

Final text of the marriage experience of Rafael Benítez and Paloma Campos on Sunday family prayer and the faith they passed on to their children.

Rafael: My name is Rafael, I'm married to Paloma and we have 19 children, we are Spanish and we have been part of Cammino Neocatecumenale for about 40 years. We are itinerant catechists of Cammino and at the moment we are carrying out our mission, with the help of the Lord, in several dioceses in the south of Spain. Eight of our children are married, we have 43 grandchildren, one of them is a seminarist and the other 10 still live at home. All of them, thank God, are part of Cammino, each one in his own community.

Paloma: Holiday, makes me think about the Gospel, the miracle of Marriage at Cana, at which Jesus transformed water into wine. I am speaking about this because the same thing happened in our marriage, soon after we got married, we ran out of wine, that is to say, holiday. And despite the fact that we had got married while in love and that we thought that everything would be fine, this lasted very little. After a few months we became part of a neocatecumenal community, where we found the love Jesus Christ had for us and, little by little, it changed our water into new wine. God's Word gave us joy and we experienced the power of true love, we learnt how to forgive because we were able to see how He had forgiven us. Our life changed and we could recognise the true holiday in our heart, the communion God was sending among us and the personal joy of feeling faith together with our sisters and brothers of our community. At one point, during this itinerary, we received from the Lord, through our catechist, the grace of praying the Lauds every day which, on Sunday, involved the entire family.

At that time, our children were still little, but once they turned 6, we started to involve them in these domestic Lauds. I have to admit that we would not have been able to do this without the previous experience of being saved by Jesus Christ. What I believe is the most important part of this liturgy, that we share with our children every Sunday, is to let them know that God is one, he is the only Lord and because of this we give him everything, we dress in our Sunday's best, we play the instruments and we sing psalms and we bless him for the mercy he had on us. We ask him to have the same mercy on the people who are suffering, who do not know him, and our family, ecc..

All of this helps me to see that when announcing God's word, it is possible to discover that the word has a relation with your life, what happens is not random and God is not just a God up in the sky not interested in what is happening, but exactly the opposite: everything happens for a reason, the events we experience in our lives are God telling us something, they mean something and it is how he intervenes in our lives, like he did with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Word we listen to, comes to enlighten the meaning of the things happening to us every day, as well as to our children.

For this we are happy and we feel our strength growing because God loves us.

Rafael: This moment of prayer takes place on Sunday, because it is the Lord's day, day of rest and sacred, during which the main activity of the family is to bless the Lord for all his kindness. The day starts with the Eucharist, and on Saturday it starts after the first Vespers. On Sunday morning the family gathers around the table and after the initial invocation, we sing the invitation psalm. The father then says a prayer out loud which starts the reading of the psalms, with refrained chants and the brief reading of the respective Sunday lauds. All the family members engage equally in the proclamation of the psalms, as well as the brief reading and the chants.

After this first part of the prayer is finished, the father reads a passage from the Bible out loud, always taken from the main books of the Old Testament. Afterwards, he invites the children, first to express what, through the psalms and the Word, the Lord told them. This moment, when the children have listened to the Word and can open up their hearts to it, tell their experiences, talk

about their difficulties or pain and share the enlightenment of God's Word in their stories, is very important. It is of great help for them as well as the parents, because it stimulates a wider communion, a dialogue between generations and it encourages the freedom and trust of the children, and it allows the parents to find answers and advice.

The mother has a very important role in this domestic celebration, because she brings her experience of the Word and she makes it real in her life. This part of the prayer ends with a little catechesis already prepared by the parents, the father puts into action the Word, answers the questions his children ask him and essentially lets them know God's love towards them. The liturgy comes to an end with the Benedictus chant, prayers or an act of grace by all the members of the family and then a sign of peace.

Before the final prayer, the father makes a request prayer to the Lord so that he grants his blessing to each of his children and perhaps asks for a special mercy if any one of them is in need, pain ecc.. and then, as a sign of God's blessing, the father lifts his hand over each child's head. At the end, after the final prayer, a chant is sung.

Paloma: Not only do we pass on the faith to our children during this celebration, but we also do it at any moment, taking inspiration from what happens every day. We try to keep God among us, because we believe that He walks with us as he did with the people of Israel in the desert. For this I believe that the holiday is always there in the life of those who have known God's free love. It is not the holiday as seen by the world, but it is a feast in our hearts. Life is full of problems, fights, clashes, joys and sorrows, but we know that Jesus Christ won over death, our death, and he forgave all our sins. He gives us the chance, together with him, to live as God's children. Jesus Christ, our older brother and our mother the Virgin Mary involve us in their family where our Father is God.

Rafael: In order to visualise how this domestic liturgy takes place, we will show you a brief video (10 minutes) which we recorded a few years ago.

Rafael y Paloma