

What It's REALLY Like to Live in a Family

Editor's note: We wanted to share Pope Francis' teaching, in his own words, on how important it is to offer and receive forgiveness and foster peace in our families. These words were offered by the pope during the Jubilee of Mercy on May 13, 2015, at St. Peter's Square.

Today's catechesis will serve as a doorway to a series of reflections on family life and what it's really like to live in a family, day in and day out...

[An important] expression is, "Pardon me." Granted, it's not always easy to say, but it is so necessary. Whenever it is lacking, the little cracks begin to open up – even when we don't want them to – and they can even become enormous sinkholes. It's hardly insignificant that in the Our Father that Jesus teaches us – a prayer that sums up all of life's essential questions – we find this expression: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mt 6:16).

To acknowledge that we have fallen short, to be desirous of returning that which has been taken away – respect, sincerity, love – these make us worthy of pardon. This is how we heal the infection. If we are not able to forgive ourselves, then we are no longer able to forgive period. A house in which the words "I'm sorry" are never uttered begins to lack air, and the floodwaters begin to choke those who live inside. So many wounds, so many scrapes and bruises, are the result of a lack of these precious words: "I am sorry."

Marital life is so often torn apart by fights ... the "plates will even start flying," but let me give you a word of advice: Never finish the day without making peace with one another.

Listen to me carefully: Did you fight with your wife or husband? Kids – did you fight with your parents? Did you seriously argue? That's not a good thing, but it's not really that which is the problem: The problem arises only if this feeling hangs over into the next day. So if you've fought, do not let the day end without making peace with your family.

And how am I going to make peace? By getting down on my knees? No! Just by a small gesture, a little something, and harmony within your family will be restored. Just a little caress, no words necessary. But don't let the sun go down on your family without having made your peace. Do you understand me? It's not easy, but you have to do it. It will help to make life so much more beautiful....

It's no laughing matter, right? Perhaps we overlook our good manners too often. May the Lord help us to put them back where they belong: in our hearts, in our homes, and in our civic life. These are the words that truly enter into the love of a family.

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