only is this a challenge and an adventure, it is the Good News!

(Text adapted from the Bishops of the Americas Statement Affirming the Value of the Family 1.3.2004)

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