



Synod  
2021  
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For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

## Reflection 9

Following Clelia's Footsteps  
Toward the Heart of Jesus

# THE FAMILY IS WHERE WE LEARN TO LOVE AND TO GO OUT OF OURSELVES

## 10th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES – ROME 2022



Pope Francis invites families to live in true freedom, expressed in the spirit of service. He tells parents to trust their children and to give them an example of faithfulness to the married vocation. The Pope entrusted the families who were

present with the mandate to proclaim the Gospel everywhere.

Family love: a vocation and the road to holiness. “Freedom is one of the most cherished ideals and goals of the people of our time. Everyone wants to be free,” he observes, “free of every kind of ‘prison’, cultural, social or economic.” Yet, the Pope affirms, it is interior freedom that matters most, and that freedom is a gift. It is Christ who, at the price of his blood, freed us from every form of slavery and, before all else, from being concerned only with ourselves. The freedom that Jesus brings is “completely directed to love.”

“In building your family, you made, with the help of Christ’s grace, a courageous decision: *not to use freedom for yourselves, but to love the persons that God has put at your side.* Instead of living like little islands, you became ‘slaves of one another.’ That is how freedom is exercised in the family. There are no ‘planets’

or ‘satellites,’ each travelling on its own orbit. The family is the place of encounter, of sharing, of going forth from ourselves in order to welcome others and stand beside them. The family is *the first place where we learn to love*. We must never forget that the family is the first place where we learn to love.”

Pope Francis observes that, realistically, this is not always the case. Thus, he says, it is necessary to defend the family and to work so that it does not lose its DNA, “which is the spirit of acceptance and service.” This is expressed in the *relationship between generations*, the ‘passing on of witness’ from parents to children.

How important it is for parents to reflect on God’s way of acting! . . . The word of God shows us the way: not to shield our children from the slightest hardship and suffering, but to try to communicate to them a passion for life, to arouse in them the desire to discover their vocation and embrace the great mission that God has in mind for them.

There is no better way to help children than to encourage them to follow their vocation, continues the Pope, and to have them see their parents living their vocation as a mission, with fidelity and patience, “despite difficulties, moments of sadness and times of trial.” (cf. Pope Francis, June 25, 2022)

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## **MARY’S VOCATION (Luke 1: 26-38)**



In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was greatly troubled at

what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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Mary is deeply touched by this greeting. With these words, the angel reveals to Mary her true identity: she is immaculate, without sin, the woman perfectly free, as Adam and Eve were before original sin. This means that she **had the option to say yes or no** to Gabriel when he announced to Mary her vocation to be the mother of God. Mary also well knows that the angel's invitation calls into question all her plans for her life and exposes her to some enormous risks. To be found with child outside of her marriage with Joseph means that she could be stoned to death, as prescribed by Jewish law. But **with complete freedom she entrusts herself to God**. Then the angel reassures her, and later Joseph, that "nothing will be impossible for God." Mary's attitude of faith is a challenge to us.

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## MOTHER CLELIA

Mother Clelia says that to become saints we must ascend step by step with constancy and perseverance.

*“We must get it into our heads and hearts that perfection is acquired precisely by means of little things”* (Spiritual Anthology, p. 85).

*“Practice charity with a kind and peaceful countenance, with an affable manner, with gentle and cordial speech; be indulgent in the use of charity, always taking the good side and interpreting everything told to you favorably, excusing others even at your own expense”* (Spiritual Anthology, p. 88).

- **How are you living your vocation?**
- **God calls you every moment: how do you respond?**
- **Have you begun your journey to holiness?**

## SHARING—TESTIMONIES

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**Prayer:** Lord, we pray for all those who are opening their hearts to your call: may your Word enlighten them, your example attract them, and your grace guide them. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, your mother and ours, answer it with love. Amen.

