

## The family Sunday: a time for communion and mission

First of all, I would like to greet all the families. After all, we are all one, unique family. It is the family that gathers together to celebrate the day of the Lord, finding there a collective spirit, and also prepares us for our mission and our testimony.

When we say that Sunday is the day of the Lord, this means that Sunday is a time for God, and consequently a time for men and women, the family and being together. At the dawn of Christianity, it was said that without Sunday, without the Eucharist, it would not be possible to live as a Christian. In fact, by taking part in Holy Mass, the Christian, within his family and with his family, celebrates Holy Mass. In this very way the family finds, and wants to meet God within the family itself. Moreover, when at the end of the Holy Mass we hear the term *Ite Missa Est*, it signifies a new beginning. It is the beginning of the mission of life, the testimony and announcement of the Gospel of the Resurrected Lord.

If we consider my own experiences, especially in the parish where I now serve and when I was a parish priest, I can say I have had many different ones. There have been many positive experiences, and of course, we would like more and more those. And for this reason, through our pastoral activities, we try to help families celebrate Sunday in the joy of reciprocal love, that is, the love received and the love bestowed.

To be honest, we cannot exclude those Christian families, at least Christian by name, who, when arranging their weekends, give priority to other things and events, and practically forget the value of the Sunday celebration of Holy Mass. Sunday has therefore become an occasion for recreation, for day-long dreaming, or an opportunity for doing other things, like going fishing and so on. To this we should add the various training activities of children and all the other activities. And so this style of living is transmitted to our children. Sunday and the Sunday lunch are always relegated to second place. Notwithstanding, there are those who do not give in to such a style of Sunday living, and they try to find better alternatives.

The moments when Christian families and couples stop and meet, especially after the end of Holy Mass with the words *Ite Misse est*, and with the blessing and the words of the Christian Mission, should be moments of shared every-day experience of being a Christian. Outside or inside the church with or without a drink we talk and socialize.

It is here that we can see that which we recognize as the “agape”. A new idea is derived therefrom, vitalized by the Holy Spirit. It is the helping of the poor. The solidarity and charitable works that originate from the Holy Mass call us to this very action. **Apropos, I would like to mention the financial help given by five families to one family. The amount is about one hundred euros a month. This action has had a good reception, and we have about one hundred and fifty families who are helping those in need.** We should also note that, thanks to the Lord, this initiative is extending beyond our diocese. God bless all those who are taking part in this type of solidarity.

The aforementioned meetings end with a collective meal which also embraces prayer, a blessing and dialogue between family members and friends.

Other activities include visiting the elderly. Some families visit their grandmothers and grandfathers, who often remain in the country, alone and weak, so that they too can live Sunday in fulfilment.

I would also like to mention the catecheses for the families – the MOP – the Mosaic for the rights of the family based on the Holy See’s Charter of the Rights of the Family of 1983. It is a project for life and the family of the Croatian Episcopal Conference, which supports the family pastoral. The first national meeting of Christian families in Croatia took place one year ago, led by

Pope Benedict XVI. Fifteen catecheses were prepared on this occasion. They were used for prayer and spiritual preparation for this meeting, and also for successive family meetings.

The document from which are derived the contents and themes of the catecheses was provided by the Holy See. It is pertinent to the persons, offices and all representatives of the family mission in the world today.

For example, in our country, a law is currently being prepared for medically assisted procreation. Through the catecheses, the conscience of the family mission in the church and in society is awakened.

We have found that the best time for catecheses with the families is Sunday afternoons, when families can come with their children, who are looked after by the activities coordinators.

The best time for marriage-encounter meetings for those who want to evangelize and so help couples discover how important and loved they are by their spouses, Sunday afternoon is also deemed to be the best time.

One of the ways or expressions for living the Sunday in a family environment is pilgrimage. Here, the centre too, is part of the celebration of the Holy Mass, and for this reason it should be seen as a momentous time, a time for a beneficial retreat from which we obtain new strength in our marriage and family relationships.

When we consider the birth and the continuation of family communities, we cannot exclude the role and the presence of the parish priest.

Therefore, we can say that the central point of Sunday is the Eucharist. It is the meeting with Christ Resurrected. And it is in this very meeting that we can see the origins of the closeness (communitarism) of the family. Expressing the joy of such a meeting, we are invited to transmit it to everyone, putting ourselves at the service of others.

As we are on this path, it is appropriate to find both the ways and the possibilities for those meetings that are vitalized by the Holy Spirit, so that families can live the Sunday, for the Sunday and in conformity to the Sunday. Thank you!

don Roko Glasnović, diocese of Šibenik, Croazia