

# Married Life

## in Regnum Christi

Making the Kingdom Present



REGNUM  
CHRISTI



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# Presentation

## An answer to the signs of the times

The challenges that families currently face are many (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 39-43). A renewed evangelization should begin with an attentive analysis of these challenges, in order to shed new light on the beauty and value of what St. John Paul II called “the first and vital cell of society” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 42).

Regnum Christi wishes to meet this pastoral challenge. In the last few years, initiatives have come forth from many of its married couples joining with other couples to help each other grow in their married life, strengthened and enlightened by the charism they share. We want to support these initiatives and commit ourselves as an institution to accompany them, to deepen the spirituality and mission of marriage. This document comes from the desire to help families live their vocation with greater fullness and joy.

This reflection is developed in three parts. First, it is helpful to look closely at the Sacrament of Matrimony and its specific grace, since this will help us better understand the identity and mission of married couples. Second, we will reflect on how the Sacrament of Matrimony and the Regnum Christi charism enlighten each other. We will then be equipped to practically apply these concepts to the life of the team, the section and the locality.

The following guiding principles were considered in the creation of this essay:

## Beginning from Sacred Scripture

In the course of the Old Testament, a story of salvation takes shape which involves the simultaneous participation of male and female. While having an evident metaphorical dimension, the terms bridegroom and bride—and covenant as well—which characterize the dynamic of salvation, are much more than simple metaphors. This spousal language touches on the very nature of the relationship which God establishes with his people, even though that relationship is more expansive than human spousal experience (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, May 31, 2004).

Marriage has a transcendent meaning and is not limited to the affective needs of man and woman on their journey through this world. In different ways and with different images, the Bible narrates the nuptial covenant between God and his people, between Christ and the Church (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1612), which culminates in the Incarnation. Matrimony is nothing less than the image by which God shares his project of salvation: “*The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman*” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 12).

## A Deep Understanding of the Reality of Being Man and Woman

The revelation that God made man “*in his image and likeness*” (Gen 1:27) opens an unexpected horizon to the significance of being man and woman. God, in his Trinity, is a communion of Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—since “*God is love*” (1 Jn 4:8). If God reflected his image in the human being, this means that we are made to love, to give ourselves in body and soul and to be fruitful, in the image of God himself. In his “Theology of the Body,” St. John Paul II developed this thought admirably.

## The Sacrament of Matrimony in the Church

All of this helps us understand the affirmation that marriage and the family constitute the fundamental cell of the Church, a “domestic Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). It is an affirmation that has very concrete implications for evangelization: All the areas of pastoral care and all lines of apostolate should have as their horizon to serve, accompany and promote the Christian family. In the recent magisterium of the Church, this truth has been *given the name pastoral interconnectedness*:

“Interconnectedness” means that the pastoral care of married life is not confined to the narrow arena of “meetings for engaged couples”, but “crosses” into other pastoral areas, which always seek to include it. Such an approach can avoid an inflexible division of pastoral care into “watertight compartments”, which diminish its effectiveness. Rather, pastoral care of children, young people, and families should all advance in tandem by working in synergy (Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life, *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral guidelines for local Churches*, 12).

## There is a Special Place for the Married Life and Vocation in the Life and Mission of Regnum Christi

These reflections are accompanied by a certainty: in the plan of God for Regnum Christi, there is a special place reserved for married couples. Indeed, Regnum Christi is not only a spirituality and lifestyle that helps its members live out their vocations as children of God through baptism, but it has something specific to offer and propose to those who unite themselves in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

On their part, each married couple enriches Regnum Christi in its ability to understand itself as a “spiritual family and apostolic body.” Indeed, being a spiritual family means that there is a relation of mutual enrichment, of shared grace, among the different vocations that constitute it: priests, consecrated members, single laypeople and married couples. Being an apostolic body means that they share a mission and a way of living it out (cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Federation*, 8 and 10).



# Chapter I: The Sacrament of Matrimony

First of all, we want to present an overview of the Sacrament of Matrimony, its identity and mission, based on the magisterium of the Church.

## **The Sacrament of Matrimony Specifies a Way to Live Baptismal Grace**

We know that God has formed the human being in his image and likeness. This means that man and woman attain the full meaning of their life in the same way God does, that is, through the complete gift of themselves in love. This calling begins with baptism, the first of the sacramental gifts of God, which confers upon us the highest dignity of being sons and daughters in the Son, Jesus Christ.

When two who are in love commit themselves, they receive a new calling to live their baptismal identity in a concrete way. From this moment on, they will continue to live “in Christ,” but no longer individually, but as “one flesh”; they will follow Christ *as a couple*, and they will express a new presence of Jesus through their matrimonial union. In other words, Christian marriage deepens the vocation of baptism, makes it more specific in the way it is to be lived, and causes the spouses to become the living presence of Jesus, no more as individuals, but as a couple.

How, then, can we describe the grace proper to Christian spouses? The Church teaches that marriage has a twofold finality: the union of the spouses and the fruitfulness that is born of their relationship (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1660), in the image of Christ's love for the Church, his Bride, and the love that unites the Father and the Son in the Spirit.

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1661).

The marriage of baptized persons thus becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ. The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us (*Familiaris Consortio*, 13).

The couple's fruitful relationship becomes an image for understanding and describing the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love. The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection (*Amoris Laetitia*, 11).

Thus, the Sacrament of Matrimony dignifies and brings to fullness the ability of man and woman to love and gives them the graces to live this love out in a concrete way.

## Christian Marriage Receives a Special Consecration from the Holy Spirit

The vocation to marriage is a gift from God, and the spouses cannot live it without the strength of the Holy Spirit. With his grace, he sustains their mutual consent, the “yes” that they gave on their wedding day and that they renew daily, in such a way that the spouses are a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the Church (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1617). It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers them for their new mission.

When they marry, Christian spouses begin not only their adventure, even when this is understood in the sense of sanctification and mission; they begin an adventure that inserts them in responsible way into the great adventure of universal salvation history. As a memorial, the sacrament confers upon them the grace and the duty to remember the great works of God and to witness to them before their children; as a realization, it confers upon them the grace and the duty to put into practice, in the present moment, the demands of a love that forgives and redeems each other and their children; as a prophecy, it confers upon them the grace and the duty to live and give testimony to the hope of the future encounter with Christ (John Paul II, Speech to the members of the Centre de Liaison des Équipes des Recherche, November 3, 1979).

## Marriage Entails a Mission

When it is said that marriage specifies and makes concrete the gift of baptism, this means that spouses participate in the three functions of Christ: *priest, prophet and king* in their own original way (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 783-786).

### Spouses participate in the priestly vocation of Christ

Each of the baptized receives the dignity of the common priesthood, which consists in the ability to offer their life as an act of praise pleasing to God. Spouses consecrate and offer to God not only their individual acts, but also their whole relationship of love. Thus, married life of the baptized becomes one continuous liturgical act, since it all gives glory to God. This *“has concrete daily consequences, because the spouses, ‘in virtue of the sacrament, are invested with a true and proper mission, so that, starting with the simple ordinary things of life they can make visible the love with which Christ loves his Church and continues to give his life for her’”* (*Amoris Laetitia*, 121).

Given that the daily self-giving of spouses also flows through the gift of themselves in bodily union, the very conjugal act acquires a special liturgical and priestly character, which goes beyond the meaning of intimacy that it has for the spouses. Therefore, for all intents and purposes, the marriage bed should be considered an altar, a place where God is offered adoration and praise.

[The sacrament is not] a single moment that then becomes a part of the past and its memories, but rather as a reality that permanently influences the whole of married

life. The procreative meaning of sexuality, the language of the body, and the signs of love shown throughout married life, all become an “uninterrupted continuity of liturgical language” and “conjugal life becomes in a certain sense liturgical” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 215).

## Spouses participate in the kingly function of Christ

By baptism, Christians receive the royal dignity of Christ (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 784). The Kingdom of Christ is not one of power or prestige, it is a Kingdom of justice, love and peace. As the baptized, we received the gift of making present and building this Kingdom in the world. Married people fulfill this calling by creating a community of fruitful love, which resonates in the Church and in society. That said, the fruitfulness of spouses goes beyond the capacity to have biological children, since it extends to conceiving children of God (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 80-82). Their paternity and maternity become a reflection of the fatherhood of God (cf. Eph 3:14).

This gift allows spouses, with or without biological children, to be the beginning of a fraternal community, a larger family. Being a domestic Church by vocation, spouses are called to extend their communion of love beyond the boundaries of their home, in ecclesial communities, places where the great family of the Church is made present, gathered in the name of the Lord and send out to announce the Gospel.

## Spouses participate in the prophetic character of Christ

Upon receiving the gift of being a prophet through baptism, each Christian can give witness with their life that the Kingdom of heaven is near. Spouses live this prophetic vocation because their spiritual, moral, affective, and sexual union makes the love of God visible among all people. By matrimony they were made “one,” in the image and likeness of God who is Trinity, communion among the divine Persons; with their faithful and fruitful love, they proclaim and make flesh Christ’s love for the Church.

This happens in two ways. First, the prophesy of matrimony consists in revealing the beauty and depth of being an image and likeness of God. Even with all their limitations, spouses are like a photograph of God, as a communion of persons, equal in dignity but distinct in their ways of being. *“The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon—not an idol like those of stone or gold prohibited by the Decalogue—capable of revealing God the Creator and Savior” (Amoris Laetitia, 11).* Second, spouses give witness to the love between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:32); they make it visible and present by their relationship, since they receive *“the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride” (Familiaris Consortio, 17).*

How great is the dignity of marriage! At the same time, it is a humble and fragile reality, lived by ordinary people with virtues and defects, aided by God’s grace. Therefore, as Pope Francis reminds us, *“No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love” (Amoris Laetitia, 325).*

## It Is a Mission That Transforms the Family Interiorly and Shines Forth to the Whole Church

When they get married, spouses receive the gift and mission of being constituted as a “domestic church.” As such, their new family is a reality that is not closed in on itself, but has a dynamic of shining forth, a centrifugal, expansive movement.

The first area of mission is the very relationship of the married couple. The primary mission of each husband is his wife, and of each wife, her husband. Spouses should help each other in their path towards God and, welcoming each other’s diversity, transform their differences into a source of growth and unity.

This mutual relationship as spouses, lovers, and friends creates an “us” as the result of the “I” and the “you” becoming one flesh. Each spouse, loving the other, makes them feel unique and thus brings them to the full realization of themselves.

This fullness is not egotistical but shines forth in society. From this stems the commitment to evangelization through their own testimony, since the married couple is called to give credibility to love through charity towards those in need and the thousand ways that the creativity of love can be lived by looking at the needs of the society in which they live and then responding.

The name “domestic church” (cf. Rm 16:5), which has been given to the family and the community that gathers in their house from the beginning of Christianity, reveals their dignity and their mission of being a privileged place in which to see the reflection of the face of the Church, which is a home, a nation, a body and a spouse. Therefore, the mission of marriage is truly “interconnected” to the Church’s apostolate.

# Chapter II: The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Charism of Regnum Christi

## **Baptism and Matrimony, Two Sacraments That Are Linked in a Charism**

Around the world, married couples in Regnum Christi who desire to live their specific vocation and grow as a couple have emerged spontaneously; enlightened and strengthened by the Regnum Christi charism, they have formed teams of married couples and seek to collaborate in evangelization in a concrete way. This situation could very well be considered a “sign of the times” (Lk 12:56).

Above all, it is important to keep in mind that a charism is a gift or grace that God gives a person to build up the Church. There are also ecclesial charisms, like that of Regnum Christi, that God gives the Church as a concrete path to live out one’s baptism and reach eternal life. So, to shed light on the relationship between the Sacrament of Matrimony and our charism, it is helpful to start with the Sacrament of Baptism, the foundation of all subsequent graces, including the Sacrament of Matrimony itself, for those who receive this vocation.



Since Regnum Christi wants to help its members live the riches of their baptism, and matrimony is founded on baptism, matrimony is also a beneficiary of the richness of our charism. Thus, marriage is welcomed as a Regnum Christi vocation, in communion with the other states of life that make up and enrich Regnum Christi.

## The Kingdom of Christ and Married Life

The ultimate purpose of Regnum Christi is “*to give glory to God and make the Kingdom of Christ present in the hearts of all people and in society, by our sanctification in the state and condition of life to which God has called us, and by personal and communal apostolic action*” (SRCF 7).

What does it mean to “let Christ make his Kingdom present” for those who are married? In what way is this accomplished in a married couple, and how can they welcome this gift? Let’s recall what we saw in the earlier chapter: the gift of marriage and the call of the family, the “domestic church,” to transcend its limits, since matrimony is essentially a sacrament destined for the mission, “directed towards the salvation of others” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1534):

The decision to “wed in the Lord” also entails a missionary dimension, which means having at heart the willingness to be a medium for God’s blessing and for the Lord’s grace *to all*. Indeed, Christian spouses participate as *spouses* in the mission of the Church. This takes courage! That is why when I meet newlyweds, I say: “Here are the brave ones!”, because it takes courage to love one another as Christ loves the Church. [...] The Church, in order to offer to all the gifts of faith, hope and love,

needs the courageous fidelity of spouses to the grace of their sacrament! The People of God need their daily journey in faith, in love and in hope, with all the joys and the toils that this journey entails in a marriage and a family (Audience of Pope Francis, May 6, 2015).

Baptism configures the believer as a missionary disciple, that is, as an apostle. Regnum Christi wants to help everyone discover and fully live this dimension of our being. Married couples are also sent out by Christ to make his Kingdom present, not individually, but as a “we”.

[T]he presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people’s salvation. It is the beauty of the Revelation that it represents. It brings with it a wisdom that is not of this world. It is able to stir up by itself faith - faith that rests on the power of God. It is truth. It merits having the apostle consecrate to it all his time and all his energies, and to sacrifice for it, if necessary, his own life (*St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 5*).

The family is truly the future of humanity because it is situated under the cascade of love that comes forth from the Trinity, and it expresses and communicates itself to society through that love.

## The Regnum Christi Charism and the Vocation to Marriage Enrich Each Other

The Regnum Christi charism is a gift for couples in the sense that it helps them to discover their identity as builders of the Kingdom of Christ and to cultivate their communion with Christ more deeply, which is the foundation of married spirituality. Also, by means of team life, Regnum Christi offers couples a community dimension in which to have the experience of being in the Church with other couples.

Beginning with the reality of Regnum Christi as a “spiritual family and apostolic body,” marriage appears alongside other the vocations as a diversity of gifts that complement and help each other to build up the Church. Marriage, in particular, contributes in a radiant way the witness of Christ’s love by the unity and charity among family members (cf. SRCF 6). The characteristic virtues of marriage (unconditional love, sacrificial self-giving, the capacity for listening and forgiveness, goodness, patience, understanding, service, common prayer...) are a precious testimony and a help for the other vocations of Regnum Christi.

The charism of Regnum Christi helps couples live the sacramental life, offering spaces of communion and channels to live as a domestic church, united in love and sent out on mission (cf. SRCF 11).

## The Mission of Regnum Christi can be Life Giving in Every Marriage

Number 8 of the Statutes says this of the mission of Regnum Christi: *“We seek to make present the mystery of Christ who goes out to people, reveals the love of his heart to them, gathers them together and forms them as apostles and Christian leaders, sends them out and accompanies them as they collaborate in the evangelization of people and of society.”*

How is this ideal achieved, lived, and transmitted in marriage?

- The spouses make present the mystery of Christ simply by the way they express their love in daily life: *“The Christian family also builds up the Kingdom of God in history through the everyday realities that concern and distinguish its state of life”* (Familiaris Consortio, 50).

- This encounter of Christ with Christian couples is different from that of single people in a certain way. The Lord does not only encounter each spouse individually, but he approaches them as a couple, since *“the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony”* (Gaudium et Spes, 48).

- The presence of Christ in the family has the goal of revealing to its members the love of his heart, by means of their self-giving to others which inspires them, and he wants to manifest himself to the world through them, *“so that, starting with the simple ordinary things of life they can make visible the love with which Christ loves his Church and continues to give his life for her”* (Amoris Laetitia, 121).

- Christ, who gathers his disciples around him, forming a community that is the Church, the family of families, also joins spouses together and makes them a sign of this great family of the Lord.

- Jesus forms couples so that by the Sacrament of Matrimony he accompanies them in a very special way along that path of holiness, since he has made a commitment to them in an indissoluble way, with an unbreakable covenant. Through the Church who is Teacher, spouses receive a concrete instruction from the Lord to make their home a privileged place in which to learn and experience the mystery of his love.

- Spouses, by their mutual self-giving, are sent by Christ as a light and witness of God's love to their family members and coworkers, in the environment in which they live and work. God does not want to deprive any human space of the testimony of his love and living presence in the world that married couples give.

In the experience of the two disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35)—this mystery of the Sacrament of Matrimony is evoked: two people become three, and the third is Jesus who comes out to meet the married couple; who reveals the love of his heart to them; and who gathers them, forms them, sends them out and accompanies them, especially when they feel discouraged, every day until the end of time.

# Chapter III: The Regnum Christi Way of Life and Marriage

Regnum Christi proposes a Christian way of life to its members. This involves specific traits that are born of a spirituality, of a gaze from Christ, and that shape a path in the Church to respond to God's love. This way of life is characterized by faithful adherence to Christ and the Church, and it is a Christianity that is dynamic and enthusiastic in love, which encourages communion in the Church, with a deep sense of the mission to be the Lord's leaven in the world (cf. Mt 13:31-33).

Lay members of Regnum Christi develop this lifestyle particularly in five areas: spiritual life, formation, apostolate, personal accompaniment, and team life. In the case of married couples in Regnum Christi, these five dimensions acquire characteristics that are worth highlighting.

## 1. The Conjugal Spirituality of a Married Couple in Regnum Christi

Lay members of Regnum Christi understand the spiritual life as a progressive development of the Trinitarian life within them, which leads to configuration with Christ. Therefore, they live it as a dynamic relationship of love with God, nourished by the sacraments, the Word of God, the liturgy, prayer, and the exercise of the moral and theological virtues. Their spiritual life permeates and

**harmonizes all aspects of their life (*Rule of Life of the Lay Faithful Associated with Regnum Christi*, 3).**

The spiritual life is a path of living a vital relationship with God that each Christian travels in a personal way. A spirituality offers concrete guidelines to grow and mature in this relationship with God, and it strengthens rather than limits this personal path. Thus, Regnum Christi offers its members some spiritual foundations (cf. SRCF 6-26) and invites them to internalize and live them out in their state of life, in order to reach more easily “the extent of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

An authentic spirituality adapts itself to the conditions and state of life of each person, since everyone, without exception, should aspire to live this joyful relationship with the Lord. In light of the magisterium of the Church, we would like to propose some guidelines that can reinforce this specificity of the spiritual life of couples.

## **A Spirituality of Communion: “In Pairs”**

In marriage, the spiritual life of each spouse (their faith, their prayer, their way of living and experiencing everyday joys and difficulties, etc.) should keep in mind the other, because from the moment of matrimony they have become “one flesh” (Gen 2:24) and aspire to be “of one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32). Therefore, this is a spirituality of “conjugal relation,” which doesn’t mean that both should be the same or do everything together, but that growth in their relationship is the criterion that should guide each step in their journey with the Lord.

**“Christian couples are, for each other, for their children and for their relatives, cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith.” God calls them to bestow life and to**

care for life. For this reason, the family “has always been the nearest ‘hospital’”. So let us care for one another, guide and encourage one another, and experience this as a part of our family spirituality. Life as a couple is a daily sharing in God’s creative work, and each person is for the other a constant challenge from the Holy Spirit. God’s love is proclaimed “through the living and concrete word whereby a man and the woman express their conjugal love (*Amoris Laetitia*, 321).

## A Spirituality Centered on Christ

Regnum Christi proposes a Christ-centered spirituality to those who approach it. That is, “*Our spirituality is centered above all on Jesus Christ and born from experiencing his love. We seek to respond to our Friend and Lord with a personal, real, passionate and faithful love. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, we are sons and daughters in the Son who becomes the center, standard and model of our life. We learn to encounter him in the Gospel, the Eucharist, the cross and our neighbor*” (SRCF 12). When they look at Christ, people united in marriage see him as the Bridegroom of the Church and learn from his complete, unconditional self-giving to all people.

If a family is centered on Christ, he will unify and illuminate its entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in union with the Lord’s cross, and his closeness will make it possible to surmount them. In the darkest hours of a family’s life, union with Jesus in his abandonment can help avoid a breakup. Gradually, “with the grace of the Holy Spirit, [the spouses] grow in holiness through married life, also by sharing in the mystery of Christ’s cross, which transforms difficulties and sufferings into an offering of love.” Moreover, moments



of joy, relaxation, celebration, and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection (*Amoris Laetitia*, 317).

By their mutual self-giving, spouses are called to make the love of Jesus present, imitating him who loves humanity and the Church to the point of handing himself over (cf. Eph 5:25).

This path that spouses walk of knowing, loving, and following Christ, penetrates the concreteness of interpersonal relations and moments of solitude, joy and pain, in the circumstances of sickness and health of each. Everything is an opportunity to identify with Christ who loves everyone and to accompany him in the many happy and sad moments that marked his journey among us as our Redeemer.

## A Spirituality of Shared Prayer

Prayer entails an irreplaceable, personal, one-on-one relationship with God. Nevertheless, just as it is important for every Christian to open themselves to liturgical and community prayer, spouses should also incorporate prayer as a couple and as a family into their lives.

By treating Christ the Spouse in a personal way, as a “you,” husband and wife learn what it means to be a “sacramental couple,” a “communion of persons,” a “you and I” that become an “us,” who converse with another “you,” who is Christ.

Therefore, while each one develops a personal spirituality, having moments of prayer as a couple is a very necessary goal. This relationship with the Lord that they live together increases intimacy in marriage, since it nurtures the identity of the couple—the “us”—with Jesus. It is important to learn how to place themselves together under the loving gaze of God, facing the

same direction, to contemplate life's events with the light of the Spirit in the same way and to enrich each other with the understanding both have of the Word, letting Christ heal the wounds of their hearts little by little.

Today we can add that the Trinity is present in the temple of marital communion. [...] The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. Living in a family makes it hard for us to feign or lie; we cannot hide behind a mask. If that authenticity is inspired by love, then the Lord reigns there, with his joy and his peace. The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures. In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion, God has his dwelling place. This mutual concern "brings together the human and the divine", for it is filled with the love of God. [...] A positive experience of family communion is a true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth, a means for deeper union with God. [...] Hence, those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union (*Amoris Laetitia*, 314-316).

The Church teaches that there are married couples who reach great mystical depth by living their ordinary life in an extraordinary way. The word "mystical" underlines the action of God, and it is certain that God grants his gifts with the greatest generosity if he finds hearts that desire to receive them. Thus, spouses can also be a sign of a nuptial relationship with God, lived out through their marriage and their care for their children. Conjugal intimacy holds a place in this growth in holiness, since "*sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is in turn a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple*" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 74).

## Some Recommendations

- Regnum Christi cordially recommends that husbands and wives, aware that they have a vital relationship with Christ the Spouse, seek concrete, stable moments of prayer together and with their children, even if they are brief.
- At the same time, Regnum Christi does not suggest any practices of piety specific to the couple or different from the practices common to all lay members. Couples can pray these common practices together or individually. Rather than inviting them always to pray the same things together, we consider that their union of hearts is what is important for each to grow in faith.
- It is highly recommended to attend Sunday Mass as a family, to have a place for prayer or at least a sacred image at home, to pray the rosary together occasionally, to read and reflect on the Word of God on Sundays, etc.
- Section directors should strive to offer more intense spiritual activities that help strengthen matrimonial communion, such as half-day and weekend retreats, marriage renewals, or spiritual exercises.

## 2. Formation in the Life of a Married Couple in Regnum Christi

### Formation as a Path of Growth

To share a spirit and a mission requires that the formation of all must take into account the characteristic features and requirements of that spirit and mission. This forma-

tion must help us discover the full meaning of our lives in Christ, be configured to him, and fulfill our mission. Formation should be integral and include all the dimensions of the person (SRCF 31 § 1).

“Apostle” means “messenger”. Thus, apostolate consists in “going on someone’s behalf,” specifically, being sent by Christ with a mission. Christ comes into the world as one sent by the Father: “*He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people*” (Mt 4:23). He, in turn, sends out his disciples, affirming to them that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. On the afternoon of Easter Sunday, he pours out the Holy Spirit upon them and says to them, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

This dynamic of Christ who sends out his disciples has repeated itself continually along the entire history of the Church, and it also happens today. Each Regnum Christi member, on account of their state as baptized, is called by Christ and sent out to give witness to him with their life and action.

A beautiful sign of responsibility on the part of one who receives a mission is the interest to form themselves better in order to fulfill it. Spouses do a great good for their relationship if they decide to dedicate some time to attend formation opportunities together.

When we speak of “formation,” we understand, above all, a path of increasing and progressive conformation with Christ, which touches and transforms all aspects of the person, until reaching what St. Paul presents in his Letter to the Galatians: “*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*” (Gal 2:20). A deeper, convinced and transformative understanding of the mysteries of the faith are of great help in this path of conformation. In Regnum Christi, we consider that formation not only consists in

knowing the content of the faith better; all of formation is viewed in the key of the mission and aims to acquire the virtues, skills and knowledge that allow for God's grace, so that the Regnum Christi member can give testimony to and announce the Kingdom in the hearts of all people and society (cf. SRCF 13).

## Formation for Married Couples

In the case of married couples, the Church insists on two aspects: (1) formation for the Sacrament of Matrimony, and (2) permanent formation.

The first is an "itinerary toward the Sacrament of Matrimony" and touches on basic points, such as formation for love and the path toward vocational fullness, both before matrimony (with its preparation courses) and in the first years of married life.

**Marriage is not a point of arrival: it is a vocation, a path to holiness that embraces a person's entire life. Moreover, by virtue of their participation in the prophetic and royal priesthood of Christ, the lay faithful also receive a specific ecclesial mission in the Sacrament of Marriage for which they need to be prepared and accompanied. Therefore, just as the Church takes care to prepare priests and religious to live out their vocation and mission by devoting long years of formation to them, in the same way the Church has a duty to adequately prepare those lay faithful who feel called to accept the vocation of marriage and to persevere in it throughout their lives by carrying out the mission with which they have been invested (Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life, *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral guidelines for local Churches*, 7).**

The second encompasses the means, tools and formative itineraries geared to help spouses grow in their identity and mission as a married couple: their new identity as a couple, the growth of their relationship, prayer life, the formation of their children, their specific mission to be witnesses of God's love for his Church, and the call to apostolate.

## Some Recommendations

Regnum Christi wishes to accompany each married couple on their path toward the fullness of their identity, vocation and mission. It does this by helping spouses go deeper in the sacrament, which gives them the permanent presence of Christ alongside them and unites them more and more closely. Being formed in this sacramental awareness and in this transformed conjugal relationship will allow them to be apostles as a couple in Regnum Christi, beginning with their self-giving to each other.

- It is each section or locality's responsibility to offer means and opportunities that allow married couples to grow in these two aspects, within the possibilities of their time.

- These means can take on various forms and are structured as itineraries that, over a period of time, offer different elements (conferences, workshops, lectures, moments for prayer and personal dialogue) directed to this purpose.

### 3. Accompaniment of Married Couples in Regnum Christi

The Church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious and laity—into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169).

#### Accompaniment in the Context of Married Couples

Regnum Christi considers that accompaniment, understood as close, stable personal attention marked by gratitude, seeks to collaborate with the action that grace is already carrying out, so they can respond to the questions and challenges they meet on their journey of human and spiritual growth (cf. SRCF 35).

Married couples in Regnum Christi naturally need accompaniment. Therefore, in addition to the individual spiritual direction that is offered to each member, it is necessary to have occasional moments in which the couple can deepen in aspects of their matrimonial identity as consecrated to the Lord, in their mission with their children, work and apostolic possibilities, basing everything on the conjugal spirituality that sustains and encourages them.

## Some Recommendations

When we speak of accompaniment, we are referring to a wide gamut of possibilities, such as these:

- The first accompaniment proper to marriage is that of each of the spouses with the other. United by love, looking in the same direction, each has the possibility to help the other know themselves and complement, advise and stimulate them to keep going forward. Some of the tools they receive can be very useful for living this deeply conjugal dimension of “walking together” fully.

- There is also another form of accompaniment very proper to this state of life, which some couples carry out with others. Life experience, along with adequate formation and training, can allow couples to help others resolve their problems and grow. Regnum Christi encourages married members who feel the Lord’s invitation to lend themselves to help other couples. Certain situations can require help from a professional in the psychological field.

All of this implies a beautiful yet demanding challenge: to create in each locality a network of people on different levels, who are trained in the art of accompanying married couples, who know their challenges, aspirations and difficulties, and who can help them on their path. The important thing is to give families the means they need in their fight to bring their vocation to fulfillment.



## 4. Being Apostles and Apostolic Activity in Married Life

My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an “extra” or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing (*Evangellii Gaudium*, 273)

Although marriage is a beneficiary of the apostolic mission of the Church, it also has a proper, specific mission within the Church, at the service of society. Thus, the invitation that every Regnum Christi member receives to be an apostle finds a channel to become more powerful and fruitful in marriage.

### Called to Give Witness to Love

In God’s eyes, each marriage and each family is a gift for the whole Church and for society. Their proper mission is to *give witness to and make present* the gift of God’s unconditional love, which is given to us in Christ (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 121).

Being apostles and doing apostolate, as spouses and as a family, implies primarily the call to be witnesses to the fidelity and love of Christ for his Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1647). Thus, the family that loves each other makes God’s love credible to us, since Christian spouses “are mutual reflections of that divine love which comforts with a word, a look, a helping hand, a caress, an embrace” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 321).

## The Family as the First Mission

The natural field where this testimony to God's love flourishes and bears fruit is one's family. God has willed that each family unit be the first evangelizing and evangelized community, in which each member is disposed to having a personal experience of Christ's love by forming hearts that are open and generous towards God and the others.

The Christian family passes on the faith when parents teach their children to pray and when they pray with them; when they lead them to the sacraments and gradually introduce them to the life of the Church; when all join in reading the Bible, letting the light of faith shine on their family life and praising God as our Father (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, June 9, 2006).

Thus, the family can become a school of evangelization for mature Christians, in which the children learn to love God, assimilate and live out his law, view life with eyes full of goodness and hope, appreciate their neighbor, and embody true human and Christian values.

## A Particular Service to Regnum Christi as a Spiritual Family and Apostolic Body

There is a particular area in which the service of married couples is especially relevant. This area stems from the reality of Regnum Christi as a "spiritual family and apostolic body," in which the different vocations help, support, and collaborate with each other by sharing the same love and the same call to a common mission.

Thus, every couple in Regnum Christi wants to give witness to a closeness and concern for priestly and consecrated vocations, help in their perseverance on the path they have taken, share the warmth of friendship and fellowship proper to every home, and offer fraternal advice when they see them in need. At the same time, those who are consecrated care for and accompany the lay members, aware that together they form a great family born of the heart of Christ.

In this way, each vocation affirms the others with its own richness and testimony and is a small reflection of the Church.

## Send Out to the Mission, At the Service of Communion

Couples and families are also called to play a crucial role in Church's work of evangelization at the service of humanity. By being a domestic church, each family lives within itself, in a hidden and silent way, what the entire Church does by its prayer, service, teaching, and preaching. The family becomes "*a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates*" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 71). Or, in the words of St. John Paul II, "*They not only receive the love of Christ and become a saved community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ's love to their brethren, thus becoming a saving community*" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 49).

As the domestic church that it is, it should enthusiastically adopt the vital outward attitude to which Pope Francis calls us: "*All of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel*" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20).

In its identity as a domestic church, by its example of life and its evangelizing work, marriage is transformed, by God's grace, into a good for the whole Church through complementarity among vocations.

It is a gift for young people, who see concrete, close, and attractive examples of what it means to view life as a gift of oneself and what loving "forever" is. This allows them to project themselves in the same way toward their future, overcoming egoism and the false paths that the world also offers them.

It is a gift for priests and for consecrated and contemplative souls, for whom the testimony of spouses' total self-giving is an example of how to love the Church, the Bride of Christ. The gift of virginity and the gift of matrimony show us two complementary ways to express God's love, the one through a complete belonging to God as it will be in heaven, the other showing love in a sacramental way, through the attraction that the spouses experience for each other, fruitfulness, and the ability to sanctify temporal realities.

It is a gift for those who are separated or divorced, because spouses who live the natural indissolubility of matrimony become, both for wounded couples and for the divorced and remarried, a gift and a burning lamp that reminds them that God is love; God is faithful, and he will never abandon them.

It is a gift for single people. The testimony of a married couple spurs them to understand that life only has meaning when it is self-giving, rooted in the awareness that we are beloved children.

Finally, it is also a good for nonbelievers, since in a Christian marriage, the presence of the Lord Jesus grants a serenity, fortitude, peace and joy that is extremely attractive. With the gift of indissolubility, spouses share God's unbreakable love for hu-

manity and Christ's love for the Church. Thus, a couple's simple promise of fidelity opens up a space for grace, through which God manifests his indissoluble love.

## Some Recommendations

In addition to the fundamental areas of the mission mentioned above, which arise from the matrimonial identity, there are fields of apostolate in which married couples in Regnum Christi can be of great service, such as, among others:

- Appreciation for priestly and consecrated vocations, through the friendship and welcoming that they offer, their help in perseverance, the warmth of the friendship proper to every home, and their fraternal advice
- The formation of adolescents and youth in the meaning and value of authentic love
- The formation and accompaniment of couples, from dating through the different stages of marriage, for example by leading teams of married couples in Regnum Christi
- Promoting and serving in apostolates dedicated to promoting the culture of life and the family, evangelization, and especially those in which they come to the aid of the needy as a family

## 5. Team Life for Married Couples in Regnum Christi

### Team Life in the Context of Married Couples in Regnum Christi

The team is the basic community that energizes the life of Regnum Christi, where we learn to make the Kingdom present. In this community of faith, members grow in fellowship proper to the charism, they join together to pray, they are formed for the mission, and they support each other day by day on their path of holiness.

On men's and women's teams many of the members are married and called to sanctification in their state and condition of life as spouses (cf. SRCF 7). Regnum Christi also offers them the possibility of forming teams with other married couples, in which they can be accompanied, supported and guided in this specific aspect of their vocation. These teams of married couples, following the example of the first Christian communities, can live authentic charity and fraternity together, which also extends to their families, true domestic churches in which they make the Kingdom of Christ present.

### Some Suggestions for Application

- Just as in the other teams that arise within Regnum Christi, the "Encounter with Christ" is a central activity for the teams of married couples. The dynamic proper to this activity is marked by the prayerful reading of the Word and by the apostolic discernment of the world around them, all of which is enriched by the gift received in matrimony. This activity, open to

listening to the Holy Spirit and in which life experiences are shared with other couples, is very helpful in their mission as apostles of marriage and the family.

- Teams should include one couple who are team leaders. They encourage, care for, and accompany the others. These team leader couples also need formation and a special accompaniment.

- Beginning with the definition of the section as “a grouping of teams” (RL 32), there are many possible ways to organize the teams of married couples that arise while always ensuring they are appropriately accompanied and remain within the life and mission of the locality. Therefore, according to the number of teams, they can be integrated into the locality’s existing men’s and women’s sections or form their own section. It is the territory’s duty to determine which would be best in each case, considering the recommendations of the local director and the section directors.





# Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
in you we contemplate  
the splendor of true love;  
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families too  
may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the Gospel  
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may families never again experience  
violence, rejection and division;  
may all who have been hurt or scandalized  
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
make us once more mindful  
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,  
and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
Graciously hear our prayer.

Amen

(Pope Francis, conclusion of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*)





