

# Reflections

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## Mission: Family

If we want to take being missionaries seriously, we have to begin in our own home.....renewing and evangelizing our own family. Now then, **why is the family a challenge today, why is it mission territory?**

1. Because **the family is in crisis** today! The growing deterioration of the natural family is one of the most alarming problems in society today: divorces, separations, conflicts and family break-ups, absent fathers, single mothers, abandoned children and adolescents. Because it is difficult for today's man/woman to grow toward a healthy, mature and generous love, the basic family attachments begin to dissolve.

And we know how tragic the consequences of all of these are for the healthy growth of our youths, for their psychological stability, their affective maturity and their religious experience.

2. **The first experiences of love.** The greatest importance of the family consists in that the family is the place where the first and the most unforgettable love attachments are experienced. Without the experiences in infancy, it will be difficult to be disposed to pay the hard price required by the apprenticeship of love and personal attachment: generosity, confidence, respect, understanding and fidelity.

It is true that the most important love for man/woman is the love for God. Nevertheless, to be able to love God, it is necessary – normally – to have first discovered the value of human love because God is love and we cannot reach out to Him if we have not been prepared through experiences of family love. For that reason, Father Joseph Kentenich, founder of the Schoenstatt Movement believes that the growth of atheism and the destruction of the family, march along hand-in-hand because – for many persons – the vital access to the world of God has been hindered for them by family traumas.

We can say that our most decisive contribution for the religious formation of our children does not take place through our teachings or testimonies of faith, but through the experiences of family love which we can offer them. As parents, we begin to lead our children toward God when we begin to love them.

3. The family **is the foundation and sign of the Church.** The Church is generated from each Christian home as a community and school of faith; therefore, it is given the title of “church in miniature” or “domestic church.”

Through the Sacrament, each Christian marriage should be a transparency and witness of the love of Christ for his Church. Each couple receives the mission to reflect in their life the generous, faithful, fruitful and heroic love of Christ. But it is not easy to achieve in our families the living presence of the Lord. It is not easy to evangelize our families; for example, fostering prayer in common, frequenting the Sacraments, Biblical or spiritual reading, a religious atmosphere, Christian customs...

4. Mary's home in Nazareth represents the **model of all Christian homes.** There, Jesus was the center and his presence filled the entire life of the small family. The divine and the human meshed into a perfect harmony. For Mary, conversing with her Son-God was already praying.

Of course, this represented an exceptional situation – impossible of imitating. Nevertheless, Mary can and wants to educate our families today according to the spirit of Nazareth. And it is urgent that She do so because in proportion to the measure in which the exterior atmosphere becomes less Christian, the importance of the Christian family as a school of faith doubles. It is no longer evident that the children – by having been baptized – will always conserve the faith.

In the future, only those parents who have consciously made their homes a reflection of the home in Nazareth will be able to trust in having an influence of faith.....long-lasting and profound, in the hearts of their children.

## Questions for reflection

1. How can I contribute to this family mission?
2. Am I on the battlefield or am I a simple spectator?
3. Am I aware that I have a divine mission as a member of my family?

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