

The Holy Family  
Model Not Exception

by

Mary Shivanandan, STD

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Dedicated to:  
The Holy Family  
And  
My Family

# The Holy Family

## Model Not Exception

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## Preface

Today the need is great to develop a theology of marriage and family. The intuition already formulated by St. John Paul II that the family is the way of the Church (John Paul II FC no. 2) has been confirmed by the reflection of the Church for more than two years after the two synods called by Pope Francis. The Church has to spend its efforts in humanizing and evangelizing the family. From here arises a mission for theology, according to a twofold vision.

The family is the way *first* to enlighten modern man, helping him to escape his individualism, by communicating a relational experience of the person. Each member of the family arrives at an understanding of who he is and his identity only in the light of a communion of persons and never in isolation; since in the family we are sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. . . The family is the way *secondly* for the evangelizing mission of the Church. One speaks of the “Gospel of the family,” which is to say: in the family are learned the words which teach each to say the Good News of Jesus. Only through experiences in the family can we understand God as Father, that Jesus is the Son, that the Church gives birth to us, that in the Eucharist a body is given to us. . .

Mary Shivanandan’s book is placed within the context of this great task: to offer a profound theological reflection on the family, upon which a spirituality of the family can be solidly founded. And it is from a concrete and original point of view that the book starts: the contemplation of the Holy Family. This choice seems to call forth an objection. Is not the chosen point of departure too “ideal”? Is not this family-- the Holy Family—a family too singular and inimitable; made unique by the presence of the

Incarnation of the Word in Mary's womb, and by the virginal relationship of Mary and Joseph?

Faced with this apparent difficulty, Shivanandan fully succeeds in showing in this book that the Holy Family cannot be termed only the great exception to the life of the family, nor, indeed, only as a model for us to imitate. Rather, the Holy Family is the source from which springs the life of all Christian families; the Holy Family is the horizon for understanding in its depth the call to love of every man and woman, and the fact that every personal vocation passes in one way or another by the family.

In this undertaking Shivanandan does not journey alone, accompanied as she is by a great theological tradition. In fact the great medieval synthesis on marriage shows that the reflection on the Holy Family was decisive in setting out the points that were key to the Christian vision of marriage. So, for example, it was by starting from the reflection of the marriage between Mary and Joseph that it is the free consent of the Christian spouses that clearly establishes what constitutes the sacrament. Against the exaggerated patriarchal concepts of the ancient world, the Church could insist, then, that the marriage is founded on the free consent of the spouses, which, through a mutual gift of self, forms a community of life and love.

On the other hand, the Holy Family also allowed the Medieval to understand the importance of consummation in the flesh. In this light they came to see that the flesh does not diminish but strengthens marital love; that marriage only reaches its indissoluble perfection, (that is, is only a sign of the union of Christ and the Church) when it is consummated. And the point of departure for this conclusion was the Incarnation, which took place in the Holy Family. It is in Jesus' birth from Mary's flesh, that God sealed

definitively his covenant with humankind. The Holy Family, allows us, then, to appreciate the importance of all the concrete and bodily aspects of conjugal life.

Mary Shivanandan's book follows, then, the path opened by the great Tradition, in order to discover the key to all family life in the Holy Family. Shivanandan, however, does not merely repeat the traditional reasoning but she places her argument in the context of the great question of modern man, who seeks to understand the world from the depth of his personal experience. Thus, the pages of this book confirm the fecundity of the teachings of St. John Paul II, the Pope of the Family, who took as the starting point of his approach the experience of love, an incarnate love that puts us in relation with the world and others and opens us to God, helping us to escape the isolation peculiar to the modern subject.

Shivanandan's study places in clear relief that the communion of persons is the central dynamic of the family. And it explains also the importance of the flesh, starting from the new measure of the language of the body, which Jesus, Incarnate Son of God, brought with him. This is in accord with Benedict XVI's vision, when, in celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for marriage and family, he affirmed that the family is the place where the theology of the body and the theology of love come together.

Shivanandan thus succeeds in offering a concrete and incarnate vision of the Holy Family, which gives no place for any spiritualist reading. On the contrary it is capable of unveiling also the ways in which Modernity has initiated a process "of disincarnation," which has contributed to the separation in the family, between sexuality, love and life. In this respect the analysis of the cultural changes introduced by contraception is of much

interest in the book. Another important contribution of Shivanandan's study are the pages dedicated to the figure and mission of St. Joseph, which medieval theology had not yet developed. It is an urgent necessity in our day, as it illuminates the person and mission of the father, who is witness of the mystery which transcends himself and becomes the carrier, of a name and of a destiny for his children.

This luminous study of Shivanandan confirms, then, the paradox, which we have already mentioned: it is precisely the Holy Family that helps us see that the Christian vision of the family is not merely an ideal, removed from concrete life, inaccessible to the majority of people. On the contrary, the fact that in the Holy Family the Incarnation of the Word took place; and the fact that the coming of Jesus in the flesh generated the relations between Jesus, Mary and Joseph; this very fact allows us to understand that the love which lives in each family has its source, not in a distant ideal, but in a fact, an event, of the encounter with a person who took flesh in our concrete space and time.

Certainly, it must be said, that the Holy Family holds a unique place in the history of salvation. However, this is not an isolated unique place but a place from which springs light and strength for all families. It is in the Holy Family that each family finds the logic of true love and fulfillment. The Holy Family helps to bring about, within each family, the transformative strength of the Gospel.

Let us take an example. The birth of Jesus was certainly unique, the virginal birth of the Son of God. And, nevertheless, it is this birth which helps us interpret and understand in a definitive manner what "being born" means, which is the ultimate truth of the original experience of every man generated by love. The presence of the Father in the birth of Jesus, his action in the womb of Mary, were without doubt unique, but they

confirm that in every child born in the mother's womb the hand of God is present. Yet more, this birth of the Son of God in Mary's womb in turn becomes the key to understanding Baptism, a new birth in Jesus. It is possible, then, to understand that the Christian family does not only generate sons of Adam but that the parents' mission includes also to lead their children to their regeneration to eternal life in God, as Pope Francis said, recalling St. Augustine (cf. LF 43). The Holy Family, in its unrepeatable singularity, opens that universal place whence human love, by discovering its original vocation, is assumed and transformed into the new love of Christ. The life of the Holy Family is an invitation to families to discover the profound logic of the Gospel, which is the origin and goal of all family life; so that they understand their love is on route to a definitive transformation in the love of God in order to be assumed into the communion of the Trinity.

Mary Shivanandan has shown us, in a detailed and profound study, that the Holy Family reveals the unity of God's plan for human love: unity of the Old and New Testament; of generation in the flesh and the Spirit; of family experiences and the evangelical call; of marriage and virginity . . . We are, indeed, before a vision which displays the riches of the Christian life, in its different vocations, contributing greatly to the task which the last two synods on the family have put before us; to throw the light of God on the ways of the family, which are the ways of the Church, in order that those ways can bring us to a safe harbor.

Fr. José Granados, dcjm

Vice President of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Lateran University, Rome.

## Acknowledgments

My first appreciation goes to St. John Paul II, without whose lifetime work on the person and the communion of persons this book on the Holy Family would not have been possible. In his studies on the person the pope confronted the two major totalitarian regimes of his day Nazism and Communism. In the West he faced a different challenge. Drawing inspiration from Vatican Council II, especially *Gaudium et spes*, he saw, in his papacy, that only if marriage and family are viewed from the perspective of a communion of persons modeled on Trinitarian communion and the communion of Christ and the Church could they be restored to their true value, the value expressed in the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. It was his initiative also that founded the mother session of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Rome, which gave flesh and blood to his ideas. Intrinsic to my own immersion in John Paul II's theological and philosophical anthropology is the Institute Session in Washington, DC, supported by the Knights of Columbus, especially its president, Carl Anderson. At this Session I owe special gratitude to Dr. Kenneth Schmitz, who inspired me by his own pioneering studies on John Paul II's thought and directed my S.T.D. dissertation, which was published under the title, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology*. Not to be forgotten is Stratford Caldecott, who was instrumental in its publication in the U.K.

I have drawn on the deep reflections on the family of many of the faculty at the Institute, whose names are mentioned in the text so they shall not be given here. I owe them a huge debt of gratitude. As a student and teacher at the Institute for 25 years I have had the privilege of learning much from the students who passed through and later



established holy and happy families. In writing the book itself, I am particularly grateful for the support of the dean, Fr. Antonio Lopez, the graduate receptionist, Christina d'Averso-Collins and recent graduate, Payal Sarah Singh, the latter two putting together and formatting the bibliography and footnotes. In addition Sarah has provided insightful copy-editing. Elisabeth Cunningham, subsequent receptionist, has also provided invaluable assistance as has Alice Knaeble. Over the years, many of the ideas in the book have been presented in journal articles. A list of articles is given in the appendix of those that are integrated directly in the text.

Since the book incorporates the Church's rich teaching in *Humanae vitae*, I cannot pass over the many years I spent in the Natural Family Planning (NFP) field. Before becoming an academic I had the privilege of interviewing many NFP couples, who were always honest about their joys and struggles. Also inspiring were the professionals, especially physicians, who remained faithful to Church teaching in the face of great opposition in their profession. I am thinking not only of the Drs. Billings, and Thomas Hilgers but also those less well known such as Claude Lanctot, Robert Jackson, Konald Prem, Josef Roetzer, Edward Keefe, Hanna Klaus and others. I hope that one day their contributions will be much better recognized and appreciated.

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Lastly it must be said that, although the book was inspired by courses that I took and gave at the John Paul II Institute, in Washington DC, as well as in Kerala, India and Melbourne, Australia, the book was written during my retirement and the Institute can in no way be held responsible for its content.

## Abbreviations

CCC	Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Print. 1997. <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II.</i>
CDL	Zelie and Louis Martin. <i>A Call to a Deeper Love: The Family Correspondence of the Parents of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus.</i> 1864-1885.
DCE	Benedict XVI. <i>Encyclical Letter Deus Caritas Est of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI on Christian Love.</i> 2005.
DD	John Paul II. <i>Apostolic Letter Dies Domini On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy.</i> 1998.
DV	Paul VI. <i>Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI.</i> 1965.
D et V	John Paul II. <i>Encyclical Letter Dominum et Vificicantem On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World.</i> 1986.
EE	John Paul II. <i>Encyclical Letter Ecclesia de Eucharistica of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church.</i> 2003.
EG	Pope Francis. <i>Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis On the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World.</i> 2013.
FC	John Paul II. <i>On the Family: Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, of His Holiness Pope John Paul II Regarding the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.</i> United States Catholic Conference, 1982.
FR	John Paul II. <i>Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason.</i> 1998.

GS	Paul VI. Vatican II. <i>Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World — Gaudium et Spes</i> . 1965.
HV	Paul VI. <i>Encyclical Letter Humane Vitae of the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI on the Regulation of Birth</i> . 1968.
LE	John Paul II. Encyclical Letter <i>Laborem Exercens on Human Work on the Ninetieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum</i> .
LF	John Paul II. <i>Letter to Families: Gratissimam Sane</i> . Libreria Editrice
LG	Vaticana. 1994. Paul VI. <i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI</i> . 1964.
MD	John Paul II. <i>Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year</i> . 1988.
MW	John Paul II. <i>Man and Woman He Created Them – A Theology of the Body</i> . Translated by Michael Waldstein. Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006.
MC	Paul VI. <i>Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> . 1974.
NMI	John Paul II. <i>Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte of His Holiness Pope John Paul II at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000</i> . 2001.
NT	New Testament. <i>Holy Bible</i> .
NFP	Natural Family Planning.
OT	Old Testament. <i>Holy Bible</i> .
RC	John Paul II. <i>Apostolic Exhortation Redemptoris Custos of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Person and the Mission of Saint Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church</i> . 1989.
RH	John Paul II. Encyclical Letter <i>Redemptoris Hominis – The Redeemer of Man</i> . 1979.
RM	John Paul II. <i>Redemptoris Mater</i> :

- SD *On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church.* 1987.  
John Paul II. *Apostolic Letter Salvifici Doloris on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering.* 1984.
- ST Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae.*  
TMA *Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000.* 1994.
- VC John Paul II. *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata of the Holy Father John Paul II on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World.*1996
- VS John Paul II. *Encyclical Letter Veritatis Splendor of the Catholic Church Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching.* 1993.

## Introduction

### Background

Catholic tradition treats the Holy Family as both the model of every human family and also as the exception. Theologians, from the Fathers of the Church onwards, have stressed that the marriage of Mary and Joseph was a true marriage, since it possessed the three goods of marriage: offspring (Christ in his humanity), fidelity and indissolubility (sacrament). Indeed, the marriage of Mary and Joseph was cited in the canonical definition of marriage in the Middle Ages as formed by the consent of the couple and consummated by conjugal intercourse open to procreation. The fruit of the marriage of Mary and Joseph was the Child, Jesus, so that theirs was still a valid marriage although not consummated. At the same time, because conjugal intercourse distinguishes marriage from every other form of friendship, and because marriage from the time of St. Paul has been considered a remedy for concupiscence as a result of original sin, the virginal marriage of Mary and Joseph came to be seen as the exception.<sup>1</sup>

The historical lack of integration in living the three goods of marriage has had profound effects on the development of a theology of the family. Angelo Scola has given a cogent summary of the history of reflection on marriage in *The Nuptial Mystery*, pointing out the failure of Christian thought to provide “an organic, unified reflection on the person, marriage and family.”<sup>2</sup> While the Fathers of the Church were steeped in Scripture, bringing forward the theme of the Christ-Church union from Ephesians (Eph. 5:21-33), their pastoral approach mostly stressed the moral requirements of the married state, indissolubility and monogamy, which were viewed in terms of the theology of

creation. References to the family as such mainly concerned the education of children.<sup>3</sup> Scola goes on to say that in the Middle Ages, St. Thomas “orients the whole of Catholic theology toward a recognition of the sacramentality of marriage, favoring the spouses as imaging the Christ-Church union.”<sup>4</sup> To counteract the downgrading of the sacraments in general by the Reformers, the Council of Trent conclusively defined marriage as a sacrament and indissoluble.<sup>5</sup> The rejection of marriage as a sacrament by the Reformers became particularly important with the secularization of marriage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis in Trent is on the consent of the couple and the sacrament, and attention to the family is confined to children as one of the three blessings of marriage.<sup>7</sup>

This more juridical emphasis on the sacrament, necessary as it was, obscured the concept of the family as an image of the Trinity, and, therefore, an image of the Holy Family, regarded in the Middle Ages as an “earthly Trinity.”<sup>8</sup> The thesis of this book is that both the recovery of the understanding of the family as the “domestic Church” and the new articulation by Vatican Council II of the family as an image of the Trinity in a communion of persons oriented to mutual self-gift, made it possible to see the Holy Family as not the “ontological exception” but a true model for the human family. This development has not come easily.

Scola points out that for two millennia in the Western world, marriage and family were, in actuality, lived as an organic unity encompassing sexuality (the person and sexual difference), love (marriage) and fruitfulness (family) so that the lack of an adequate synthesis in the theology of marriage among the three goods was not felt. With the advent of contraception on a mass scale in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this lived unity crumbled. The resulting separation of the three factors, reduced to their purely biological

components by the reigning secular ideology, meant, says Scola, that “Christians found themselves lacking adequate reasons to explain the marvelous unity of the nuptial mystery.”<sup>9</sup>

The rise of a conjugal spirituality in various family movements heralded a new development before Vatican Council II. Catholic Action galvanized the Catholic laity in both France and Italy. Scola points to the advent of various family associations and movements, which promoted a conjugal spirituality. Christian families began to see themselves not just as passive recipients of the Faith but as active subjects in the Church. The idea of the family as an *Ecclesia domestica* or domestic church was revived from the patristic period in the Second Vatican Council.<sup>10</sup> The new spirituality developed specific formation around the themes of “marriage as a Christian ‘state of life’ in the full sense, the necessity of promoting a conjugal spirituality and the problem of the family or conjugal ‘ministry’.”<sup>11</sup> In spite of this promising development, Scola speaks of “a certain extrinsicism” informing these movements with regard to the relationship between marriage as a sacrament and as a created reality.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, not enough attention was given to the relationship of the mystery of Jesus Christ to marriage as a sphere of redemption. Furthermore, the emphasis on the consent of the couple as forming the marriage had accentuated the “ministry” of the spouses to the detriment of its Trinitarian and Christological identity.<sup>13</sup>

The flowering of this conjugal spirituality coincided with the spread of contraception and extravagant claims by its advocates like Margaret Sanger for an ecstatic conjugal union.<sup>14</sup> Here can be seen the damaging effects of a one-sided emphasis on the couple’s relationship in a theology of the family; it left Christian couples prey to



propaganda such as Sanger's. It is noteworthy that Pat and Patty Crowley, founders of the Christian Family Movement in the United States and one of the few married couples on Pope Paul VI's Birth Control Commission, were prominent dissenters from the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*.<sup>15</sup> A leading international marriage movement, the Teams of Our Lady, while not espousing such a public position, nevertheless, quietly accepted the dissent of many of its member couples.<sup>16</sup> Rather than challenging couples to engage the good news of *Humanae Vitae*, their leaders and most chaplains preferred not to disturb their consciences, a pastoral practice that became all too common in the Church at large.<sup>17</sup>

Responding to these developments, another contemporary theologian, Marc Ouellet, also saw the pressing need for a true spirituality of the family.<sup>18</sup> Reiterating moral norms is not enough. What is needed is "a positive vision of domestic values, a 'personalist' family spirituality, which truly grounds conjugal and familial relations within Trinitarian communion, incarnated and revealed in Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup> Ouellet speaks of a "theological turn," in which the members of the family cultivate "consciousness of a personal relationship with Christ." In fact a radical relationship with Christ is key to the transition of the family from "model" to "image."<sup>20</sup> He seeks to reintegrate the three traditional values of marriage—procreation, faithful love and sacramental signification—into the context of "fruitful conjugal love."

It is against this backdrop that this book proposes the Holy Family, with its union of both the created reality of marriage and the eschatological perspective of grace and the presence of Christ, as not just the model of family life but the path to transformation of the family from the inside. Central to the argument will be the concept of presence, both

divine and human presence. Ouellet refers to the “‘Presence’ which gives to each person and to the communion of persons a sacred and inviolate character.”<sup>21</sup> Again “the domestic Church is the ‘sanctuary of life’ (LF 11), the locus of that Presence which makes the communion of persons a sacred and sacramental reality.”<sup>22</sup> The presence of the Trinity in the family is made manifest by its spiritual fruitfulness. Throughout history it has been a place of prayer, charity and evangelization.

As first a created reality, the family is, or ought to be, imbued with the human presence of its members. John Paul II has coined the phrase “discovers in the body the anticipatory signs...of the gift of self” (VS 48). The body is nuptial, orienting spouses to each other and to their children through specific bodily acts of conjugal embrace, gestation, birth and breastfeeding. The last, breastfeeding, is one key aspect of bodily communion in families that is commonly overlooked, even by scholars who promote the genuine procreation and education of children. To correct this oversight, this book will examine the detrimental effects of abandoning traditional theological and magisterial promotion of breastfeeding in favor of wet-nursing or bottle feeding, practices that could be permitted when necessary, as morally equivalent to the natural mother-child bond. Just as with contraception, the devaluation of breastfeeding came in part from an overemphasis on the life of the couple (particularly, the marital bed) to the detriment of a theology of the family. This book will show how a vibrant understanding of the Holy Family as exemplar for contemporary Catholic families includes meditation on Jesus at Mary’s breast. Grace builds on nature, and without attention to the body’s integrity and intrinsic orientation to communion, it becomes difficult to open the child to human love, let alone love of God.

## The Communion of Persons

An important development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that changed how we look at the Holy Family was the philosophy of personalism, which emphasized a new appreciation for the dignity of the person and the communion of persons. Of course, the notion of person had been developed in the early Christian centuries to explicate the mystery of the Trinity, but the concept of the dignity of the human person belongs to a century that perhaps violated the dignity of the person more than any other. Vatican Council II for the first time spoke of marriage as a communion of persons (GS, no. 12). Polish philosopher Cardinal Karol Wojtyla explored the nature of the human person and what he called “participation,” the only form of being together that affirms the dignity of the person.<sup>23</sup> Later, as Pope John Paul II, he aligned it theologically with the concept of the communion of persons, which he developed more fully in his interpretation of the Genesis account of the creation of man and woman.<sup>24</sup> In the encyclical *Familiaris consortio* he writes:

In matrimony and in the family a complex of interpersonal relationships is set up—married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation and fraternity—through which each human person is introduced into the “human family” and into the “family of God,” which is the Church.<sup>25</sup>

The great pope’s theology of the Holy Family was traditional but also innovative. A theology of the Holy Family as a communion of persons could develop in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because there was greater recognition of the role of Joseph in salvation than there was in the early church. In the early Christian centuries, although Mary was honored devotionally by the people, her place in theology remained limited until the doctrine of

Theotokos was proclaimed at the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431 AD. Something similar has happened with the role of Joseph in salvation over a much greater period of time. Devotion to St. Joseph had been widely promoted by such saints as Teresa of Avila and various popes, but it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the dignity of Joseph and his place in the Holy Family received recognition in Church documents, in response to new threats to the family.<sup>26</sup> In each case the delay in recognition of the role of Jesus' solely human family members in salvation served to preserve the integrity of the unity of Christ's divine and human nature in the Incarnation.<sup>27</sup> These two developments, the concept of the family as a communion of persons and the flowering of the theology of the Holy Family, now make it possible to see the Holy Family not as the "ontological exception," but rather as a model for all families.

It is in the Holy Family, the original "Church in miniature (*Ecclesia domestica*)," that every Christian family must be reflected. "Through God's mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families" (FC, no. 15).

Using the lens of the Holy Family enriches our understanding of the theology of the communion of persons as explicated by Pope John Paul II, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and other contemporary scholars, but even more importantly, such a *Communio*-based understanding of the Holy Family enriches our understanding of family spirituality and morality. In particular, it enlightens one's understanding of the Church's controversial teachings on marital sexuality, including the difference between natural family planning and artificial contraception and the strong fit between breastfeeding and this Christian vision of family relationships.

## Methodology

The methodology of this book is interdisciplinary. It will have as its goal to “hand on ever more effectively the prophetic truth” of *Humanae Vitae* in the light of John Paul II’s own progressively deepened understanding of its implications for a Trinitarian vision of reality. Its newness will not lie in the originality of research--I shall be drawing mostly on John Paul II and members of the Institute he founded, the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage & Family, among whom are Angelo Scola, Marc Ouellet, Joseph Atkinson, José Granados, and Livio Melina, who have made in-depth and original studies of the family. While it may seem confusing to bring so many voices to bear on the topic, it is hoped that each theologian illuminates a unique aspect of the theme. This book will focus on the integration of this research into an understanding of the Holy Family as a communion of persons and its implications for the human family as a communion of persons in both its human and salvific roles.

The John Paul II Institute has multiple, relatively independent but interconnected “sessions” throughout the world: Rome (the central session), Benin, Brazil, Spain, India, and the United States, as well as “affiliated” institutes in Australia, Lebanon, Korea, and the Phillipines., The Washington, D.C. Session was founded exactly 20 years after the encyclical, *Humanae vitae*. John Paul II made note of this in his message to Cardinal James Hickey August 22, 1988:

I am pleased that the beginning of this undertaking coincides with the twentieth anniversary of Pope Paul VI’s Encyclical Letter *Humanae vitae*, for I am certain that the Institute will give notable assistance to the

Church's efforts to hand on ever more effectively the prophetic truth of that historic document.<sup>28</sup>

The mission statement of the catalog reads:

The Institute's specialized ecclesiastical degree in the theology of marriage is unique. It is a degree in a specific topic of theology, not in a general area, such as moral theology. Its topic—marriage and family—is inter-disciplinary, and its program of studies draws from many disciplines what must be applied to elucidate the topic.<sup>29</sup>

Following the methodology of the Institute, my own doctoral dissertation was interdisciplinary, although not in an integrated way.<sup>30</sup> As the Institute developed, so did its understanding of its mission. The 2005-2007 catalog states:

The distinguishing feature of the John Paul II Institute, in sum, lies in conceiving of marriage and the family, and all the moral problems associated with these, within an entire vision of reality. The uniqueness of the Institute lies further, in its anchoring of this vision of reality, and this marital-familial love, in God's self-revelation as a Trinitarian communion of persons (LF, 6: "The primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life.").<sup>31</sup>

The interdisciplinary focus remains but it is much more strongly grounded in a Trinitarian vision of reality, which David L. Schindler, Dean and Provost from 2000 to 2011, has expanded at the Institute. This book follows that same interdisciplinary but above all the Trinitarian pattern.

## Organization of the Book

The book begins with an excursus on the family as both “domestic church” and as a communion of persons modeled on the love of the Trinitarian Persons. Our guides are John Paul II and his interpreters, Angelo Scola and Marc Ouellet. Beginning with Chapter Two it will be shown how the family has the vocation to image the Trinity and so be like the Holy Family, traditionally called an “earthly Trinity.” Essential to the understanding of the communion of persons is the notion of person, so that the chapter will also take up the subjectivity of the person. In several documents John Paul II has highlighted Mary’s subjectivity, particularly in her fiat at the Annunciation.<sup>32</sup> The nature of Mary’s subjectivity sheds light on true subjectivity as opposed to the isolated autonomy of the Enlightenment and is essential for understanding the unity in difference of man and woman in marriage.

Without a clear vision of Joseph’s role the Holy Family could not be seen as a true family. Chapters Three and Four trace the theological development of the Holy Family as a communion of persons from the Middle Ages to the 20<sup>th</sup> century with some reference also to the Church Fathers.<sup>33</sup> The two chapters consider the marriage of Mary and Joseph in the Tradition, focused mainly on the Middle Ages on the Western Church.<sup>34</sup> The papal documents from Leo XIII to John Paul II on St Joseph reveal a rising interest in the role of St. Joseph in salvation history and concomitantly devotion to the Holy Family, crowned by John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris custos* (RC). Since John Paul II is known especially for his innovative theology of the body, considerable attention will be given on the way Mary’s nursing was intrinsic to Jesus’ human development, a practice that was increasingly neglected in the urban West with

deleterious effects on mother and child as well as the spouses. In a sense, two aspects of the Holy Family, which contribute to a communion of persons, will be particularly drawn out, the closeness of mother and child through nursing and the chastity of Joseph, understood first and foremost as following God's will. This means the right use of the conjugal act and the true appreciation of masculine and feminine contributions to family well-being. Contrary to generally accepted views of the encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, this means full appreciation of the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of marriage and family life.

The communion of persons will then be explored in Chapters Five to Seven as it is expressed in the family through the spousal, maternal and paternal relations. The child plays a central role in this communion. Chapter Eight is a pivotal chapter, dealing with embodiment and Presence/presence, especially the role of bodily presence for communion. Bodily presence has perhaps suffered most in our culture from absence and distortion, especially in relation to the family and sexuality. The Holy Family epitomizes both human and divine presence in its fullness apart from conjugal intercourse. At the same time, it points to the perfect bodily subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of the resurrected state.

The question arises, how can sinful human beings in the family participate in the sublime communion of the Holy Family? Chapter Nine examines the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, proposing it as the good news of salvation as well as a path to healing the communion of persons of the family. The chapter situates the encyclical within the context of continuity with Tradition, giving examples of both faithful and dissenting views. It also affirms the full significance of marital chastity as the foundation of a



communion of persons. Chapter ten considers the universal call to holiness, which has particular relevance for living the truths of *Humanae vitae*. Every baptized Christian, whatever his state in life, is called to be “perfect.” Through the sacramental life of the Church, every Christian is empowered to overcome sin and participate more and more not only in the life of the Trinity but in true human communion. In this vein, Chapter Eleven, addresses sin, mercy and conversion in Christ. When “structures of sin” in society make it difficult to live the truth, the Holy Spirit, through the Church, always accompanies the sinner with grace and mercy, leading to repentance and even holiness. The final chapter, by way of epilogue, concludes that the Holy Family, imbued by “fairest love” among its members through the Incarnation, is not the “ontological exception” but a true model of the family as a communion of persons. Some suggestions will be made for further research in the Epilogue.

This is, indeed, a large undertaking and only the exigencies of the times prompt an attempt to accomplish it. As I am a scholar who has specialized in the work of John Paul II, his thought will be paramount.

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## Introduction

<sup>1</sup> See Cormac Burke in Chapter 9 for erroneous views that developed from the 14<sup>th</sup> century on the meaning of “remedy for concupiscence.”

<sup>2</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 193.

<sup>3</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 195.

<sup>4</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 196.

<sup>5</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 197.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Leo XIII was particularly concerned with severing the marriage contract from the sacrament. He affirmed the teaching of previous popes that marriage was considered sacred even among unbelievers. Leo XIII, *Arcanum*.

<sup>7</sup> “In the Latin Church, it is ordinarily understood that the spouses, as ministers of Christ’s grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church. In the Eastern liturgies the minister of this sacrament (which is called ‘Crowning’) is the priest or bishop who, after receiving the mutual consent of the spouses, successively crowns the bridegroom and the bride as a sign of the marriage covenant.”

<sup>8</sup> Chorpenning, *Guidance*, 41. “Before it became popular to speak of Jesus, Mary and Joseph as the Holy Family, they were referred to as the “earthly Trinity,” an expression coined by Gerson.” Chorpenning, “Holy Family,” 85, fn 7.

<sup>9</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 198.

<sup>10</sup> See Atkinson, *Foundations of the Family*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 200.

<sup>12</sup> Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 204.

<sup>13</sup> The spouses as ministers of the sacrament are only instrumental causes of the sacrament, not secondary efficient causes.

<sup>14</sup> Sanger advised, “Through sex mankind may attain great spiritual illumination which will transform the world, which will light up the only path to an earthly paradise.” Sanger, *Pivot of Civilization*, 271.

<sup>15</sup> McClory, *Turning Point*.

<sup>16</sup> “In occasione dell’incontro di Roma dell’anno 1970, lo stesso P. Cafferel realizzo il bilancio dei primi 30 anni. Ricordo quello che credette di poter accreditare al Movimento come positive e annoto le mancanze che percepiva in quel momento: alcuni dissensi in seno alle équipes a proposito delle posizioni di contrasto riguardo all conduzione de Movimento, come anche de fronte alla Chiesa (nate dall’enciclica *Humanae Vitae*); l’anemia spirituale in un numero rilevante de coppie; la loro vita spirituale girava intorno all’impegno morale, ma mancava un vigoroso impegno teologale.” Alberto e Constanza Alvarado, “Storia e Orientamenti,” 3.

<sup>17</sup> For example, a woman purposely sought out priests who told her to “follow her conscience.” Personal communication, October 5, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 53.

<sup>23</sup> The same word exists in Thomistic Metaphysics but with a different meaning.

<sup>24</sup> See John Paul II, *Man and Woman*.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, *On the Family*, No. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Secular historian Rudolf Binion surveys European literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and ascribes its anti-family theme to the introduction of contraception in the chapter “The Guilty Family, Ideology in the Bedroom, The Sublime and the Grotesque.” Binion, *Past Impersonal*, 61-79.

<sup>27</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to the gradual revelation of the Trinity with the Father in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ in the New and the Holy Spirit in the time of the Church. (CCC 684) Although all three were present from creation, the revelation of the Trinitarian persons occurred gradually. In the same way, it took several centuries to affirm the unity of humanity and divinity in the one nature of Christ. One might say also that the intrinsic value of celibacy had to be established to illuminate the value of periodic continence in marriage.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage & Family, *Academic Catalog 1995-1997*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage & Family, *Academic Catalog 1995-1997*, 15.

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<sup>30</sup> As one of the original lay S.T. L. students at the Institute, coming from 20 years of immersion in independent research into the topics of marriage, family and natural family planning, the opportunity to acquire a foundation in the theology of marriage and family was an enormous grace. A further grace was to work with Dr. Kenneth Schmitz on my doctoral topic of John Paul II's theology of the body. The dissertation served as the foundation of my book. Shivanandan, *Threshold of Love*.

<sup>31</sup> Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage & Family, *Academic Catalog 2005-2007*, 6.

<sup>32</sup> "All God's action in human history at all times respects the free will of the human 'I.' And such was the case with the Annunciation at Nazareth" (MD, no. 4).

<sup>33</sup> The theology of the Holy Family was a late development.

<sup>34</sup> Since Mariology has been well developed over the ages, (see Hilda Graef *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1965) the emphasis will be more on Joseph's role in salvation history. For without his participation there is no true communion of persons in the family.

## Chapter 2