

PEACE AND FAMILIES

To all of you who seek for peace :

Peace !

Pope Francis called for an Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that will be held in October of this year, to reflect on the theme "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of the Evangelization". On February the 2d, he wrote a letter to all the families inviting them to actively participate in the preparation of this event, with suggestions and above all with prayers.

It is an occasion for us to reflect and pray upon the contribution of families for peace on this earth. Pope John Paul II dedicated the message for the XXVII World Day of Peace to the theme: "The Family Creates the Peace of the Human Family". Right from the start, John Paul II reflects upon the family as a community of life and love: "The domestic virtues, based upon a profound respect for human life and dignity, and practiced in understanding, patience, mutual encouragement and forgiveness, enable the community of the family to live out the first and fundamental experience of peace" (n°2). However, he notes that family is often victim of absence of peace and that "In contrast with its original vocation of peace, the family is sadly and not infrequently, seen to be the scene of tension and oppression, or the defenceless victim of the many forms of violence marking society today" (3-4). Our own experience proves us how much homes are torn apart by quarrels and conflicts, whether it be between parents and children, or between brothers, generally for futile reasons. Despite these limitations, we can consider family as a central actor for peace: "The State also has an important role in creating the conditions in which families can provide for their primary needs in a way befitting human dignity. Poverty, indeed destitution - a perennial threat to social stability, to the development of people and to peace - in our day affects too many families" (5). Eventually, John Paul II understands the mission of the family as a service for peace. He thus advises and suggests each family to "ask for this peace, pray for this peace, work for this peace!" (6). Parents are asked to be educators for peace ; children, to face the future, to develop a desire for good and thoughts of peace ; grandparents, to make a contribution of their experience and their witness in order to link the past to the future in a peaceful present. For those who do not have a family, it is the Church's responsibility to greet them as the great house of the children of God (n°6).

So that families of the entire world can live this vocation of builders of peace, let us pray the Lord:

O Lord, Father of the entire humanity, you wish that all men and all women may live as brothers and sisters on earth. Bless every human family and give them the grace to live in peace and be a source of peace for everyone. Amen.

Kindest regards,

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