



The Joy of Love

Study Guide

Chapter Nine - "The Spirituality of Marriage and Family"

1. "Charity takes on different hues, depending on the state of life to which we have been called." What state of life are you called to currently? What are some acts of charity in which you can participate in your everyday life?
2. **"A Spirituality of Supernatural Communion"** "The word of God tells us that 'the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness' (1 Jn 2:11); such a person 'abides in death' (1 Jn 3:14) and 'does not know God' (1 Jn 4:8)." In what ways are the demands of family life an incentive to grow and more fully encounter the Lord?
3. **"Gathered in Prayer in The Light of Easter"** "If a family is centered on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in union with the Lord's cross, and his closeness will make it possible to surmount them. In the darkest hours of a family's life, union with Jesus in his abandonment can help avoid a breakup." Consider incorporating family prayer in your daily life. What are some ways you could do this? If your family doesn't all live together how could you use technology or social media to participate in family prayer?
4. **"A Spirituality of Exclusive and Free Love"** "The space which each of the spouses makes exclusively for their personal relationship with God not only helps heal the hurt of life in common, but also enables the spouses to find in the love of God the deepest source of meaning in their own lives. Each day we have to invoke the help of the Holy Spirit to make this interior freedom possible." What barriers stand in your way of having a true personal relationship with Christ? Today take time to ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your personal relationship with Christ.

5. **“A Spirituality of Care, Consolation and Incentive”** Below is an excerpt from the closing paragraph of the exhortation, take some time to read it again and reflect on its meaning.

“As this exhortation has often noted, no family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. This is a never-ending vocation born of the full communion of the Trinity, the profound unity between Christ and his Church, the loving community which is the Holy Family of Nazareth, and the pure fraternity existing among the saints of heaven. Our contemplation of the fulfillment which we have yet to attain also allows us to see in proper perspective the historical journey which we make as families, and in this way to stop demanding of our interpersonal relationships a perfection, a purity of intentions and a consistency which we will only encounter in the Kingdom to come. It also keeps us from judging harshly those who live in situations of frailty. All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse. Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. What we have been promised is greater than we can imagine. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us.”

6. **“Prayer to the Holy Family”**

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division; may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God’s plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.

Amen.”