

## *FAMILY EUCHARIST ON THE LORD'S DAY*

*Eucharist in our life plan.*

*We're Fabio Sánchez and Marlén Cristina García and the Lord joined us in marriage 25 years ago. Together with us, in our house we have two amazing sons, 23-year-old Cristian Camilo and 21-year old Daniel Francisco. They are the wonderful gift God sent us in order to share and experience fatherhood, motherhood and family. We have been members of Comunidad Matrimonial Alegría for 20 years; this community coordinates the Family Pastoral of Minuto de Dios in Bogotá (Colombia) and the Lord had called us to this association to carry out the fine mission of bringing the married life Gospel to Colombian and foreign couples and families. We are very thankful to the Lord and the Catholic Church for giving us the opportunity to dedicate ourselves to the testimony of our Eucharist experience as the vital core of family and marriage which constantly support and renew our marital alliance.*

### ***Fabio***

*When we began our friendship and later on our engagement in 1981, we realised, surrounded by all this shared love, space and time, that we both followed catholic faith which, with great love, had been passed on to us from our parents. From that moment, Eucharist became part of our life together as a couple, in which, every Sunday we happily looked for an individual/personal contact with Christ, the instruction/precept of his Work and Word. Furthermore, we asked him if he could help us find our calling to marital life which would allow us to build a home where He could be always beside us. Therefore, after 5 years of engagement and after many joys and difficulties, we decided it was time to get married. At that time some friends and colleagues were telling us to go and live under free union or get married with a civil ceremony, but we knew that the only way to join our lives together was through the sacrament of marriage, so on 12th December 1986 we happily made our wish come true with God's blessing.*

### ***Marlén***

*Once we were married and full of dreams, we started working at turning our life plan into a reality, we were longing for a stable relationship in which we could raise our children, give them all our love, our protection and the necessary education. And a house that could welcome them and let them fully grow up. We also struggled to become professionals/freelancers and achieve economical growth which could allow us to reach our intellectual and material goals.*

*The Sunday Eucharist was a fundamental part of our married life, we fully took part in the*

*listening of God's Word, in the reception of the Eucharistic Bread, in the communion and personal moments with God. The weekly meeting with the Lord allowed us to forgive ourselves and reconcile in difficult and critical moments of our married life.*

### ***Fabio***

*When our first child was born, it was necessary to start making those that we called the little big decisions, and one of them regarded who was going to take care of our baby. After having analysed the pros and cons, Marlén decided to give up her job, she was going to stay at home and I would support the household. We think it was one of the best decisions we could have ever made, but it also had its downsides: we wanted to keep our living standards and without the economical support of Marlén it was going to be difficult, after my long work days I was drifting away from our relationship, we did not have time to talk, routine, loneliness and constant complaining were jeopardising our relationship so much that we ended up considering a separation by mutual consent.*

*Only God's Grace was allowing us to carry on, we knew we loved each other, but we couldn't visualise the right harmonic path. When our second son was born, some of Marlén's friends came to visit us and they invited us to a meeting of Encuentro de Renovación Matrimonial, we accepted out of politeness but we actually did not really know whether to go or not. After 8 months we were called to confirm that our seats had been booked for the end of March 1992 and therefore we felt more motivated to go.*

### ***Marlén***

*From that moment, God made us meet new people, couples and priests/clergymen who helped us find a bigger interest in God's plan for men and women. We found a richness that we had never perceived before in the Eucharist, and we started to understand the meaning of the celebration of Eucharist as the great mystery of the conjugal love of Christ for his Church. I still remember, along with Fabio, the thrill we felt when God's Word was announced in Epistle of Saint Paul to Ephesians 5,25-26.*

*25 "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" 26 "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word".*

*This exhortation Saint Paul made and the explanation that the priest gave, became the reference of our love as a couple and our commitment to the Church for the evangelisation of the family. With joy and desire we dedicated our lives to the understanding of God's call, we actively took part in group meetings and little by little we felt more motivated and ready for the service. After a little, we trained as family pastoral agents and, answering the invite of the*

*Bogotá Archdiocese, we became part of the promoters team of the pre-marriage days. Moreover, we were asked to become members of the base community and counsel of Comunidad Matrimonial Alegría, and to attend the meetings of Renovación Matrimonial and the seminars of Vida en el Espíritu.*

### **Fabio**

*The Sunday Eucharist, prayer, community life and the mission were the environment our children were grown up in and in which we were showing them the love and generosity of God, as a couple, parents and instrument of our word.*

*Since they were very little, our children came and actively attended the Eucharist, we taught them to live all the moments we live in it, especially the listening of the Word, the Consecration of the flesh and blood of Christ and the Communion. We still have the memories of those important family moments, because once the Eucharist was finished, we kept on thinking and interiorizing the Gospel, the readings and the shared sermon. This is the way we initiated our children to the faith path, preparing them to the personal contact with Christ.*

*We understood that the Eucharist on the Lord's day is a source of grace that sanctifies our married life. This is why in it, our conjugal alliance can find the possibility of constant renewal of Jesus' saving presence. We found the meaning of true love in the Eucharist, the kind of love that led us to create life, spend our days trying to find the fulfilment and happiness of our couple. Jesus is the meeting point of the whole marriage, and family, which longs to break the chain of slavery that consumes it in selfishness, pain and sadness, the family recognises the source of charity in the Lord and forgiveness as a source of live water that quenches the love thirst that everyone wishes for. The real presence of the Lord can be felt through the Eucharistic Christ, it is in the Eucharist where we receive God's promises to his children and where his Word is alive and powerful. It heals the couple and family's heart, because only God can make the miracle of Love happen, the miracle of forgiveness and reconciliation.*

### **Marlén**

*The Eucharist is the Communion with the Resurrected Christ who offers himself as food with his flesh and with his blood, nurturing our personal, married and family life. For us, the Eucharist is a miracle of love, a gift and communion with the Church, Body of Christ that orients, enlightens and sanctifies. When we take part in the Eucharist we remember that Christ is the sign of the new and ultimate Alliance, offered to humanity by God Our Father. The Lord comes into our married life to accompany us through it, as he did with the bride and groom of Cana, and he changes our lives, allowing us to discover the richness that comes from living our*

*marital commitment in harmony, happiness, exclusivity and complete gift.*

*The Eucharist on the Lord's day invites us to recognise God as the Merciful Father in the presence of whom we go and thank him for our existence, it is the right moment to deliver, in his hands, our life, plans and projects. We ask him to enlighten us so that we are able to choose our actions, protect and children and family, and give us the strength to face difficulties and faith to fulfil his sacred will in our lives.*

### ***Fabio***

*At the moment our children are finishing their higher education, they are the best testimony of God's action in our family: we see them as a definite life plan, confident and motivated, God's love reflects upon their faces and gives them the chance to feel that honest pride for their origins, for their story and faith. We believe that the Lord, in his infinite love and mercy, has allowed us to become people, parents and a couple. Furthermore, we feel like we have welcomed his call, He shows us how we can serve him, he only needed our willingness and he completed his work. For this reason, we are convinced of his power and mercy, and today we announce to the world the truth, more than ever, of the conjugal life Gospel.*

*To our father*

*who summoned us to proclaim his love and greatness on our house*

*you longed to stay among us and invited us to the great Easter dinner, in which we feasted on  
your flesh and blood.*

*we give our lives to your service, give us strength, devotion, intelligence and understanding to  
be disciples and missionaries for/to you.*

*Allow us to open our hearts, so that you can rule in them, we can feel the grace of forgiveness  
and saviour.*

*help us build a better world where families are true schools of faith, hope and solidarity for  
your glory.*

*Amen.*