

SECTION 45
THE WAY OF DAILY LOVE
IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE
Part 7: Love and Forgiveness

In his letter "Amoris Laetitia", "The Joy of Love," Pope Francis often speaks of the connection between love and forgiveness. Every family knows how selfishness, disagreement, tension and conflict can threaten family life and cause great damage (AL 106). Even so, at times couples want to deal with marital problems too quickly, without having the patience to reflect first and to make the sacrifice to forgive each other (AL 41). The Pope is well aware that forgiveness is not easy, for it requires generous tolerance and the attempt to understand the weaknesses of the other. Forgiveness, however, drives the bitterness out of our hearts, before we begin to discuss our disagreements (AL 105).

In order to be able to forgive the other, it is good to first turn to oneself, says the Pope. For example, we may wonder to what extent our own behavior has contributed to the tense situation. Have we perhaps kept too much distance from one another, or have we been too restrained in showing affection? In order to be able to forgive someone else, we must first forgive ourselves. Self-knowledge can have a liberating effect, while blaming the other person may make us feel good, but might be the wrong way to go. (AL 107).

The Pope therefore urges us to return to our own past history, for example in prayer, in order to accept ourselves with our limitations, and to forgive ourselves. This will help us to adopt the same attitude towards the other (AL 107). Moreover, when we realize that we ourselves are constantly forgiven by God, in the belief that God's love continually strengthens us, we will also be able to forgive the other, even if we have been wronged in a

terrible way. Otherwise we run the risk, writes the Pope that "*our family life is no longer a place of understanding, support and encouragement, but of constant tension and mutual criticism*" (AL 108).

A Reflective Moment

*. "The unitive end of marriage
is a constant summons
to make love grow and deepen.*

*Through their union in love,
the couple experiences
the beauty of fatherhood and motherhood,
and shares plans, trials, expectations and concerns.*

*They learn care for one another and mutual forgiveness.
In this love, they celebrate their happy moments
and support each other
in the difficult passages of their life together.*

*The beauty of a mutual, gratuitous gift,
the joy which comes from new life that is born
and the loving care of all family members
– from toddlers to seniors –
are just a few of the fruits
which make the response to the vocation of the family
unique and irreplaceable"*

(Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* n. 88)