



Synod  
2021  
2023  
For a synodal Church  
communione | partecipazione | missione

**Reflection 10**  
*Following Clelia's Footsteps  
Toward the Heart of Jesus*

## THE FAMILY ON A JOURNEY WITH THE LORD: KEEP LOOKING AHEAD WITHOUT LONGING FOR THE PAST

### 10th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES – ROME 2022



To follow Jesus means to set out on a never-ending “trip” with him through the events of life. How true this is for you married couples! By accepting the call to marriage and family, you too have left the “nest” and set out on a trip, without knowing beforehand where exactly it would lead,

and what new situations, unexpected events and surprises, some painful, would eventually lie in store for you. That is what it means to journey with the Lord. It is a lively, unpredictable and marvellous voyage of discovery.

Dear families, you too have been asked not to have other priorities, not to “look back,” to miss your former life, your former freedom, with its deceptive illusions. Life becomes “fossilized” when it is not open to the newness of God's call and pines for the past. Missing the past and not being open to the newness that God sends always “fossilizes” us; it hardens us and does not make us more human. When Jesus calls, also in the case of marriage and family life, he asks us to keep looking ahead, and he always precedes us on the way. *He always precedes us* in love and service. And those who follow him will not be disappointed!

The Church is *with* you; indeed, the Church is *in* you! For the Church was born of a family, the Holy Family of Nazareth, and is made up

mostly of families. May the Lord help you each day to persevere in unity, peace, joy, and in moments of difficulty, that faithful perseverance, which makes us live better and shows everyone that God is love and communion of life. (from Pope Francis, June 25, 2022)

## **Genesis 12: 1-7 – The Call Of Abraham**

The LORD said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will find blessing in you. Abram went as the LORD directed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai, his brother’s son Lot, all the possessions that they had accumulated, and the persons they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, by the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said: To your descendants I will give this land. So Abram built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.



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### **COMMENT**

The story of Abraham is “good news,” a true gospel about salvation from harm. It is about a life-giving God who puts an end to the most persistent barrenness; a God who shatters human plans with his creative initiative; a powerful God who firmly holds the reins of history. God’s command is to abandon, renounce, detach, and surrender; to set out on an unknown path, without guarantees or certainty.

The call of Abraham is characteristic of the many vocation stories found in Scripture. It reveals a divine plan whereby the salvation

(blessing) lost through sin will be restored to all mankind. Thus, God confers on Abraham and, through him, to his descendants not a privilege, but a service of universal significance. The blessing promised to him consists of great material well-being, regarded as a consequence of a just life. It is this material well-being that makes him the model of the just person who lives in total submission to God, and thus God fills his life with gifts. In the silent response of the patriarch appear the essential features of an authentic experience of faith: listening, abandonment of one's personal security, confidence, and willingness to set out on a journey.

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### **OUR FOUNDRESS, CLELIA MERLONI**

Mother Clelia Merloni was born in Forlì in northern Italy on March 10, 1861, and baptized on the same day.

In 1864, at the age of 3, she lost her mother. Her father was remarried in 1866 to Maria Giovanni Boeri. She and Clelia's maternal grandmother educated her in the faith and in virtue. In 1872, Clelia received the Sacrament of Confirmation. She was a very gifted child: intelligent, courageous, generous, enthusiastic. She let the seed of her vocation mature in her heart.

In 1884 she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Snows and took the name of Sister Albina. However, she soon had to return to her family for health reasons. In 1888, persistent in her desire to help the poorest, she opened an orphanage for girls in Nervi with the help of her father. This, however, was forced to close the following year.

Clelia never abandoned her dream. In 1892 she entered the Congregation of the Daughters of Saint Mary of Providence in Como, and was welcomed by Blessed Luigi Guanella. The following year, she contracted tuberculosis. Although she was not expected to survive, she was miraculously cured. From that moment, she felt the desire to

found a work dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which would serve the poor, the orphans, and the elderly.

On May 30, 1894, at the age of 33, she was officially introduced to the parishioners of Saint Francis Church in Viareggio, Province of Lucca. With this, the Institute of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was born. Very soon afterwards, other young women followed her, who dedicated themselves to the service of orphans and abandoned elderly women, to the education of girls, and to catechesis.

- **Tell your vocation story to your children, to those close to you, and if possible to your GFASC group.**

## **SHARING – TESTIMONIES**

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**Prayer:** Lord, make us people capable of service. Place us at the service of our brothers and sisters who are most lonely, most marginalized, most in need of care and help. Give them their daily bread along with our understanding, peaceful, and joyful love.

Lord, make us people capable of service, bringing love where there is hatred, the spirit of forgiveness where there is injustice, harmony where there is discord, truth where there is error, faith where there is doubt, hope where there is despair, light where there is darkness, and joy where there is sadness.

Lord, make us people capable of service and of living in the love that you give us. Amen!

