

The word seminary means “seedbed.” In this regard, the family is the original seminary, where the seed of faith is nurtured and eventually germinates. How did Christ begin? In His own home. The family is the first thing Christ sanctified. Family is that societal unit that draws life from the love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man. Family is that living organism that draws its strength from praying and worshiping together, a school of faith, providing young people a holy and loving environment to hear God’s voice and discern His will for their vocation, their call to holiness. The family is a social unit that fosters attitudes of care and concern, where mature adults are called to a vocation of service, and to live that vocation by laying down their lives, day by day, for one another and for the children their love brings forth. Family provides that foundation for each of us to grow, prosper, and mature into the full stature of Christ.

It is a commonplace that cannot be repeated too often that the family is the cornerstone of society. Where family life is in trouble, society is also in trouble. Many of the troubles in contemporary American society derive directly from the troubles in American family life. And where something goes deeply wrong in the family, it is usually because members of the family refuse to measure up to the demands of SACRIFICE. The word sacrifice means “to make holy.” No family can be a holy family without sacrifices. And no family can be a happy family unless they rest on holiness-sacrifice that requires the gift of self to and for others. At every wedding, the Church exhorts the couple to be married: “Let the security of your wedded life rest on the great principle of self-sacrifice. Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome: only love can make it easy and perfect love can make it a joy.” Love, in the wisdom vocabulary of the Church, is another word for sacrifice. Affluence? We need to face up to the fact that sparing and sharing will be more beneficial than the unimpeded consumerism and waste to which we’ve grown accustomed. Affluence has had a destructive and privatizing impact on contemporary American life. Material progress has produced so many “private and personal” things- cars, rooms, TV’s, cell phones, computers, iPads, and all the other hardware and software that make us less dependent on one another, but isolate us from close, physical, tangible contact at home, while enabling our isolated selves to reach out and electronically “touch” someone anywhere in the world. We are moving ourselves into a very private but deeply lonely corner. How do we get out of that corner? The only way out is by coming together offering the gift of self to and for others.

Family wounds: forgiveness can heal family wounds. Forgiveness means giving and restoring, reinstating and forgetting even when they are not deserved. Who among us deserved the gift God gave us in Christ? No one of us had any title at all to reinstatement in the life of grace, no claim to the forgiveness we have all received. Aware of having been forgiven and yet still needing forgiveness in Jesus Christ, we should extend to each other forgiveness now and the promise of future forgiveness. There is no healing power like the kind that comes through forgiveness. As a model for all families, the Holy Family loved each other, sacrificing for each other, bearing one another’s burdens and always forgiving within a loving home. Every Christian family is called to carry out the wonderful vocation and mission of being the nucleus not only of society, but also of the Church. May Jesus, Mary and Joseph help all families succeed in our holy purpose.