



## Catechesis for Families & Parishes

*"The strength of a faith that feels like home" – Pope Francis, Edmonton 2022*

### Love one another

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us, **"Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another"** (Jn 13:34). Jesus' words "love one another" motivate us to love and forgive daily, for better and worse, in sickness and health, in good times and bad. **We find love at the heart of family relationships, a communion of love in Christ.** When we think about the day-to-day lives of families, we know that sometimes a family is one of the most challenging relationships to build, nourish and maintain. Families can disagree about many things – sometimes with lots of emotions! Our faith joyfully shares that the Christian proclamation of the family is Good News!<sup>i</sup> We learn how Christ loved us through the Gospels, and we come to know that the Son of God came to us as a child and grew to walk among us, to know and be near to us, to give His life freely for us on the cross, and to rise again to save us.

**To love one another is to be "guardians of life"** within our families and in caring for the elderly, devoting attention to being of service for persons with disabilities, and providing attention to people living in poverty.<sup>ii</sup> Love, sometimes called **charity**, is a theological virtue, which means **we need God's grace** to receive and give it. Charity is what holds together our Church, a family of families. Together, faith, hope, and charity are all gifts from God that we receive and practice through prayer, concrete acts of generosity and care, and the Sacraments.

### The strength of a faith which makes us feel at home

When Pope Francis visited Canada on his penitential pilgrimage in 2022, he encouraged us to walk together and **renew "the strength of a faith which makes us feel at home"**<sup>iii</sup>. A family rooted in Christ claims the beauty and abundance of grace in the family anew. The New Testament speaks of



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Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB)  
2500 promenade Don Reid Drive, Ottawa, ON K1H 2J2  
Tel: 613-241-9461



**“churches that meet in homes”** (cf. 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5; Col 4:15; Philem 2). In our daily lives, our family homes become a **domestic church** when the smallest gathering of believers understand that Christ is present among them and they make room around the table for him.<sup>iv</sup> We are reminded of the image found in the Book of Revelation, where the Lord says: **“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me” (Rev 3:20)**. Here we see a home filled with the presence of God, common prayer and abundant blessing.<sup>v</sup>

### The gift of grandparents

Our roots are important! Across Canada, many people have a special devotion to Jesus’ grandparents, Saint Anne and Saint Joachim. During his visit last year, Pope Francis said that “it was in the home of Joachim and Anne that **the child Jesus came to know his older relatives and experienced the closeness, tender love and wisdom of his grandparents.**”<sup>vi</sup> This is a beautiful scene to imagine. In our own families, we may hold special memories of meals or simple times spent chatting with our grandparents. So often, through listening, and conversations, including silly, sad, and joyful stories, we learn to understand about our family history and diverse identities.

**The Pope reminded us that our family roots are “the love that awaited us and welcomed us into the world, the families in which we grew up.”**<sup>vii</sup> We are part of a unique history that came before us and gave us life. We receive this history and life as a gift and are called to pass it on to future generations. As Pope Francis said, we are “children of a history that needs to be preserved” but also “authors of a history yet to be written.”<sup>viii</sup>

### The treasure of faith inherited

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus describes our identity as believers:

***“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the***





*lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt 5: 14-16).*

In speaking to young people in Iqaluit, Pope Francis extended this invitation echoing the above Gospel reading: **“Come to the light which is Christ and share that light with others.** You are called to bring new light into the world, the light of your eyes, the light of your smile, the light of the goodness that you and you alone can bring.”<sup>ix</sup>

**The faith we have inherited must be cherished and safeguarded.** We are asked to remember and take care of our roots and to pray for and with those who came before us. We can concretely do this by making space in our homes to preserve the memory of our ancestors, keeping close their Bible or rosary beads. In doing so, the Holy Father said: **“This is how a family tree grows; this is how the future is built.”<sup>x</sup>**

### **The closeness of Christ to Indigenous Catholic families**

When Pope Francis visited us on this land, he opened a space to recall the memory of the past. He spent time with and listened to us in the present and set his gaze on a future full of hope and healing. At Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton, Pope Francis recalled the words from Saint John Paul II’s visit to Canada, **“Christ animates the very centre of all culture. Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the [Indigenous] people, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself [Indigenous].”<sup>xi</sup>** This teaching affirms the beauty and goodness of Indigenous ways of life and is lived out in many Indigenous Catholic families.

During his meeting with young people in Iqaluit, Pope Francis described the testimony of an elder. This elder spoke of the beautiful spirit that reigned in Indigenous families before the time of the residential school system. The elder compared those days to springtime when young birds chirped happily around their mother. Families of grandparents, parents and children lived



harmoniously together. But suddenly, the singing stopped. Families were broken up. Little ones were taken far away from home. Winter fell over everything. Expressing his hope and prayer, Pope Francis shared his wish for Indigenous people; he said, **“that by listening to your elders and drawing from the richness of your traditions and your personal freedom, you will embrace the Gospel preserved and handed down to you by your ancestors, and thus come to see the Inuk face of Jesus Christ.”**<sup>xii</sup> May we continue to walk together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, families, parents, grandparents and children, to grow in understanding, truth, healing, forgiveness, faithfulness and hope.

*Each person is invited to reread the catechesis and to reflect on what resonates in their heart in a particular way.*

## Summary and key points for children

- In the Bible, Jesus tells us how much he loves us! In return, Jesus says we must love our parents, siblings, grandparents and friends, just as much as he loves us.
- God’s grace, love and charity hold our families and our Church together.
- Our faith and relationship with Christ should “feel like home” – a safe, loving place where we grow into who we are created to be.
- Jesus loved and learned from his grandparents, Saints Anne and Joachim. Grandparents and elders teach us about our family history. It is important to spend time listening to them.
- Through our Baptism and through knowing and loving Jesus, we are the light in the world. We are called to share this light with others.
- We should find ways in our homes to remember and pray for our loved ones.

## Discussion questions for couples and families

- *Describe a time when God’s charity and grace made it easier for me to forgive a loved one.*





National

*Family & Life Week*

May 7-14, 2023 *Love one another*

- *In what ways does your faith “feel like home”?*
- *Share some concrete ways Christ and your family’s history can be more present in your Domestic Church?*

**Learn more about Pope Francis’s Penitential Pilgrimage to Canada toward healing and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.**

*Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. “Educational resources. Indigenous delegation to Rome, 28 March to 1 April, 2022”.*

<https://www.cccb.ca/indigenous-peoples/indigenous-delegation-march-28-to-april-1-2022-vatican-city/educational-resources/>

*Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. “That we may walk together” Series of Pastoral Letters, 2023.* <https://www.cccb.ca/indigenous-peoples/that-we-may-walk-together-series-of-pastoral-letters-2023/>



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## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> Pope Francis. Apostolic exhortation. *Amoris Laetitia*, "The Joy of Love". 19 March 2016. para 1. <https://www.cccb.ca/faith-moral-issues/family-and-life/celebrating-the-amoris-laetitia-family-year/explore-and-reflect-on-amoris-laetitia/>
- <sup>ii</sup> Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, "Catechumenal pathways for married life. Pastoral Guidelines for local churches". *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 2022. [http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/amoris-laetitia/OrientamentiCatecumenatomatrimoniale/Catechumenal%20Pathways\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/amoris-laetitia/OrientamentiCatecumenatomatrimoniale/Catechumenal%20Pathways_ENG.pdf)
- <sup>iii</sup> Pope Francis. "Homily of the Holy Father on the Feast of Saints Joachim and Anne during the Apostolic Journey to Canada (24 - 30 July 2022) at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton", 26 July 2022. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220726-omelia-edmonton-canada.html>
- <sup>iv</sup> "The family, is so to speak, the domestic church." See Pope Paul VI, Dogmatic Constitution. *Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para 11. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)
- <sup>v</sup> cf. Pope Francis. Apostolic exhortation. *Amoris Laetitia*, "The Joy of Love". 19 March 2016. Follow link for the text and discussion questions prepared by the CCCB Office for Family and Life. <https://www.cccb.ca/faith-moral-issues/family-and-life/celebrating-the-amoris-laetitia-family-year/explore-and-reflect-on-amoris-laetitia/>
- <sup>vi</sup> Pope Francis. "Homily of the Holy Father on the Feast of Saints Joachim and Anne during the Apostolic Journey to Canada (24 - 30 July 2022) at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton", 26 July 2022.
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>viii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>ix</sup> Pope Francis. "Address of His Holiness, Meeting with Young People and Elders during the Apostolic Journey to Canada (24 - 30 July 2022) at Primary school in Iqaluit Tuesday", 29 July 2022. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/july/documents/20220729-giovani-anziani-iqaluit.html>
- <sup>x</sup> Pope Francis. "Homily of the Holy Father on the Feast of Saints Joachim and Anne during the Apostolic Journey to Canada (24 - 30 July 2022) at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton", 26 July 2022.
- <sup>xi</sup> Pope Francis. "Address of His Holiness at Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton", 25 July 2022.
- <sup>xii</sup> Pope Francis. "Address of His Holiness, Meeting with Young People and Elders during the Apostolic Journey to Canada (24 - 30 July 2022) at Primary school in Iqaluit Tuesday", 29 July 2022.



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