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## **Christmas and Family**

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Christmas is a time of year that has its foundation in a historical-salvific event: the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, which Christians commemorate in a liturgical time of the same name. In a materialistic society like ours, Christmas has been turned into a season of the year to sell and buy, to spend and consume, to flaunt and splurge. And within this enormous consumer traffic, the message of what Christians remember, the meaning of what Christians celebrate at this time is manipulated, lost, diluted, and forgotten.

The significance that Christmas holds for the world in general and for Christians in particular is enormous. What we celebrate is the birth of a Jewish man, born in what we now know as Israel, called Jesus of Nazareth for having been raised in that town and who is, for all, a model of Humanity and Divinity: because Jesus is Divine for the profoundly Human.

When Christians acknowledge Jesus as God made Man, we acknowledge at the same time, the ultimate and definitive destiny to which all of humanity is called: that of divinely incarnating ourselves in history and in our daily lives to divinely humanize ourselves. At Christmas, therefore, we celebrate the joyful and hopeful certainty that in the Birth of Jesus, God has wanted to remain forever with us by showing us in Him, the Way, the Truth and the Life to which we are all called.

The historical event of Christmas occurs in the context of a family. Among the many meanings assigned to the commemoration of the first Christmas, the value given by God to the family at the birth of Jesus is, today, important and special among us.

Today we suffer and witness a deep crisis of humanity and humanity in all its forms. The serious problems revealed in the crisis show a more profound and definitive crisis in the very heart of the human being:



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a de-humanization contrary to all that is meant and implied in the message of Christmas. But at the same time, the serious social problems that emerge from the heart of man have their origin in a deep crisis of the family.

The list is extensive of the enormous conflicts that today attack the family model put forward on that first Christmas night. In a world that changes daily and swiftly, the generational gap between parents and children grows by adding:

- Rapid and easy – "express" – separations, divorces, and annulments.
- Infidelity in a pansexual society that placates and encourages it.
- The lack of commitment in a hedonistic society that advocates for the simple, the fleeting, the ephemeral, the easy, the disposable, the purely aesthetic and apparent.
- The academic and labor world that separates distances and disintegrates families.
- Machismo and feminism.
- The alleged scientific manipulation of God's designs on creation and family life.
- The lack of respect for human life.
- Smoking, alcohol, drugs.
- The meaninglessness of life in a society that quickly kills the will to live while it reduces the meaning of life to the merely material and the intra-historical hiding of the transcendent vision of man, the world and its history, etc. ...



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In a world that advocates plurality of ideas and lifestyles along with respect for individual freedoms and human rights, Truth - under that pretext - should not be denied, confused or dissolved in the middle of the sea of individuals, each small and almost always a petty pocket of truth. The Good News that the Christian Gospel contains for every man and woman of goodwill is that every person has the right to be born and to "grow in grace and wisdom" in a family model in which the paternal, filial, and fraternal love relationships are replicated and lived in a way that we Christians recognize and praise in the same bosom.

The disturbing statistics that tell us about the millions of children who try to "grow up" and "raise" themselves in dysfunctional "homes", "surrogate" homes or with other family members or in government institutions that try to "supplement" non-existent families, are an alarm about something very serious that is happening in our communities and an urgent challenge for us to re-evaluate and live the model of Christian family suggested at Christmas.

Today, as never before, there is nostalgia for Nazareth:

- Nostalgia for homes where parents and children live and live together in communion.
- Nostalgia for homes like Nazareth: where parents love and fulfill the will of God by loving and serving the lives of their children.
- Homes in which children fulfill the will of God by obeying their parents.
- Homes that foster the construction of a world in solidarity by first living brotherly and sisterly relationships at home.
- Homes where love and respect prevail over the ever-difficult and ever-changing circumstances of life.



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- Homes with parents dedicated to the care of their children and with children attentive and devoted to their parents.
- Homes where parents and children grow in humanity by cooperating with the creative work of the God of the Bible through daily work.
- Families that are real homes, that is, bonfires lit with love capable of heating and illuminating a world so often cold and dark.

I congratulate you on these holy days that we Christians live in memory of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I rejoice in the joy of the world because "a child has been born to us, a child has been given to us" who is called "Emmanuel, which means God-with-us" and I encourage you all to spend more time in our homes, our environments, in our communities, the great lessons, the good lessons, the sacred and eternal lessons we can learn for our family life from the life of the Man of Nazareth.