

Liturgy of the Church of John

The Spiritual Value of the Family

First Reading (John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 1994, no. 19)

Reader: *A reading taken from the spiritual heritage of humanity.*

Assembly: *From all time, Heaven has prepared the coming of the Kingdom.*

Reader: *Today, a passage from John Paul II's "Letter to Families".
It is written:*

The family itself is the great mystery of God. As the "domestic church," it is the bride of Christ. The universal Church... is most immediately revealed as the bride of Christ in the "domestic church" and in its experience of love: conjugal love, paternal and maternal love, fraternal love, the love of a community of persons and of generations. Could we even imagine human love without the Bridegroom and the love with which he first loved to the end? Only if husbands and wives share in that love and in that "great mystery" can they love "to the end"....

Pointing to marriage, and indirectly to the family, as the "great mystery" which refers to Christ and the Church, the apostle Paul is able to reaffirm what he had earlier said to husbands: "Let each one of you love his wife as himself." He goes on to say: "And let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Eph 5:33) Respect, because she loves and knows that she is loved in return. It is because of this love that husband and wife become a mutual gift. Love contains the acknowledgment of the personal dignity of the other, and of his or her absolute uniqueness....

Saint Paul continues his exhortation...; "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger..." (Eph 6:1-4) The apostle thus sees in the fourth commandment the implicit commitment of mutual respect between husband and wife, between parents and children, and he recognizes in it the principle of family stability.

Reader: *This was a passage from John Paul II's "Letter to Families".*

Assembly: *Thanks be to God.*