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THE PROFOUND MEANING OF MUTUAL SELF-GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

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We would like to begin by thanking Edgardo and Clarita, as well as Mercedes and Alberto, for the invitation to be here today with all of you, in this gathering of like-minded people.

We have been invited to speak to you about the profound meaning of mutual self-giving in marriage. And we want to reflect with you, in order that each of us may learn more about mutual self-giving, and that each one of us may be enabled and want to give more of ourselves in the best possible way to our marriages.

Before we begin, let us start with a musical metaphor. Let us say that each of us is like a melody. Let's imagine that it is this: (a melody is played). Let us imagine that this is a male melody. Now let us imagine a female melody. Let us imagine that it is this: (the melody is interpreted). So, the fullness of each does not come from playing in isolation, but springs from their union, from each embracing the other and giving of their all to the other. Then they will sound like this: (A piece of music is played). The fruit of this encounter is that it gives rise to new rhythms, to new harmonic sequences, and becomes more fruitful, for example, in this way (a piece of music is played).

In the same way, from the loving encounter of man and woman, which springs from mutual self-giving, a movement of fruitfulness and giving arises... This is what we are going to talk to you about now.

1. Mutual giving arises from a profound encounter

Each of us is supported by encounters with the most important people in our lives. Each of us is from people who have loved us and we are-for those we love. In fact, we are all from God, who is our Alpha and Omega, and we are for Him. We are loved, created, called and sent. And we are for Him because the goal of our life will be a full encounter with Him.

We find this same dynamism of being-from and being-for in the course of our lives with other people. I ask you to remember now, with affection, those who have loved you and thanks to whom you are who you are: grandparents, parents, siblings, educators, significant people in our communities, in Teams. We can say that we are what we are because of them. Think now of the people you are called to love: family, friends, team members, neighbors.... We can say that we are for them.

Throughout our lives we encounter people who either form our lives or whom we help and encourage to build theirs. What does an encounter consist of in the strict sense of the word? In making two people present, *welcoming and giving themselves to each other*. In the encounter, each person *wants the other to become who he or she is called to be*. Each one supports, enables and encourages the other to grow as a person. And this with reciprocity.

But it is not enough for two people to be together for there to be a real encounter. Generally, there is no real encounter between a supermarket cashier and a customer, or between two people who sit together in the subway or go together to watch a game. Even a man-woman couple may meet

to have fun, go for a walk or play together, send WhatsApps to each other, but there is no deep encounter between them. In fact, in the age of individualism and isolation, real encounters are not so common.

The profound encounter is one in which there is a conscious acceptance and mutual self-giving, thus giving rise to a "we".

In the authentic encounter, the other with whom I meet presents themselves as *someone who challenges me, someone who affects me with their presence, as an event*. The encounter "touches you deeply". The other, in making themselves present, is an *epiphany*: he makes himself present as a real face that challenges me. Is your husband, your wife, someone who challenges your life, who affects you, who does not leave you indifferent? This is what happens in marriage: the other person is continuously questioning you; they are your calling. Your spouse invites you to let yourself be dethroned, to abandon the central place in your life and to attend to him or her in such a way that your life becomes a response to his or her person.

For those of us who are married and live from this profound encounter, our vocation consists in responding to this call that is the other for me. Say now to your husband or wife: you are a call for me!!

Living thus becomes living attentive to another, living for another. If you really have an authentic encounter with your spouse, you will lose your independence, you will no longer be able to dedicate your life to pleasing yourself or to being at the center of your concerns. On the contrary, you feel, happily, that you only find yourself making your spouse your priority, being responsible for their happiness and serving them

2. *The encounter takes place "Emmaus style".*

How is the encounter possible? For an encounter between two people to be possible, the following attitudes must be present:

- a. Each person should be able to *step outside of him/herself*, out of their previous preconceived ideas about the other and about what is being discussed. Self-centered attitudes must be banished since they prevent us from attending to the other. But one must abandon one's own needs to go out to meet the other and walk with them.
- b. The one who goes out to the encounter puts themselves in *the other's place*. This allows those who meet to be able to dialogue and communicate, opening themselves to the richness of the other.
- c. Each of those who meet should listen to the *other*, without shutting themselves off in their own ideas or in their presumptions. It is about *listening actively, without judging, without condemning, always apologizing, always understanding*. It is about opening oneself to the other as they are, respecting them, and not pretending that they are the way I want them to be. To listen to the other is to linger in them.
- d. May each of those who meet allow themselves to be *challenged by the other*. The encounter only exists to the extent that each one recognizes the other and is open to be questioned by them. "To live means to be questioned" .



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e. Let each person *respond to the other*. If the other is someone who I happen to meet and who challenges me, I have no choice but to respond to them. The other takes me out of myself and calls me to respond to their presence. But the response cannot be entrusted to habitual actions, to learned responses. When challenged by the other it is not a case of putting into action a learned protocol. Before the other who challenges me, I have to respond with my actions, my words and my life. As a result this encounter is about mutual self-giving and acceptance of the other.

How do you regularly put aside your own worries, plans and opinions and open yourself to those of your spouse? How much quality time do you dedicate to listening to them, both verbally and non-verbally? Do you try to understand them? Do you allow yourself to be questioned by them? Do you put your life at their service as they do to you?

3. *Giving and receiving is reciprocated*

Giving and receiving must be reciprocated in this encounter. "Do not try to weaken the meaning of relationship: relationship is reciprocity", says Martin Buber. This implies that people's lives consist in living *towards* others and *for* others. Correlatively, I can only exist for others: *I* receive my existence from *you* and *you* receive it from *me*. And this implies that there must be two basic movements in this relationship: *unconditional acceptance of the other and giving to the other*. In this way, we are more fulfilled to the extent that we are more for-other.

This reciprocity demands that the other be treated as a person (with their dignity) and, furthermore, as *this very real* person, and never as an object or an instrument for my purposes or in a determined role. That is why there are certain *dispositions that make this reciprocity impossible* in the encounter.

First of all, lack of *availability*. *This* consists of being available only for one's own interests, but never for others. Renounce any responsibility that goes beyond one's own individual limits. A paradigm of this position is Cain's question, after being asked by his brother: "Am *I* my brother's keeper?" .

Secondly, *indifference*. This is the situation in which the other person does not matter to me. Their life is not something that *happens to me*, but that happens to them and does not affect me. The other is not someone to whom *I am accountable* for anything. This indifference can manifest itself as silence, as not naming them and, therefore, as not considering them as a person. This indifference and lack of responsibility with respect to the other is destructive of the other and, of course, of the personal relationship itself. Being indifferent to the other results in the loss of life lived in common and changes it from coexistence to merely coexisting.

Reification can also consist of accusation. This may also result in one taking charge and accusing the other, judging the other, labeling them and disqualifying them. This, besides being a form of violence, is a form of depersonalization that prevents any encounter and any dialogue. It comes from the idea that the other should submit to my criteria of how they should behave. But this is nothing but an attempt to alienate them. By accusing the other in this way, personal relationships become untenable and unviable, we allow Satan free rein. (*Satan* in Hebrew means adversary, accuser).

Finally, the most radical forms of reification-depersonalisation-result in the *reduction* of the other to an inventory (to a set of qualities or roles). It is when we consider the other as encompassable, as a mere function, as a mere thing at my service, as an instrument for my use or pleasure.

Faced with this scenario reciprocity becomes impossible in the encounter. Let us analyze, in the context of the conjugal encounter, the place of these two movements: welcoming and giving, they are always united and linked: welcoming and giving. There is no gift without prior acceptance and no acceptance without gift.

4. *The person: welcoming and accepting the other*

Opening myself to my spouse in the context of our vital encounter means, first of all, *accepting him or her* as he or she is. And this supposes, first of all, that I accept him or her as a person (and renounce taking him or her as an object, as a thing, as a partner, or for his or her role). Secondly, that I accept them as being *this* person, that is, not in an impersonal way, like any other person, but as a real person, with a real face, who is present in my life, who is happening to me. It presumes, therefore, that I do not insist that they be as I want them to be or as I wish they were, but that I respect them in their differences and love them as they are.

To accept the other means to *understand them as a* person, to understand that they are someone different from me. Acceptance means opening myself to experience them as a real person who is exclusive, unique. It is what Adam said to Eve: "You are unique for me", although at that time it did not have much merit to say it because there was no other person.

Therefore, I cannot try to conceptualize it or analyze it but, basically, to love. For Buber, to understand the other is to understand them in "their totality, unity and exclusivity". Therefore, accepting the other is accepting the totality of the person and not reducing to psychic, bodily or social elements. It is to discover that they are an inexhaustible mystery. Say now to your wife or husband: you are a mystery to me! Only by both of us realizing that we are complete, unique, exclusive, can the amazing and fruitful encounter of which married life consists emerge. Have you already lost your wonder for your spouse?

To accept others is also to *affirm them*, to make them confident to consolidate them in their personal being. It presumes, above all, that we affirm their dignity and personal identity by the way we behave and to make him see by our attitudes how much we care for them. It is a matter of showing them every day that we care about them. The question I ask you now is, do you know how to do it? Have you asked how your spouse likes it when you show them that you love them and that you care about them? Ask him or her now... and watch for the consequences. [Allow a few seconds for them to ask themselves the question.]

5. *The person as a gift to the other. Personal foundation*

Along with the movement of acceptance, people have the capacity to give themselves to others. But not only the capacity to give but every person has a natural inclination or structure that involves giving or being generous. This means that in order to live fully as a person we are called to give ourselves. Being able to be a gift to another is, according to Karol Wojtyła (the Polish philosopher who later worked in Rome as something else with great success for 27 years), what defines being a person.

Being able to give ourselves, together with the capacity to accept the other, are the dynamisms that form and give rise to community and, in a special way, to the community of marriage. Community, says Wojtyła, "is a way of being such that, existing and acting reciprocally (and, therefore, not only existing and acting in 'common') through this acting and being, they are also reciprocally confirmed and affirmed as persons". The gift of self, Wojtyła also says, "initiates the relationship and in a certain sense creates it, precisely because it is directed towards another person or persons", so that it forms not only the conjugal relationship, but also, the family.

In fact, the person can only be on the way to fullness; he can only grow and find himself fully through the gift of himself. This gift must be a gift of what one is (and not only of what one has) and a gift freely given. For this reason, Wojtyła affirms that "if it were to serve some 'interest' on one side or the other it would no longer be a gift; it would perhaps be a favor or even a gain, but it would not be a gift" .

This being a gift for the other, far from diminishing the person, far from limiting or chaining him or her, is what allows his or her growth. There is only personal growth from the gift of oneself. Marriage is only possible from the gift of each of the two to the other. How is it possible that a person can give themselves? We can give what we have, but how can we give what we are? On this, Karol Wojtyła says that "the world of persons has its own laws of existence and development. The gift of self, as a form of love, springs from the depths of the person with a clear vision of values and the readiness of the will to give oneself [...]. In the gift of self, we find, therefore, a striking proof of self-possession". We are capable of giving ourselves to the extent that we possess our life. Therefore, if our life is ours, as a gift from God, we can make it available to others. But we can also choose not to make it available.

In the conjugal encounter, each of us is a gift for the other. Say now to your husband, to your wife: I want to give myself to you, I want to be a gift for you [Allow a few seconds] What is happening at this moment? The miracle of the "we" is happening. In this "we" each one of us is a support, source of possibilities and drive for the other and for the marriage community.

Please: pay attention to these three aspects, because they are constitutive for each of us: in self-giving each of us becomes for the other a *support, a possibility and a driving force for one's own life*. So, through the mutual self-giving of my life and my spouse's we form the basis of our community of marriage and in a way we also support each other in order to be fulfilled. This form of mutual grounding, which already takes place in the community of marriage, will later manifest itself in fullness in family life, which, as we will see at the end, is the fruit of mutual self-giving that overflows into others.

6. The structure of marital unity as a result of mutual self-giving

The spousal relationship (a word that comes from the Latin word *spondere*) is that which responds (in Latin *re-spondeo*) to the presence of the other in the *we*. In this spousal *we*, each one is called in reference to the other: *in, towards, for, and by the other*. This is why this unity that springs from self-giving manifests itself in these various forms:

1. *I-in-you; you-in-me: it consists in being both in full mutual presence, founding the marital community*. Now it is in the *we* that I find the *you*. In this way we develop a *common project*. But it often happens that, when we get married, each of us comes with our own expectations about what we would like the other to be like, what we expect to receive from the other and



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what we would like the relationship to be like. And we assume that the other knows them - wrong, because the other has many gifts, but certainly not the gift of divination! We don't always share all these expectations in the first years of marriage, we live as if the other knows them without us telling him/her. Then the first tensions arise, because while one expected to spend Sunday afternoons with their parents, the other expected to go on an outing; because while one preferred to save, the other preferred to buy in installments; while one wanted to have children, the other preferred to go on more trips or while one preferred to devote time to social or church commitments, the other imagined that what they would do in the evenings was to watch movies on Netflix or Amazon Prime while drinking wine. It may happen that one does not know what the other's preferences and expectations are and he / she has not expressed his or her own. Therefore, frustrations and anger arise, because one thinks that the other is not what one thought they were or does not act as one thought they should. Therefore, only *open communication* can make the expectations that each one brings explicit and allow common ones to be developed, a *common goal*, which both agree and accept. In this sense, they have to talk and agree on several key aspects that they have to sit down and talk about from time to time:

2. *You towards me; I towards you.* Each of the two spouses orients his or her life towards the other. Each one remains a function of the other and of the "we" that they form together. This orientation towards each other is developed in *mutual communication in all its forms as a way of sharing my life with the other*. This communication supposes attentiveness to the dialogue (to dedicate time to be able to dialogue), to improve in the dialogue (to listen to each other, not to judge each other, to be transparent telling each other how we see things, what we feel, what we need and to welcome all that the other tells me), not to run away from the dialogue in the crises, to improve the non-verbal communication...

3. *I-for-you; you-for-me.* The presence of your spouse is a calling; it is the way in which your vocation is made real day by day. And the calling requires a response: to welcome the other completely and to give yourself completely to the other. The Christian matrimonial vocation consists in giving oneself to the other, in giving oneself to the other and, in this way, each one of us grows and the us that we constitute grows. How do you give yourself to the other every day? Today: What steps can you take? In this sense, St. John Paul II, in one of the general audiences in which he presented his *theology of the body*, clarified that this gift of self, through sin, can change into a desire to appropriate the other, perverting the sense of "you-for-me": "If a man relates to a woman to the point of considering her only as an object to be appropriated and not as a gift, at the same time he condemns himself to become, for her, only an object of appropriation and not a gift", further clarifying something essential: "The terms 'mine... mine', in the eternal sense, are not only a gift, but also an object of appropriation and not a gift... mine", in the eternal language of human love, have -certainly- no such meaning. They indicate the reciprocity of the gift, they express the equilibrium of the gift - perhaps precisely this in the first place - that is, that equilibrium of the gift in which the *reciprocal communio personarum* is established. And if this is established through the reciprocal gift of masculinity and femininity, the nuptial meaning of the body is also preserved in it. Certainly, the words "mine... mine", in the language of love,

seem a radical negation of belonging in the sense that a material object-thing belongs to the subject-person".

4. *I-for-you; you-for-me* or personal foundation in the community of marriage. What takes place in the matrimonial *we* is a personal growth of each of its members. And this is so because the community of marriage, in a certain way, personally forms each of its members. It is no longer just *me* for you, but *me* and *you* for *us*. As each one is a *support* for the other, a source of possibilities and a driving force, the community of marriage is a very real personal foundation of the other. And this develops into a way of life which is love. Love consists in mutual self-giving, and it is carried out by taking care of the relationship in many different ways: daily details of physical affection, introducing routines of affection and avoiding the tedium of the daily routine, asking for affection if it is needed, but not demanding it, giving affection and saying "I love you", being amazed daily of the mystery and the positivity of the dedicating time exclusively to each other, serving each other in small ways. All this can be achieved with a simple procedure: to look at the other person as if it were the first time we see him or her, because in part it is so, or as if it were the last time we could see him or her. Let's take a few seconds right now to look at each other as if it were the first time. [Allow a few seconds]. Now let's hold each other's hand tightly and look at each other as if it were the last time we are going to be together. From this perspective we understand that being for each other means enjoying small moments of intimacy on a daily basis, it also means knowing how to forgive each other continuously and to thank each other for everything. Above all, it is about having the will to promote each other, to want the other to be who he or she is called to be.

Thus, love is not only fundamental to our marriage but also the *meaning* of the relationship, it's the why. The community of marriage, because of the love that it is made of, is a reality full of meaning, revealing its first function: mutual promotion. This is what the French philosopher Maurice Nédoncelle affirms: "in love, there is a desire for mutual promotion, a desire to help the other to be a universal perspective, to possess in order to give himself, not to isolate himself, but to establish the order of all subjects and to find there his own development". To love is, therefore, to desire the fullness of the other, to want what is good for the other, to realize what is valuable in the other and to work effectively for it.

7. Openness and fruitfulness: being from us

The mutual self-giving of the spouses becomes fruitful and this has an effect on others. It is this richness which makes the marriage reach its potential, which would never happen in a marriage closed in itself, self-enclosed. Just as the Trinity is a mutual gift and overflows in the Creation of the Father, the Charisms of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist of the Son, so too the mutual gift in marriage overflows in fruitfulness, in becoming a gift for others.

This is precisely the point where the gift that is the Eucharist enlightens, but also strengthens and fulfills, the gift of mutual self-giving in marriage. We could say that just as "the Church lives from the Eucharist", as the fourteenth encyclical letter of St. John Paul II says, so too *marriage lives from the Eucharist*. Marriage lives from the Eucharistic Christ and it is this that allows the couple, like the disciples of Emmaus, to have their eyes opened and to recognize Christ in them, and in Christ, what is their very vocation. Thus, just as "the Church has received the Eucharist from Christ, not only as a gift among

many others (...) but as the gift par excellence, because it is the gift of himself, of his person", so too the mutual gift of the spouses in marriage is not just another gift, but the total gift of their life, in which they unite themselves to the very self-giving of Christ. Therefore, there is a parallelism and mutual reference between Christ's self-giving to his Church and that of the spouses to each other. When Christ instituted the Eucharist "he did not limit himself to saying 'This is my body...' but added 'given for you'". And just as Christ does not give himself in a generic sense, but gives his very life and gives us his very body, this is the same degree of mutual self-giving to which marriage is called. And, for this reason, its richness is never depleted in them but overflows fruitfully.

Fruitfulness is the communitarian way of giving of oneself. The community of marriage is, by essence, openness to a third party. The light of your marriage is made to spread. And this diffusion is fruitful, fertile. Therein lies your happiness. To give of yourselves in your marriage is precisely to *give yourselves, to offer yourselves, to communicate yourselves to others.*

Although the term *fecundity* usually refers to its biological dimension, it is not the only one. We will distinguish several forms of fruitfulness in the community of marriage. The first is foundational. The others, forms of fecundity founded on the first.

1. *Mutual fertility*

Mutual fecundity is the founding form of fecundity. Every other form of fecundity rests on this one, which is presented as the foundation of the others. If biological, social or personal fecundity is possible, it is because there is a community of marriage that is growing towards its fullness (which is the same as saying towards its sanctity).

But, beware, fecundity, given that we are talking about a Christian marriage (although what we are describing from the anthropological point of view is valid for any conjugal man-woman relationship), a definitive factor is missing. Father Caffarel explains it with extreme clarity: "Christian marriage is not only the reciprocal gift of man and woman; it is also the gift of the couple to Christ. Henceforth, Christ is present in this marriage which, by giving itself, opens itself to Him, ".

3.2. *Biological fecundity*

Although it is surprisingly denied today by *gender theory*, it is evident that, from human anatomy and physiology, from its dimorphism and the way it works, the possibility of physical fecundation, that is, procreation, of conceiving children, happens in a natural way. And since the gift and acceptance of the other, is total in married love, also includes the sexual dimension, it is clear that biological fecundity is a natural result of the loving relationship. However, this fecundity, because it occurs in a community of persons, is necessarily and indissolubly united to another: the personal fecundity that manifests itself in paternity and maternity. To give physical birth to a child brings with it the giving of oneself as a person.

Since biological fecundity is a well-founded fecundity, if it is impossible to realize it or fulfill it because of sterility, it will not prevent other forms of fecundity (including adoption or fostering). What really prevents the realization of fullness and fecundity is not, in itself, the fact of not being able to

realize a form of fecundity, but the fact of being able to, that is, having the possibility, and not wanting to.

The sexual dimension is not something that the person *has*, but something that he or she is. For this reason, every action in which sex intervenes in an active and *protagonist* way, that is, all sexuality, has, in addition to its biological meaning, a personal meaning and, therefore, a value that goes beyond the limits of the sexual. Therefore, biological fecundity is, *sensu stricto*, a personal fecundity. It is not, therefore, the exercise of a mere biological function, but a personal creative act that, in addition, brings with it the need and responsibility to develop spiritual fatherhood and motherhood (which, in reality, can be developed without physically engendering children).

Biological self-giving is not an act of production but of creation, of creating the person of the child, of illuminating what the other is, of giving light. The union is luminous and enlightening. And in the same way the bearer of light cannot be separated from the fact of illuminating, neither is the union of persons, in its physical dimension, separable from the fact of biological-personal illumination.

3.3. Social fertility

Fruitfulness, the overflowing of the community of marriage, also has a social dimension. And it has in two ways: in the sense of welcoming the other, those who are different, the stranger to the community; and in the sense of commitment to what is *outside*, to what is valuable to be realized in society or in the world. Let us look, finally, at each of the two.

1. Fertility as hospitality: hospitality

Hospitality is a form of community overflow, since it is a matter of offering our richness to others. It is born, then, from a willingness to share what we are and what we have, welcoming others. It is about opening oneself and welcoming those who, in principle, are strangers. It is, and not only in a metaphorical sense, to *open one's house*, to open one's intimacy to a stranger. To whom do we open our house? Is our house an open house? Opening our house is an act of giving, of offering, but it also puts us in a situation of vulnerability. There is no doubt that opening our house to one or several friends, to another family, or permanently, is a *risky action*, transgressing our stability and tranquility. However, it is proof of maturity, generosity and magnanimity in which this community's capacity for giving is manifested.

In any case, hospitality presupposes the recognition of the dignity of the person being welcomed. And this has a gradation that goes from attentive listening to the stranger and *accompanying others* to the physical opening of the house to shelter the other permanently. Moreover, this gradation occurs in another sense: that which goes from exercising hospitality with someone who is already close to us to hospitality with the *stranger*.

We see, then, how hospitality, like other forms of fruitfulness, also supposes a decentering, a going out of oneself to take another upon oneself. But this broadening of horizons, beyond the horizons of one's own community, paradoxically, does not destroy the marital community, but rather strengthens it and

enriches the "we". And, also paradoxically, to be able to be hospitable and close the house, impoverishes and hardens us.

Finally, something very important must be said: hospitality is one of the most genuine and original ways of evangelizing because, as Father Caffarel affirms: "The Christian home does not limit itself to offering its human riches (...); it gives to its guests the riches of the grace that inhabits it (...). Its great spiritual richness is the presence of Christ who makes of this family community a little church".

2. Fertility as a gift: social commitment

The fruitfulness of the marital community can also be projected outside of it, outside of the *home*, adopting various forms of establishing justice and, even more than justice, working to promote a personal universe, participating in a process of personalization of society.

The commitment of each couple involves taking on responsibilities, both as a couple or one with the support of the other, in the various spheres of the world in which they are present: it can be done in politics (speaking out a party or union, for example), in education (as educators, teachers, participating in or running a school for parents), in religion (leading groups, evangelizing, catechizing), in solidarity activities (in associations, in groups that alleviate local poverty, in solidarity movements, caring for the elderly), in neighborhood movements, in cultural movements, accompanying other couples, in the promotion of truth, beauty or good in its various forms. The ideal would be the active participation of both spouses, although it can also happen that both are involved, one in an active way and the other in a delegated or passive way (although supporting the active one in their action).

3.4. Community fertility: family and other community groups

Biological maternity and paternity are prolonged in a personal, spiritual maternity and paternity. Whoever is born is accepted as a duty by the parents. And the mission now consists in the promotion of their personal well-being. This is the fact that forms the basis of the family. The family arises when the community of marriage gives of itself in various forms of personal fecundity, the most frequent being that of paternity and maternity. But the key lies in exercising spiritual paternity and maternity, so that even if one is unable to have children, one can be fruitful and, therefore, a family. The child and all those to whom we consecrate our lives together give a new dimension to the community of marriage. This community is thus integrated into a wider community, generated by it, but wider than it: the family. This is why Lacroix affirms that "true marriage is a progressive discovery and a continuous deepening of the family being".

But the culmination of family life, in this broad sense, the culmination of spiritual fatherhood and motherhood and its fruitfulness, is, as Father Caffarel affirms: "to beget and form 'worshippers in spirit and truth' so that on earth the worship of the true God may be perpetuated". For this to be possible, marriage must be a continuous experience of Christ, for as the Gospel of St. John says: "Without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). This means that without prayer and without the Eucharist, evangelizing fruitfulness is not possible.



It is already clear that the communitarian fruitfulness of marriage does not end in the family. It is naturally oriented towards a fruitful encounter with other couples and with other communities.

Your mission as a married couple does not have as its ultimate horizon your family but, in reality, the whole of humanity. We are also the ones who are invited to go throughout the world and announce the Good News of marriage.

Your married life is a wonderful adventure, it has a wonderful mission and the whole world is waiting for our full manifestation. Will we dare to say as a married couple "Ecce" and will we dare to say "Fiat"? Do you dare? If we do, we will finally sing Magnificat! [Musical moment]

Thank you very much to all of you.

