

**para el mundo - pour le monde - for the World - para o mundo - per il mondo**

The final document of the Synod of the Universal Church, centred on the theme of synodality, actually devotes only two numbers to the family (No. 35 and No. 64), but one would be mistaken to think that the family was forgotten or underestimated by the Synodal Assembly. On the contrary, it was seen as the paradigm for learning concretely what it means to be a synodal church, a church that gathers, listens, discerns and decides together.

## Synod and family. Towards a family church

In this regard, the most forceful text of the document is no. 35. *"Families, which the Council refers to as 'as it were, the domestic Church' (LG 11), are the pre-eminent context in which we learn to live out the richness of relationships between persons, united in their diversity of character, sex, age and role. In families, we learn to experience the basic practices needed for a synodal Church. The reality of brokenness and suffering experienced by families notwithstanding, they remain places where we learn to exchange the gifts of love, trust, reconciliation, forgiveness and understanding. Here, we learn that we are equal in dignity and created for reciprocity, that we need to be listened to, and that we are able to listen. Here we first learn how to discern and decide together, accept and exercise authority that is loving and life-giving, and to be co-responsible and accountable"*.

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These words call for a reversal of perspective. We are used to thinking that the family is an 'object' of pastoral care. This is true, but the opposite, according to the Synod, is even more true. The Synod fathers and mothers fully embraced the perspective that Pope Francis gave in his Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*. In it he calls for a reconsideration of ecclesial identity beginning with the family. Pope Francis, while acknowledging and integrating the Church's traditional path to the family, proposes a reverse approach: starting from the experience of love lived in the family to enlighten the Church as the 'family of God's children'. In this perspective, it is not only families that define themselves as Church, but it is the Church itself that conceives itself as family, situating itself in the school of family life.

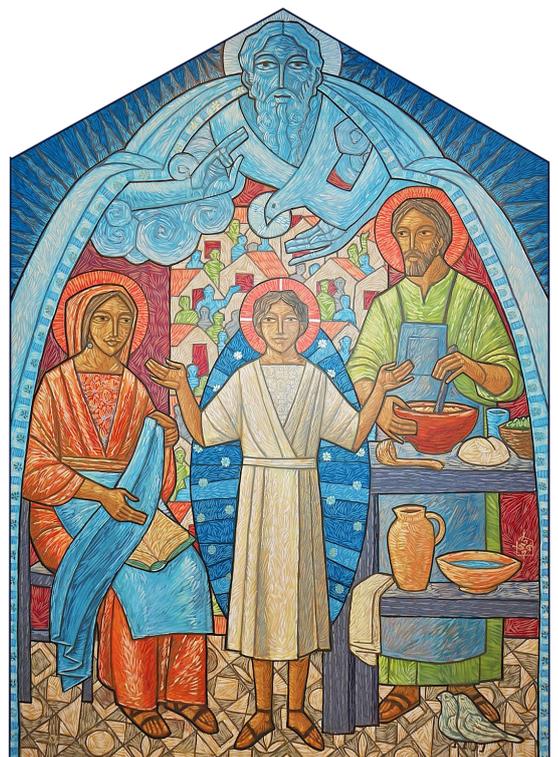
The family, from a place often interpreted as a source of problems or an object of moral regulation, is instead revealed as a fundamental resource: a community of love and life which becomes an essential source for the very constitution of the Church. In this context, the family is not only an 'object' of pastoral attention, but a fundamental 'subject' for making the whole Church and its pastoral mission 'family-oriented'. It is configured as a 'theological place', from which the very mystery of the Church can be understood more deeply.

The family, with all its frailties, remains the richest school of humanity and life.

It is an 'existential', a fundamental formative reality for understanding and realising personal, social and ecclesial existence. The family is the 'matrix of identity', the basis of relationships and social life, because each person is what the family has allowed him to be and what he can become in the world.

A Church that wants to be 'synodal' is called to become a 'family' Church.

Br. Enzo Biemmi. FSF



# Today's family...



There are five of us in the family: Katty, the pillar, mother of three children, Camila and Valentina, former students of the School of Ambato and catechists; and Mathías, student of the Sa-Fa. And I, Alex, father of the family. We have lived our life in the Nazarene Fraternity at the invitation of a Fraternal Sister. We have been sharing a new way of life for more than five years, studying the teachings of Brother Gabriel, as well as sharing with our children the Nazarene Charism, trying to apply the Sa-Fa legacy: 'Prayer, Love, Work, Peace'. We are actively involved in various actions that allow us to grow in spirituality, convinced that God is at work in us. Blessings to all. (Alex. Fraternity of Ambato. Ecuador).

Yes, that day at the beginning of September we received the good news: Jaime was entering the school from that waiting list we had seen a thousand times before. Hello Sa-Fa Family we are the Alvaro-Fernandez Family: Jesus, Carmen and our children Jaime, Carmen and Pablo. We belong to a school community called 'Safarenos' and our children, now university students, are also in youth communities. As parents we have said 'THANK YOU' so many times for that day in September. Our first child was starting school: it was a big step for all of us and we celebrated it without being fully aware of what it would mean. We found in that space of LOVE, VALUES and FAITH a place where our children learned to read, to play, complex equations, parts of the cell and to pray... They felt loved and valued, they met people who have come to stay in their lives. Today we are all part of this large, plural, joyful family on the way: the Sa-Fa Family. (Madrid).



I am Arabella Medida, better known as 'Bhing' at school. I am a mother blessed with the gift of raising my family. As a mother, I seek to instill love, faith and hope in my children, guided by the light of the Holy Family. Serving as an Administrator of Gabriel Taborin School in Davao has been a privilege and a calling. It allows me to support the mission of forming young hearts and minds, while my involvement in Sa-



Fa deepens my connection to the charism of the school. Through it, I have not only found a community of faith, but also a space to grow spiritually. Being close to the Sa-Fa charism has transformed my family life. It has taught us the beauty of prayer, the strength of unity and the grace found in service to others. This closeness has made us more compassionate, more resilient and more grounded in God's love. It is a gift that continues to bless us every day. (Lasang. Philippines).

# ... and the Sa-Fa charism

We are closely related to the Sa-Fa Family through the Holy Family Schools where both of us parents were educated. We are also involved in other areas of the Province. We have 3 children. The closeness to the Sa-Fa charism has enriched us by cultivating the values of solidarity and respect. This has created an atmosphere of participation and mutual help, strengthening family cohesion. Participating in the activities has allowed us to develop a sense of belonging and to be able to pass on these values to our children. Convinced of the richness of the Sa-Fa charism, we are committed to transmitting it to those around us. We accompany and advise 7 young couples with whom we share the Sa-Fa spirit (DOUAMBA Family, Burkina Faso).



Hello, we are the Oliú Eguren Family: José and Beatriz, the parents, and our sons Facundo Santiago and Felipe José, both married. Our relationship with the Holy Family is almost lifelong, I am a former student of the school, my sisters too, our children (both of them) and my 6 nephews and nieces too. José, on the other hand, went to the Jesuit School, but he always admired the excellence manifested through the books of Brother Damascene, which were an inescapable book in his family.

Our charismatic harmony begins with the option for a simple, Christian education that encourages family values. A second element has been, without doubt, the testimony of simplicity, warmth, and work that we have always seen in the Brothers, we can say of them that 'each one reflects what it is to be a Brother and the whole Nazarene charism'. Our family always sought God, we tried to live in a Christian way and in the year 2024, seeing the deterioration of the concept of family, we received as a gift from God the invitation from Brother Edgardo to form part of the Nazarene Fraternities. What better than to be under the protection of Jesus, Joseph and Mary, of the Brothers and of other Nazarenes who want to live in the same way! Humbly, in silence, with concrete gestures, they simply strengthen and encourage us to live this stage of life (José and Beatriz. Uruguay).

We introduce ourselves: The parents are Matteo and Sara. The daughters, Alice and Giorgia. Relationship with the Sa-Fa Family: What has the closeness and participation in the Sa-Fa charism brought to my family? We have known the Brothers of the Holy Family for about 20 years. Our approach to this reality came about little by little, in a natural way. It is nice to be able to share thoughts and opinions about the home together. We recognise in the charism of the Brothers the tendency, today, to come closer and be together, sharing life between human beings before having chosen to be religious or lay, and before any other kind of relationship. The possibility of embracing and breathing an air of communion and sharing, of respect and kindness towards others.



# Being a family today

The concept of family throughout Salvation History has changed and will continue to change. From Abraham who unites with his slave girl to have offspring, to Brother Gabriel who does not leave Belleydoux (1824) until he has the blessing of his parents, passing through the extended family in Nazareth where cousins are included (Mk 6:3), up to today where so many single-parent families struggle to be 'one heart and one soul' loving and helping each other, sharing joys, sorrows, successes and failures... (Cf. Circular 21 of Brother Gabriel).

*"The Holy Family shows us the bonds which united them and which led them to care and concern for each other: 'Your father and I looked for you in anguish' (Lk 2:48). In faith, we see in the family union of Jesus, Mary and Joseph an inspiring ideal of fullness, balance, development and true love... every experience of family relationships can be inspired by the union of the family of Nazareth, because all love carries within it something of the paternity, maternity and filiation of God. Respect for the mystery of love that we find in every expression of family life is an impulse to encourage every family that frequents the centres of the Sa-Fa Family to be inspired by the Holy Family of Nazareth as a desirable and accessible ideal" (Laity under the same roof of Nazareth. 2023).*

But there is still more to guide us in the answer to the initial question .... *"Then his mother and his brothers came and, standing outside, sent for him. The crowd was sitting around Jesus, and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are looking for you outside'. And he said to them, 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' And looking at those sitting around him, he said, 'These are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother'" (Mk 3:31-35).*



We believe that there is a common element in all the types of family we have hinted at and those to come: to do God's will, to seek it, to recognise it and to do it. It is what we pray every day, in that prayer of the family which is the Our Father... *'hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...'*

Those who live together, sharing their daily bread, forgiving offences and taking care not to deviate from God's will, those will be a family in the context of our spirituality. Thank you for reflecting on this with me!

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Uruguay