

**Friday of the Second Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Homily to the Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family**  
***"We learn to be family"***  
**Rome, January 20 2017**

Dear brothers and sisters,

in this annual meeting of the Salesian spirituality days we're delving into the reality of the family and our commitment in its favor, as we are indicated by the Strenna of the Rector Major for 2017. In this Eucharist, we want to thank God for the gift of family and call upon him for his manifold needs. The family is an irreplaceable resource of society and of the church; often, however, it looks fragile and therefore in need of help, especially the help of God whom now ask with confidence.

1. The first reading, taken from the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the new covenant between God and his people. And 'the Lord Jesus who inaugurates the new covenant in his blood, that is, in the gift of himself and of his life. Then we will not need a law written on stone tablets; God will give His laws in our minds and in our hearts. We will no longer need anyone to instruct us, because everybody knows God from the smallest to the biggest. Says the Lord: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The family is founded and established as a covenant, that is, as reciprocal relations. The family alliance requires exchange of gifts and commitments in their own family to the proximity between its members are placed in a position to overcome the alienation and indifference, and to establish authentic relationships. The family then becomes the house of love, that is the place where you learn to love, where love is kept and where love grows. That is why it is important to ask ourselves in the logic of what I give to the family, rather than in the logic of what I pretend to receive. Its is the logic of love given and received.

In the family meet the generations: grandparents, parents, children, brothers and sisters. We learn from each other. Life instructs us; for this the family is also the home of life, that is the place where one learns to live and where life is enriched. Family life sometimes for multiple commitments risk of not meeting one another. If there is no meeting, there is no journey and if there is no journey there is not growth: life then threatens to go off and fade. The family becomes generative, when life is transmitted.

Today the family needs to renew itself. The family must get new alliance. The formal relationships or relationships based solely on rules, the frantic or superficial relationships or need to be overcome with the language of the heart. Thus says God to his people: "Behold, I will speak to her heart." Even for the family the language of the heart, the sentiments communicated, the affections shared are its newness and freshness. The family needs to see gestures, signs, expressions of tenderness, which is love expressed.

2. The gospel then speaks of the calling of the first disciples of Jesus. He went up the mountain and summoned those he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve, whom he named apostles, to be with him and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. To be with Jesus and to go in the name of Jesus

The Christian family has a vocation: the vocation to be a community of disciples. If its members learn to be with Jesus, they will share the same journey of the disciples; it will be easier to maintain family unity and concord. The company of Jesus helps us to listen to the word of his gospel, to ask ourselves how to live together and strengthen our faith, to share prayer, to live generously the charity.

The Christian family has a mission: the mission of being the community of apostles Jesus. The family must feel that they sent among other families to bear witness to the gospel. Be a visible sign that in the weakness one can be understanding and forgiving; to be credible sign that the Christian faith make life joyful and peaceful even in the trials and hardships; to be fruitful sign that generates and gives life.

In the Christian family, together we grow as disciples and apostles. We cannot be bold apostles, if as a family we do not help one another to be authentic disciples; in the same way, we will not be true disciples if we are not apostles in the family open to offer a gospel witness.

3. Let us look at Don Bosco and his family: his father Francesco, who left when John was two years old, Mamma Margaret who raised him and stayed with him at the oratory of Valdocco for 10 years, grandmother with his wisdom of life and faith, the brothers Antonio and Giuseppe. His family learned the need that young people have to have a family who accompany them in growth.

We look at the family of Nazareth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In it we contemplate the splendor of true love. Holy Family of Nazareth, make also our families places of communion and cenacles of prayer, authentic schools of gospel and small domestic Churches. Never again there be incidents of violence in families, of closure and division. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, listen to us and accept our supplication. Amen.