

My dear Team Members,

At the recent international gathering of families in Rome for the Pilgrimage of Families during the Year of Faith, 26 & 27 October 2013, the Holy Father spoke about the basic characteristics of a Christian family, namely that the family prays and secondly that the family experiences joy.

When talking about prayer, Pope Francis insisted on two points: that prayer (whether personal or with the family) should be marked by a sense of *humility*, that is, it ought to proclaim the greatness of God and our smallness, both moral and spiritual, before Him and that prayer ought to be said with *simplicity*, according to our condition as *beloved sons of God*. And Pope Francis gave the reciting of the Rosary *en famille* as an example of simplicity. This is the prayer of simple people and one that Blessed Jean-Paul II used to say was the shortest way to acquiring inner peace and in this manner, being able to help with the establishment of Peace between men, between peoples. For me, this is the importance of the Endeavour of conjugal prayer and also the annual retreat, to which we all ought to be faithful.

I also wanted to talk to you about my recent trip to Lebanon (17-18 November 2013) for the final ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the presence of the Teams of Our Lady's Movement in that part of the world. I am able to attest to the vitality and enthusiasm of the Teams in the way they practice the spiritual method of our Movement, to the joy they have in bearing witness to the beauty of the sacrament of marriage and to their sense of the Christian family in today's world. During the meeting with those in positions of responsibility, I was able to see how faithfully they are committed to the charisma of our Movement and its international nature, in which we are able to confirm the grace of belonging to a large family, which is a part, a living cell of the larger Church, of the Mystic Body of Christ.

In his encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Francis reminds us that faith becomes even stronger and more alive according to our capacity to open ourselves to others, to be together and to share with one and other the riches of our lives and our hope. Faith, that brings us alive, originates in the Lord's love which precedes us and which unites us to others in the diversity of our vocation and mission in the Church and in the movement. For couples, it is marvellous to believe that it is the Lord who chose them and who made them for each other, in order that they may bear witness to the beauty of the love between a man and a woman according to the Lord's wish. Couples are furthermore efficient signs of Christ's love for his Church through the sacrament of marriage.

A Christian in the future will be a mystic or will be nothing. As Christian couples, may you be living witnesses to this mystic, which is the soul of our Movement. Let yourselves be transported by the creative fantasy of love in order to invent a new world, even in the current conditions of moral and spiritual crisis that many parts of the world are experiencing, but especially in the western world. In this manner, you will be, dear friends, men and women of hope, because you know in whom you have placed your trust, in the Lord God who is faithful and who loves you with a love that is to be trusted, that is made up of the Cross of Christ.

May the Holy Virgin, mother of God and our mother too, protect you all and be for you a sure way that leads you to God.

Yours Sincerely,

Father José Jacinto Ferreira de Farias, scj

