

Prayer Vigil for the Synod on Family with Pope Francis
St. Peter's Square, October 3, 2015

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“For the Church, the family is not first and foremost a cause for concern, but rather the joyous confirmation of God’s blessing upon the masterpiece of creation. Every day, all over the world, the Church can rejoice in the Lord’s gift of so many families who, even amid difficult trials, remain faithful to their promises and keep the faith!” (September 27, 2015).

These words spoken by Pope Francis in Philadelphia explain the reason we’ve come together this evening: to thank God who continues to generate families, the proof of which is visible in those present here today, and to ask that He continue to bless our families.

Where does the Church get this optimism? From the certainty that the Lord is faithful to His Church, to His family. In this, she offers the right outlook for us to have as well, indicating what we should place our hope in.

How can we grow ever stronger in this certainty? By going to the heart of the reason that two people get married. As we were reminded by the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: in “love between man and woman, [...] human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. [...] All other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison” (2).

It’s the same experience witnessed by Giacomo Leopardi in his hymn to Aspasia: “Lady, your beauty was a ray of heavenly / light to my thinking.” The poet perceives a woman’s beauty as a “heavenly ray,” as the presence of the Divine. Through her beauty, God Himself comes to knock at man’s door.

The beauty of women really is a “heavenly ray,” a sign that points to something beyond. This means that if they don’t encounter the reality indicated by that sign, the place where the promise awakened by the other finds fulfillment, husbands and wives will be condemned to a prison of unfair expectations, and their desire for the infinite will be destined to go unsatisfied.

Christ, Beauty made flesh, places “His person at the core of man’s affection and freedom,” at the “heart of his natural sentiments, fully and rightfully establishing Himself as their true root.” (Fr. Giussani) Only He can fulfill the promise awakened in us by the other. Our families will be able to reach their fullness, to forgive each other, to face all challenges and open themselves to others inasmuch as they welcome Him into their homes.

This is how we can witness the beauty of our families, and the good that they represent, to all people. By demonstrating that Christ makes it possible to love without expecting anything in return, because “everything for me You were and are.” (Ada Negri)