



A PLEDGED TROTH

A Pastoral Letter on *Amoris Laetitia*

By

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**“The pledging of troth
expresses a deep,
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lifelong faithfulness.”**



“I take thee, to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse: for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy law; and thereto I plight thee my troth.”¹

With these beautiful and profound words of the *Divine Worship Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony* the groom gives his consent, with the bride responding in kind, “I give thee my troth.” The Priest or Deacon then pronounces “that they be man and wife together,” having “given and pledged their troth either to other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving of a ring, and by joining of hands.”²

The pledging of troth expresses a deep, exclusive loyalty and lifelong faithfulness. It is the act whereby the marriage covenant is made actual, for the giving of consent, the free “act by which the partners mutually give themselves to each other” is “the indispensable element ‘that makes the marriage.’”³ While the Priest or Deacon “witnesses” and “receives that consent in the name of the Church,” it is the spouses themselves who are “the ministers of Christ’s grace” and “mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony” through “expressing their consent.”⁴

“Forsaking all other ... so long as you both shall live,” the spouses are by this “vow and covenant betwixt them made” indissolubly bound, for whom “God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”⁵ So permanent is this unity “which by its very nature is perpetual and exclusive” that, once validly entered, it “is a reality, henceforth irrevocable.”⁶ No one, not even the Church herself, has “the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom.”⁷

Yet the truth of the indissolubility of marriage, rooted in nature, reason, Revelation, and God’s own unchanging nature, “is not at odds with a bitter truth found throughout sacred Scripture, that is, the presence of pain, evil, and violence that break up families and their communion of life and love.”⁸ As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, reminds us in the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the family is often confronted by grave and threatening realities. No one can doubt the severe troubles facing families and marriages in our own time, just as “[n]o one can think that the weakening of the family as that natural society founded on marriage will prove beneficial to society as a whole ... only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a plenary role to play in society as a stable commitment that bears fruit in new life.”⁹

After two years of careful deliberation with the world’s bishops in the Synods of 2014 and 2015, Pope Francis presented the Church with his exhortation to “seek new forms of missionary creativity” in order

¹ *Divine Worship: The Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony*, for use by the Ordinariates erected under the auspices of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1627, 1626; citing *Gaudium et Spes*, 48, and *Code of Canon Law*, 1057.

⁴ *The Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony*, Introduction, 8; citing *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1623.

⁵ *The Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony*.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1638, 1640.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1640.

⁸ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.



to “offer a word of truth and hope” to all.¹⁰ *Amoris Laetitia* urges the faithful to continue the unbroken and permanent teaching of the Church on the nature, purpose, and indissolubility of marriage, while soberly and tenderly remaining “conscious of the frailty of many of her children,” those who need the Church to “accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love, by restoring in them hope and confidence....”¹¹

While dogma can be better understood and developed in its expression, it cannot change or alter in substance, nor can pastoral practice or care be incongruent with unchanging teaching, for “[d]ogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure.”¹² In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis boldly presents God’s plan for marriage, inviting us to rediscover the dignity and nobility of family life rooted in the infinite love of the Lord Jesus who was made incarnate in a

human family, who died and rose so that we might live, and who continues to strengthen couples with sacramental grace so that married life might reflect

Christ’s own love for the Church. The universal teaching of the Church on marriage — the dogma that illumines our path of faith — is the context for evaluating pastoral practice, including the reception of the Eucharist by the divorced and civilly remarried. The secular media has little understanding of dogma or of the richness of Catholic teaching, so we must avoid reading this Exhortation through the lenses the media all too readily offers. Only a careful and faithful reading of *Amoris Laetitia* will ensure that we receive the Holy Father’s words with the gratitude and respect due them, safeguarding this beautiful reflection from those who would

misuse it to promote practices at odds with the Church’s teaching.

This pastoral letter is a reflection on Pope Francis’ Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* in the particular context of the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter, with particular attention to the situation of some members of the Ordinariate who divorced while previously in Episcopal/Anglican communities.

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¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 89.



PART ONE



The Nature of Marriage

In the Admonition and Scrutiny of our proper *Divine Worship* Marriage Rite, the couple is reminded that matrimony “is an honourable estate, instituted by God himself,” and ordained to several purposes: “the increase of mankind,” that “the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed and directed aright,” and “for the mutual society, help, and comfort” of the spouses for each other.¹³ While the Church joyously affirms these purposes, they are also known naturally, by reason, and thus direct and govern all humans, not only the baptized. Established by the Creator and made knowable to every human, the vocation of marriage is not a “purely human institution” but “written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.”¹⁴

In the beginning, God created male and female for each other. God is love, and created humans in his own image, calling us to love, “the fundamental

and innate vocation of every human being.”¹⁵ Consequently, “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18), but “good, very good, in the Creator’s eyes” for the man to leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife, and become one flesh.¹⁶

Our Lord affirms the natural and unbreakable bond of this union when recalling the will and purpose of the Creator “in the beginning,” for “they are no longer two, but one flesh” that may not be separated (Mt. 19:4, 6). Suffering from the wounds of sin, the law of Moses permitted men to divorce their wives, but this was due to “hardness of heart” and not in keeping with the nature of the abiding covenant of marriage as ordained by God and exemplified in the “nuptial covenant between God and his people.”¹⁷ The matrimonial union, as intended by God, once entered into validly, is indissoluble, and “whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery” (Mt. 19:9).

¹³ *The Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony*.

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1603.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1604.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1604, 1605.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1610, 1612.



The Elevation of Marriage

By its very nature, marriage “is perpetual and exclusive,” defined by “unity and indissolubility,” and there is “no human power” which has the authority to dissolve it.¹⁸ The Lord’s firm and unchangeable instruction, constantly recognized and proclaimed by the Church, “could

seem to be a demand impossible to recognize,” but “Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy.”¹⁹ As Pope Francis reminds us, “the law is itself a gift of God which points out the way, a gift for everyone without exception; it can be followed with the help of grace....”²⁰ The order and purposes of marriage can be kept with God’s gracious assistance, for “by coming to restore the original

order of creation disturbed by sin, [Christ] himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ ... that spouses will be able to ‘receive’ the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ.”²¹

Grace elevates and perfects nature and, for the baptized, the natural bond of marriage “has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a

sacrament,” for whom the unity and indissolubility of natural marriage “obtain a special firmness by reason of the sacrament.”²² Ordained by God and blessed and reaffirmed by the Lord at Cana, marriage is “an image for understanding the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son, and Spirit of Love. The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection.”²³

Manifesting and sacramentally participating in the abiding covenant of God with his people, the bond of marriage “imposes total fidelity on the spouses and argues for an unbreakable oneness between

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them,” not only for the good of children, society, and the spouses themselves, but ultimately because of the nature of God, whose covenantal vows are unbreakable.²⁴ The

one flesh union of marriage is ordered on “the model of his union with the Church. For as God of old made himself present to his people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that, just as he loved the Church ... the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.”²⁵ The family “is thus not unrelated to God’s very being.”²⁶

Caught up into divine love, spouses are not abandoned by God in an impossible moral obligation

¹⁸ *Code of Canon Law*, 1134, 1056, 1141.

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1615.

²⁰ *Amoris Laetitia*, 295.

²¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1615.

²² *Code of Canon Law*, 1055, 1056.

²³ *Amoris Laetitia*, 11.

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 11.

and weight. As a sacrament, marriage is a means of grace “intending to perfect the couple’s love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity.”²⁷ Further, Christ is the source of this grace, and our Savior “encounters Christian spouses.... Christ dwells with them, gives them strength to take up their crosses and so follow him.... ‘Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit.’”²⁸

Knowing well the reality of sin and weakness, the Church tenderly accompanies those who struggle and fail in their attempts to live God’s holy law: “Illumined by the gaze of Jesus Christ, ‘she turns with love to those who participate in her life in an incomplete manner, recognizing that the grace of God works also in their lives by giving them courage to do good....’”²⁹ As God never abandons his

covenant, so his grace is always active, with Christ’s own body, the Church, accompanying with mercy all who suffer or struggle. Constantly encouraging that daily conversion by which those who fall, can, by God’s grace, rise again, the Church never abandons her children. No one is excluded from the love and mercy of God!



27 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1641.

28 *Ibid.*, 1642; citing Tertullian.

29 *Amoris Laetitia*, 291; citing *Relatio Synodi* 2014, 24.

PART THREE



The Experience of the Ordinariate

L*ex orandi, lex credendi* — as we worship, so we believe. Those formed in the traditions and rich spiritual heritage of English Christianity well know that liturgy functions as a guide for belief. In the *Divine Worship: Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony*, marriage is understood covenantally, as evidenced by the Nuptial Blessing: “send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy Name: that, living faithfully together, they may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made.”³⁰ Not a covenant between the man and woman only, but “such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his Church.”³¹ The sign, and the reality grounding it, are indissoluble, for God “hast taught us that it should never be lawful to put asunder those

whom thou by Matrimony hadst made one.”³² By God’s grace the couple is enjoined to “please him, both in body and soul, and live together in holy love unto your lives’ end.”³³ Troth is pledged “till death us do part.”

Yet despite the law clearly revealed in worship, the Anglican Communion, as is well known, has “followed a practice of pastoral accommodation to the changing social and sexual mores in Europe and North America. It has liberalized divorce, allowed contraception, admitted those engaged in homosexual activity to communion and even (in some places) to the ordained ministry, and begun to bless same-sex unions.”³⁴ As a result, that Communion has fractured as the plain teaching of Scripture, Tradition, and reason was rejected.

32 *Ibid.*


33 *Ibid.*, Final Blessing.

34 Corbett, et al., “Recent Proposals for the Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried: A Theological Assessment,” *Nova et Vetera* 12.3 (2014), 601–30, at 614.

30 *The Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony*.

31 *Ibid.*, Nuptial Blessing Form A.





In this context, “the Holy Spirit has moved groups of Anglicans to petition repeatedly and insistently to be received into full Catholic communion individually as well as corporately.”³⁵ To our great joy, the “successor of Peter, mandated by the Lord Jesus to guarantee the unity of the episcopate and to preside over and safeguard the universal communion of all the Churches” did not “fail to make available the means necessary to bring this holy desire to realization.”³⁶

The three Personal Ordinariates “maintain the liturgical, spiritual, and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church.”³⁷ In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we have “the authoritative expression of the Catholic faith” and are “governed according to the norms of universal law and the present Apostolic Constitution ... subject to the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, and the other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia in accordance with their competencies.”³⁸ Consequently, members of the Ordinariate, as full members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, are governed by the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on marriage and divorce.

This is a blessing and a gift, a homecoming and source of great joy; we do not consider or experience the teaching as alien or external, but as our own. The indissolubility of marriage *is our own teaching* found in Scripture, from our Lord, in our liturgy, in reason and the nature of marriage itself, and in the tradition of the Church of which we are part.

Still, it remains the case that some in the Ordinariate were divorced and civilly remarried while still in Anglicanism, and thus experienced a pastoral practice and Eucharistic discipline distinct from that of the Catholic Church. For them, as indeed for us all, *Amoris Laetitia*, in continuity with constant teaching of the Church, is a welcome occasion for discernment, ongoing conversion, and grace.

³⁵ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, III.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I.5, II.



PART FOUR



To Accompany and Welcome

While there are many Catholics who have “recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions . . . the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was.”³⁹ If the first marriage was valid, it is indissoluble, and if the divorced remarry civilly “they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God’s law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists.”⁴⁰ In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis calls upon the whole Catholic community, clergy and laity alike, to accompany those among us who have civilly remarried after an experience of divorce. Accompaniment begins, therefore, in reminding people in this circumstance that they are loved by God and remain cherished members of the Church. Accompaniment continues in discerning whether the irregular marital situation can be effectively resolved through a declaration of nullity of the previous marriage.

It is true that, for many, the annulment process

in the Catholic Church appears complicated, involving lots of red tape. Others fear that engaging it would open up old wounds best left alone. It is important to remember, however, that the entire process is a *discernment*, attempting to say with certainty whether the previous marriage was truly a valid marriage, entered into freely, consciously, and maturely, and therefore binding for life. It is not a discernment which a person need engage alone, but in and with the community of the Church, which helps the person peer into difficult realities with the strength of faith and Gospel truth, so that what was hurtful in the past does not inflict new pain now. Considering the secular environment in which we live, there are numerous factors that might motivate declaring a previous marriage null, and Pope Francis himself has recently streamlined the annulment process to make it more accessible to the faithful.

A person who is divorced and civilly remarried should begin this process of discernment by speaking to their Pastor or another Priest or Deacon of trust. The Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter does not yet have its own marriage tribunal, but all Ordinariate communities and faithful have recourse

³⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1650.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*



to the tribunal of the local Catholic diocese, and our Priests and Deacons can assist in navigating the process. Many seemingly complex situations can indeed be regularized, which would allow the couple to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church.

In some cases, the discernment leads to the conclusion that the first marriage was valid, and the parties entered into it freely choosing to live an exclusive and life-long covenant. When it comes to the divorced and remarried among us, it is the duty of the entire community of the faithful to “manifest an attentive solicitude” toward those “who live in this situation ... so that they do not consider themselves separated from the Church, in whose life they can and must participate as baptized persons.”⁴¹ That is, the divorced and civilly remarried are baptized members of the Church, and they are welcomed with great love to “listen to the Word of God, to attend the sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts for justice....”⁴² Their children are welcomed into the full sacramental and communal life of the Church. In no way are the civilly remarried outside of the Church, nor does the Church abandon them, making “untiring efforts to

put at their disposal her means of salvation.”⁴³ This bears repeating — the civilly remarried “are living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel.”⁴⁴

There is no contradiction between the Church’s firm resolve to maintain the fullness of her moral teaching and the disposition to mercy, love, and accompaniment for all, even those in troubled situations: “A lukewarm attitude, any kind of relativism ... would be a lack of fidelity to the Gospel and also of love on the part of the Church.... To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never

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implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being.”⁴⁵ At the same time, the Church, while continuing its teaching, addresses “the weak with compassion, avoiding aggravation or unduly harsh or hasty judgments.”⁴⁶ The Church is a field hospital for the wounded, and all are welcomed into her care. Such care includes couples’ careful and attentive

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1651.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1651; citing *Familiaris Consortio*, 84.

⁴³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84.

⁴⁴ *Amoris Laetitia*, 299.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 308.

discernment with a priest to “understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop.”⁴⁷ Accompaniment also contributes to the “formation of a correct

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the Church and on what steps can foster it and make it grow.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

PART FIVE



Forming Conscience

The Church never tires of loving her children, offering pastoral care to all. For the divorced and civilly remarried, “pastoral dialogue is needed ... that can lead to a greater openness to the Gospel of marriage in its fullness.”⁴⁹ Such discernment includes recognizing that “the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases,” for the “Church possesses a solid body of reflection concerning mitigating factors and situations.”⁵⁰ Given these factors, it may be that “a negative judgment about an objective situation does not imply a judgment about the imputability or culpability of the person involved.”⁵¹

Such discernment, which incorporates individual conscience in its reflection, is not, however, a matter for the individual to determine privately, but must be “guided by the responsible and serious discernment of one’s pastor.”⁵² While the Church recognizes varying levels of culpability and subjective responsibility, pastoral discernment must avoid “the grave danger of misunderstandings, such as the notion that any priest can quickly grant ‘exceptions’....”⁵³ The prohibition against adultery admits of no exceptions, and discernment with respect to individual culpability and growth does not permit us to “look on the law as merely an ideal to be achieved in the future: [we] must consider it as a command of Christ the Lord to overcome difficulties with constancy.”⁵⁴ There are not “different degrees or forms of precept in God’s law

⁴⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 293.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 300, 301; citing, *Relatio Finalis* 2015, 51.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 303, 307.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 34.

for different individuals and situations.”⁵⁵

Further, while pastoral accompaniment is called “to form consciences, not to replace them,” the formation of conscience “can never prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church.”⁵⁶ Conscience is not a law unto itself, nor can conscience rightly overrule the holy law of God, for conscience “bears witness to the authority of truth” but does not create that truth.⁵⁷ Conscience must “be informed and moral judgment enlightened,” and the lifelong task of educating conscience “is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.”⁵⁸ The Word of God and the authoritative teaching of the Church provide abiding truth for the education of conscience; to judge rightly, it “is always very important to have a right notion of the moral order, its values and its norms; and the importance is all the greater when the difficulties in the way of respecting them become more numerous and serious.”⁵⁹

Consequently, pastoral discernment admits of no exceptions to the moral law, nor does it replace moral law with the private judgments of conscience. Instead, accompaniment, done tenderly and mercifully in the light of truth, calls people to “progress unceasingly in their moral life, with the support of a sincere and active desire to gain ever better knowledge of the values enshrined in and

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 34, 300.

⁵⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1776, 1777.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1783

⁵⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 34.

"God orders us to our happiness and well-being, he commands only what is for our goodness, and he never abandons us in our weakness and need."



fostered by the law of God.... This shared progress demands reflection, instruction and suitable education ... to assist married people in their human and spiritual progress, a progress that demands awareness of sin, a sincere commitment to observe the moral law, and the ministry of reconciliation.”⁶⁰ The Church accompanies as Teacher and Mother, confident that with the grace and assistance of God, conscience can “remain ever open to new stages of growth and to new decisions which can enable the ideal to be more fully realized.”⁶¹

The formation of conscience “can include the help of the sacraments,” including reconciliation and, *under certain conditions*, the Eucharist.⁶² As the Church teaches, and has always and firmly maintained, because reception of the Eucharist is the reception of Christ himself, “anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.”⁶³ St. Paul cautioned that “anyone who eats and drinks unworthily, without discerning the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Cor. 11:29), as Pope St. John Paul II reaffirmed: “in the Church there remains in force, now and in the future, the rule by which the Council of Trent gave concrete expression to the Apostle Paul’s stern warning when it affirmed that, in order to receive the Eucharist in a worthy manner, ‘one must first confess one’s sins, when one is aware of mortal sin.’”⁶⁴

Under the guidance of their pastor, avoiding occasions of confusion or scandal, divorced and civilly remarried persons may receive the Eucharist, on the condition that when “for serious reasons, such as for example the children’s upbringing, a man and woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they ‘take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples.’”⁶⁵ A civilly

remarried couple, *if committed to complete continence*, could have the Eucharist available to them, after proper discernment with their pastor and making recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation. Such a couple may experience continence as difficult, and they may sometimes fail, in which case they are, like any Christian, to repent, confess their sins, and begin anew.

Reconciliation requires contrition, the “sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.”⁶⁶ A civilly remarried couple firmly resolving complete chastity thus resolves not to sin again, which differs in kind from a civilly remarried couple who do not firmly intend to live chastely, however much they may feel sorrow for the failure of their first marriage. In this situation, they either do not acknowledge that their unchastity, which is adultery, is gravely wrong, or they do not firmly intend to avoid sin. In either case, the disposition required for reconciliation is not satisfied, and they would receive the Eucharist in a condition of grave sin. Unless and until the civilly remarried honestly intend to refrain from sexual relations entirely, sacramental discipline does not allow for the reception of the Eucharist.

The firm intention for a chaste life is difficult, but chastity is possible, and it “can be followed with the help of grace.”⁶⁷ Every person is called to chastity, whether married or not, and the assistance of grace and the tenderness of mercy is available to all. Further the law is given to us by a kind and loving God: “Since the moral order reveals and sets forth the plan of God the Creator, for this reason it cannot be something that harms man, something impersonal. On the contrary, by responding to the deepest demands of the human being created by God, it places itself at the service of that person’s full humanity with the delicate and binding love whereby God himself inspires, sustains and guides every creature towards its happiness.”⁶⁸ God orders us to our happiness and well-being, he commands only what is for our goodness, and he never abandons us in our weakness and need.

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⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 303.

⁶² *Ibid.*, n. 351; cf. n. 336.

⁶³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1385.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 36.

⁶⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84; citing Homily at the Close of the Sixth Synod of Bishops (Oct. 25, 1980), 7.

⁶⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1451; citing Council of Trent, 1676.

⁶⁷ *Amoris Laetitia*, 295.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 34.



PART SIX



Conclusion

Pope Francis instructs us to engage *Amoris Laetitia* “patiently and carefully,” not only to understand the text itself but in order that the people of God may rightly discern how to nourish and care for their own marriages, families, and others within the community of faith.⁶⁹ As he wisely reminds us, “no family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. This is a never-ending vocation....”⁷⁰

In whatever situation we find ourselves, may “we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeing that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us.”⁷¹ The Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter knows very well the ways in which God has provided love and the fullness of communion to us, and in gratitude and joy we proclaim that same communion to others. It is our

never-ending vocation to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ crucified and risen again. The Christian knows that death is not the final word, but rather resurrection, for God brings good from evil and life from death. As we navigate the joy and pain of family life, including obstacles and challenges that seem, at times, insurmountable, we know that we have a Savior who has gone ahead of us, has suffered as we have, and promises that nothing can separate us from his love and mercy.

Our prayer for each other should echo a Collect from the *Divine Worship* Marriage ritual: “look mercifully upon [them] who come before thee seeking thy blessing, and assist them with thy grace; that with utmost fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God world without end. **Amen.**”⁷²

⁶⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *The Order of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony Outside of Mass.*



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