

# G R I S T

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## **Marriage and Family**

from the } *Compendium of the Church's Social Doctrine*

The family is the primary place of humanization for the person and society and the **cradle of life and love**. #209

In the family one learns the love and faithfulness of the Lord, and the need to respond to these. #210

The family is the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it...It is the **first and vital cell of society**. #211

It is in this cradle of life and love that people are born and grow...[that] persons are recognized and learn responsibility in the wholeness of their personhood. #212

The family, the natural community in which human social nature is experienced, makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society...As a community of persons, the family is the first human society...Without families that are strong in their communion and stable in their commitment peoples grow weak. #213

The family does not exist for society or the State, but society and the State exist for the family. #214

The family has its foundation in the free choice of the spouses to unite themselves in marriage, in respect for the meaning and values of this institution that does not depend on man but on God himself...

**Marriage** [as an] intimate partnership of life and love...is founded on conjugal love which, as a total and exclusive gift of person to person, entails a definitive commitment expressed by mutual, irrevocable and public consent. #215

Society cannot freely legislate with regard to the marriage bond by which the two spouses promise each other fidelity, assistance and acceptance of children, but it is authorized to regulate its civil effects. #216

The characteristic **traits of marriage** are: **totality** by which the spouses give themselves to each other mutually in every aspect of their person, physical and spiritual; **unity** which makes them "one flesh"; **indissolubility** and **fidelity** which the definitive mutual giving of self requires; the **fruitfulness** to which this naturally opens itself. #217

In its objective truth, marriage is ordered to the procreation and education of children...Nonetheless, marriage was not instituted for the sole reason of procreation. Its indissoluble character and its value of communion remain even when children, although greatly desired, do not arrive to complete conjugal life. #218

By Christ's institution, the baptized live the inherent human reality of marriage in the supernatural form of a **sacrament**, a sign and instrument of grace... Marriage, as a sacrament, is a covenant in love between a man and a woman. #219

As a "**domestic Church**," the Christian family is called to be a sign of unity for the world. #220

The family is present as the place where communion is brought about...where an authentic community of persons develops and grows, thanks to the endless dynamism of love, which is the fundamental dimension of human experience and which finds in the family the privileged place for making itself known. #221

Love is also expressed in the generous attention shown to the elderly who live in families. #222

The truth of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of unity and fidelity. #223

**Gender identity** [is not] merely the cultural and social product of the interaction between the community and the individual, independent of personal sexual identity without any reference to the true meaning of sexuality...Everyone, man and woman, should accept his or her sexual identity. Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarities are oriented towards the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. #224

The nature of conjugal love requires the stability of the married relationship and its indissolubility. #225

The Church does not abandon those who have remarried after a divorce. #226

**De facto unions** are based on a false conception of an individual's freedom to choose and on a completely privatistic vision of marriage and family. #227

[Demands for the legal recognition of **unions between homosexual persons**] are opposed by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being...and the absence of conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical-biological and the eminently psychological levels... Homosexual persons are to be fully respected in their human dignity and encouraged to follow God's plan with particular attention in the exercise of chastity. #228

The solidity of the family nucleus is a decisive resource for the quality of life in society, therefore the civil community cannot remain indifferent to the destabilizing tendencies that threaten its foundations at their roots...It must never weaken the recognition of indissoluble marriage as the only authentic form of the family. #229

The family founded on marriage is truly the sanctuary of life...Christian families have a particular mission that makes them witnesses and proclaimers of the Gospel of life. #231

The family contributes to the social good in an eminent fashion through responsible motherhood and fatherhood, the spouses' special participation in God's work of creation. #232

Rejected as morally illicit are **sterilization** and **abortion**...Also to be rejected is recourse to **contraceptive methods** in their different forms. #233

The judgment concerning the interval of time between births, and that regarding the number of children, belongs to the spouses alone. #234

The desire to be a mother or a father does not justify any "right to children," whereas the rights of the unborn child are evident. The unborn child must be guaranteed the best possible conditions of existence through the stability of a family founded on marriage, through the complementarities of the two persons, father and mother...Ethically **unacceptable reproductive techniques**: making use of the uterus of another woman or of gametes of persons other than the married couple...methods that separate the unitive act from the procreative act by making use of laboratory techniques, such as homologous artificial insemination or fertilization...Avoiding recourse to different forms of so-called "assisted procreation" that replace the marriage acts means respecting – both in the parents and in the children that they intend to generate – the integral dignity of the human person...Methods that are meant to lend assistance to the conjugal act or to the attainment of its effects are legitimate. #235

**Cloning** can have a reproductive purpose, that of producing human embryos, or a so-called therapeutic purpose, tending to use such embryos for scientific research or more specifically for the production of stem cells. From an ethical point of view, the simple replication of normal cells or of a portion of DNA presents no particular ethical problem...[However] cloning understood in the proper sense is contrary to the dignity of human procreation because it takes place in total absence of an act of personal love between spouses, being agamic and asexual reproduction...[Also] this type of reproduction represents a form of total domination over the reproduced individual on the part of the one reproducing it...The fact that cloning is used to create embryos from which cells can be removed for therapeutic use does not attenuate its moral gravity, because in order that such cells may be removed the embryo must first be created and then destroyed. #236

Parents, as ministers of life, must never forget that the spiritual dimension of procreation is to be given greater consideration than any other aspect. #237

By exercising its **mission to educate**, the family contributes to the common good and constitutes the first school of social virtue. #238

The parents' love, placing itself at the service of children to draw forth (*educere*) from them the best that is in them, finds its fullest expression precisely in the task of educating. #239

Parents are the first, not the only, educators of their children...[and must] exercise with responsibility their educational activity in close and vigilant cooperation with civil and ecclesial agencies. #240

The family has the responsibility to provide an **integral education**...This integrality is ensured when children – with the witness of life and words – are educated in dialogue, encounter, sociality, legality, solidarity and peace, through the cultivation of the fundamental virtues of justice and charity...the role of the father and that of the mother are equally necessary. #242

It is of fundamental importance for the balanced growth of children that they are taught in an orderly and progressive manner the **meaning of sexuality** and that they learn to appreciate the human and moral values connected with it. #243

Special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. #244