

LOVE

Any “union and communion of persons” works best when there is a common vision. If the mission of the family is to image the Holy Trinity then each household should ask itself, “What should this household therefore look like? What should it sound like? What should be the overall atmosphere and character of the household?”

This essentially means establishing plan or a family “culture.” What daily routines, traditions, habits, prayer time, activities, music, art, friends, etc. will best allow each family member to become the best versions of themselves — to grow in holiness? A particularly powerful practice in this regard is to have at least one meal together which would include prayer and brief reading of Scripture. During the meal have each person talk about what was significant to them that day. Reflect together on these experiences in the context of Faith. *Consistency is vital to the effectiveness of any aspect of the family culture.*

The word “Gift” should be the guiding word of a family. The greatest gift that parents can give a child is the love between husband and wife. Parents should not ask children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Rather, ask them, “How do you think you can make a gift of yourself for others?” The greatest lesson learned in a family is that we are all made in God’s image and likeness and we only find our fulfillment in life by making a full, free, faithful and fruitful gift of ourselves to others. **The family is a structure in which we first learn that real love is ultimately reflexive: We get what we need by tending first to the needs of others.**

VOCATIONS DIRECTORS

Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
 Archpriest Dennis M. Bogda
 c/o Chancery
 66 Riverview Avenue
 Pittsburgh, PA 15214
 phone 412-231-4000 ext. 20
 fax 412-231-1697
 vocations@archeparchy.org

Eparchy of Passaic
 Reverend Edward G. Cimbala
 Saint Mary Church
 1900 Brooks Boulevard
 Hillsborough, NJ 08844
 phone 908-725-0615
 fax 908-725-9615
 ecim@aol.com

Eparchy of Parma
 Archpriest Dennis M. Hrubiak
 Saint Mary Magdalene Church
 5390 West 220th Street
 Fairview Park, OH 44126-2968
 phone 440-734-4644
 fax 440-734-4645
 fdhrubiak@yahoo.com

Eparchy of Van Nuys
 Reverend Robert M. Pipta
 Holy Angels Church
 2235 Galahad Road
 San Diego, CA 92123-3931
 phone 858-277-2511
 fax 858-277-5792
 rmp.byzcath@juno.com

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BYZANTINE CATHOLIC VOCATIONS - FAMILY LIFE

AN ETERNAL RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE



THE HOLY TRINITY

The God that we believe in is Three Persons yet one God. God is a “union and communion of persons” in an eternal relationship of love between the Three Persons.

God is like a “family” within Himself! But this God, who is a “family,” a “union and communion of persons,” also did something. God created the world. He then united Himself intimately with His own creation. God moved out from the Trinity, while remaining in the Trinity to unite Himself with His own creation in what is described in Biblical imagery and by the mystical tradition of the Church as a “marriage” or “Spousal Mystery.” This “marriage” was also fruitful. It brought forth life. Love and life are inseparable realities.

The book of Genesis tells us that we are “made in the image and likeness of God.” This means, therefore, that we human beings are made to become a “union and communion of persons” who seek to enter into “spousal relationship.” We desire love, marriage, intimacy and children simply because these are the things that make us most like God! The essential definition of “family” is a unit that by its very nature was designed to image the very interior life of the Holy Trinity. Marriage and family enable human beings to actually participate in the way that God loves.



During the months of July and August, our bishops call us to a special awareness and increased understanding of Byzantine Catholic Family Life . . .

FOUR TASKS: THE MISSION OF “FAMILY”

In his 1981 Apostolic Exhortation, “The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World,” (*Familiaris Consortio*) Pope John Paul II outlined four “tasks” of the mission of family:

1. Forming a Community of Persons

The mission of a “family” is to become a “union and communion of persons” which reflects the very interior life of the Holy Trinity. This community is based upon love and real love is based upon the correct vision of the human person. A “person” by definition is worthy of dignity, respect and regard. As persons, we were made by God for our own sakes. A “community of persons” that is truly built upon love is one that seeks above all the good of the other person for their own sake. A loving family is a structure which allows each member to become the best version of themselves, to realize the particular plan that God has for each member of the family. It is in the structure of family that human beings first learn the lessons of love.

2. Serving Life

Love and life are inseparable. The love that exists between a husband and wife is naturally ordered to fruitfulness. Therefore, being open to the procreation of children is part of the true definition of “family.” However, serving life goes beyond just the biological begetting of children. Fatherhood and motherhood are ultimately defined by the spiritual investment that parents make into the lives of children. The family is a place where life is served in its broadest terms. This means forming children of character by teaching them virtues. Especially important is the virtue of charity which should be taught to extend beyond the family unit. A “family” is a structure in which its members learn to give life to others.

3. Participating in the Development of Society

The family is the first and vital cell of society. It is the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society. Imbued with the virtue of charity, family members are called to engage in temporal affairs and order them according to God’s plan. It is the family, formed as a union and communion of persons in love, which is to inform and influence society and not the other way around.

4. Sharing in the Life and Mission of the Church

The family is designed to be a “domestic church,” in a sense, a “little church.” The family actually participates in and incorporates into its structure the very mission of the Church. The family incorporates into the daily routine of the household some of which goes on at church. Personal and family prayer, participating in the Sacramental and ministerial life of the Church, encouraging vocations and evangelizing are among the ways that the family shares in the life and mission of the Church.

WHAT IS A “FAMILY?”

Civilization will go by way of the family. But what actually is a “family?” The traditional and ideal image would say that a family is a mother and father in a committed relationship who together bear and lovingly raise children in the same household. Yet today this traditional image is almost becoming the exception to the rule. The model of “family” today is more often marked by single mothers, single dads, broken families, step parents, step children, Mom and her boyfriend, or Dad and his girlfriend, Dad’s “partner,” Mom’s “partner,” mildly dysfunctional and radically dysfunctional families. There are even units of people that are referred to as “family” today that would never have been called “family” in the past. And yes, there are some basically functional families as well. Such chaos and confusion! Yet we all, in various ways, still desire marriage, intimacy, and children. We still desire “family.” Why is this?

If civilization is going to go by way of the family, then it becomes imperative that civilization have a sense of what family truly is. A “family” has to understand its mission, have a vision for that mission and a plan or “culture” in which to carry out the mission. The chaotic definition of “family” that we labor under today is due to a lack of a vision not only of “family” but of the human person. So, where do we go for the correct vision and mission of a “family?” Where do we go for the answer to why, amidst the family chaos today, we still desire family? The starting point is our concept of God, for God is the source of all good things.

*Very Rev. Thomas J. Loya, STB, MA
Syncellus for Parishes and Laity
Eparchy of Parma*

