

DECREE OF APPROVAL OF THE FAMILIES OF CANA MOVEMENT

The Second Vatican Council teaches us that the laity, because they participate in the prophetic, royal and priestly ministry of Christ, have a specific role in the mission that the entire people of God is called to accomplish in the Church and in the world, a role that consists of contributing to the evangelization and sanctification of all mankind, to inspiring and perfecting human reality in accordance with the evangelical spirit, and to making their lives and activity a clear testament to Christ and an occasion for the salvation of all people (AA 2).

This mission, which is entrusted to the laity, is accomplished in a special way within the family, but we cannot encourage families on a path to fidelity and reciprocal giving without stimulating the growth, consolidation and deepening of conjugal and family love (AL 89).

For its part, it is the hierarchy's obligation to nurture the apostolate of the laity, providing them with spiritual principles and assistance and guiding their apostolic action for the common good of the Church while taking care that they respect doctrine and order (AA 24). Simultaneously, it is the place of the competent ecclesiastical authority to bring to fruition associations of the faithful who offer to teach Christian doctrine in the name of the Church, to promote public worship or to seek to achieve other ends, when, by their nature, these pursuits fall under the protection of the same ecclesiastical authority. (CIC c. 301).

The first retreat of the "Families of Cana" took place on the 14th of September 2013, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in the parish of Mogofores, District Council of Anadia, Diocese of Aveiro, where the Families of Cana committed themselves to aspire to holiness not only as individual people or couples but above all as families. Meanwhile, many Families of Cana and some Villages of Cana have appeared, which are themselves fertile cradles for new Families of Cana through their testimony and their enthusiasm.

The Bishop of Aveiro, having been asked for his approval, and who has accompanied their growth and has come to recognise their deep ecclesiastical significance

Decrees hereby

To approve in our Diocese of Aveiro the «Families of Cana Movement» as an ecclesial Movement of family spirituality "ad experimentum" for a period of three years, in accordance with its charism, spirituality and mission as published in its Founding Charter

To Mary, Help of Christians, Mother of Cana, we offer up all the Families of Cana, in the certainty that She will always assist us in the humble and glorious task of doing whatever Jesus tells us.

Aveiro, 29 June 2016

+ António Manuel Moiteiro Ramos, Bishop of Aveiro

FOUNDING CHARTER
of the
«FAMILIES OF CANA MOVEMENT»

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1. FOUNDATIONS

1.1 An Experience of Family Life

The Families of Cana began when the Power Family felt the call of God to share with other families their particular style of living as a Domestic Church.

Niall, born on 24 December 1970, is Irish, native of Waterford, and seventh in a family of ten brothers and sisters. Educated in the Catholic faith, Niall was a member of the scouts and always participated in the life of his parish with his family. During his youth he had the grace to travel to Taizé and during his courtship with Teresa participated in a Convívio Fraterno (a retreat organised by the Convívio Fraterno youth movement in Portugal).

Teresa, born in Lisbon, Portugal, on 3 June 1972, the eldest of three sisters, was brought up and lived in Castelo Branco. From a very early age she participated with her family in the activities of her parish. In her youth she joined the Convívio Fraterno youth movement, participated in numerous meetings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and made pilgrimages to Taizé, Lourdes and Mejugorje.

Niall and Teresa met in Germany in 1992 during their university studies while participating in the Erasmus student exchange project. From the beginning they were united by the catholic faith and by their great love of Our Lady, to Whom they consecrated themselves on the day of their wedding in Fátima on 27 July 1996.

Both of them have professional careers in Portugal, Niall at the University of Aveiro and Teresa as an English teacher in Anadia.

As two people open to life and to love, they were blessed with seven children, with one who died at the age of just one and a half. They are Francisco, Clara, Tomás (who died), David, Lúcia, António and Sara.

At the beginning of their married life they lived in Aveiro and some years later in Gafanha da Encarnação, always linked to parish life, growing in faith as a family and gradually building, child by child, the foundations of the Families of Cana spirituality.

In the summer of 2007 they moved to Mogofores in Anadia [Portugal], close to the Mary Help of Christians National Sanctuary. Their parish priest, a Salesian, Fr José Augusto Fernandes, invited them to teach catechism and to lead the children's singing group at mass in the parish. Through regular visits he witnessed the way the family prayed together and told the stories from the Bible and the lives of saints, and he encouraged Teresa to share this family experience of faith with other families. That is how Teresa started to give talks at meetings for the parents of catechism pupils and to direct retreats for the preparation of the reception of sacraments etc., while Niall became dedicated to youths. The foundations of the Families of Cana were beginning to appear, almost without the family realising it.

1.2 The Wedding at Cana

Finally one day Teresa and Niall asked their parish priest to help them to discern what seemed to them to be a calling from God: the foundation of a Movement that would challenge entire families, and not only married couples, to be holy according to the spirituality that they already experienced in their home. Encouraged by this, Fr José Fernandes immediately offered to celebrate the Eucharist and hear the confessions of the participants in the retreats that the family wanted to direct.

Teresa and Niall wanted that the new movement be entrusted to Mary Help of Christians, venerated in the Sanctuary in Mogofores. What was needed was to invoke the Holy Spirit and go through the Gospels in search of the most appropriate Marian episode. A few days went by and while praying for that intention they decided upon the episode of the wedding feast at Cana that presents Mary as the helper of a new family and as an activist in the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God.

The choice of that Gospel episode, which encapsulated the movement, proved itself to be truly providential because it allowed the Power family's spiritual intuitions to gain roots and unfold harmoniously. Indeed the episode of the Wedding at Cana has so many levels in its reading and meditation that no family can exhaust all of them.

At a first level, the presence of Jesus at the wedding feast anticipates the entire strength and beauty of the sacrament of matrimony and sanctifies this young growing family. But the author of the fourth Gospel, of the Letters and of the Revelations pointed to another level of reading, to another wedding, the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19:9), announced throughout the Bible from the first to the last pages. Here Jesus is the Husband and each one of us and the entire Church are the bride.

The Wedding at Cana is a celebration of family that opens itself to the infinite love of God. But it is also the celebration of the only and eternal love between God and each one of us.

Living in the atmosphere of a "marriage feast" means making life, and especially making family life, a divine feast, joyfully celebrating friendship, solidarity and the sharing it with the whole community, just like what took place in Cana. And it means inviting Mary and Jesus to the family banquet from the first moment, knowing that Mary will always help us in this humble and great task, to do whatever Jesus tells us to do.

1.3 Journey

The first Families of Cana retreat was held on 14 September 2013, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Curiously, it took place in a manor house that some friends usually rent out for wedding parties. The families that took part were nearly all friends of the Power family. The enthusiasm was contagious and at the next retreat there were already more families, ready for the challenge to try out this style of family faith.

So that their testament of life could reach further, the Power family started a blog, Uma Família Católica (A Catholic Family), where they shared everyday life stories that were rooted in the Word of God and that unfolded under His attentive eye. The blog was their open door to the world and attracted many families from various parts of the country to the Families of Cana retreats, while making it possible for numerous priests to contact the movement.

On 21 January 2015 the Power family was received at the home of Reverend Dom António Manuel Moiteiro Ramos, Bishop of Aveiro, who learned of the existence of the Families of Cana and undertook to accompany this new movement with his prayers, his word and his discernment. The following lent, on 7 March, to the great joy of everybody, he directed the Movement's lent retreat. There he proposed that the different points of the Movement's spirituality be representatively distributed among six pots, like the stone water pots at Cana. The Power family greeted the suggestion enthusiastically and set immediately about structuring the Six Clay Water Jars of Cana.

Meanwhile, the Power family was being invited to give talks in different parts of the country. From this witnessing, many Families of Cana and some Villages of Cana have appeared, which are themselves fertile cradles for new Families of Cana through their testimony and their enthusiasm.

1.4 Belonging to the Families of Cana Movement

The pathway to belonging to the Movement is *"the Church's way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, (which) has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement (...) for true charity is always unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous"*. (Amoris laetitia, 296)

The members of the Movement strive for holiness according to the charism of the Families of Cana. Nevertheless, they may find themselves in different situations in their personal or family lives. Those who belong to the Movement or who may belong are:

:: Families that together – parents and children – commit themselves to living according to the charism proposed. Not all of these families are rooted in the sacrament of matrimony, but they should all desire the sacrament. Therefore, there are families of divorced people in the Movement, who live in a new union and correspond to the profile laid out by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*: “... *a second union consolidated over time, with new children, proven fidelity, generous self giving, Christian commitment, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins.*” (AL 298) Families resulting from a non-marital partnership that has no impediment in relation to receiving the sacrament of matrimony can only be Families of Cana after matrimony, because that non-marital partnership does not suggest a longing for sacramental life. Nonetheless, the Movement can and should accompany these families in order to cultivate in them a thirst for God, which is necessary so that they too can come to drink the “*new wine*” of Jesus.

:: Families where only one of the married couple wishes to commit him- or herself given a lack or immaturity in faith of their spouse. Refusal to accept them would be to increase the pain of the husband or wife who is a believer. For these families the words of Saint Paul prevail: “... *the unbelieving husband is made one with the saints through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made one with the saints through her husband. If this were not so, your children would be unclean whereas in fact they are holy.*” (1 Cor 7:14)

:: Families that experience all kinds of problematic situations, like single mothers, parents whose children have abandoned the faith and others. It is enough that one of the members of the family has a desire to be committed. Pope Francis was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he presented the Church as a “*field hospital*”: “*This is the mission of the Church: the Church heals, it cures. Sometimes, I speak of the Church as if it were a field hospital. It's true: there are many, many wounded! So many people need their wounds healed! This is the mission of the Church: to heal the wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all, God is the Father, God is affectionate, God always waits for us.*” (Homily, 5 February 2015) This image comes in the same biblical vein that presents Jerusalem as ruins that the Lord has the joy to rebuild: “*Break into shouts of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for Yahweh is consoling his people*” (Is 52:9) “*They will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise what has long lain waste*” (Is 61:4) Jesus was born in the stable of Bethlehem and transformed it into a sacred place. In Cana, Jesus restored the fountain of joy.

In a most beautiful homily on the mystery of the wedding at Cana, Pope Francis made prophetic statements, referring precisely to these broken families: “*And the best wine is yet to come, in spite of all the variables and statistics which say otherwise. The best wine will come to those who today feel hopelessly lost. Say it to yourselves until you are convinced of it. Say it to yourselves, in your hearts: the best wine is yet to come. Whisper it to the hopeless and the loveless. Have patience, hope, and follow Mary's example, pray, open your heart, because the best wine is yet to come. God always seeks out the peripheries, those who have run out of wine, those who drink only of discouragement. Jesus feels their weakness, in order to pour out the best wines for those who, for whatever reason, feel that all their jars have been broken.*” (Homily, 6 July 2015)

:: Young people who find in the charism of the Movement a way to holiness.

:: Consecrated laypersons who find in the mystery of Cana a calling to serve families, especially broken families, according to the charism of the Movement.

:: Diocesan priests the wish to “drink from the Six Clay Water Jars of Cana”.

2 CHARISM, SPIRITUALITY AND MISSION

2.1 Charism

The Families of Cana aspire to be holy, not only as individual family members and not only as married couples, but above all as families. This wish to become holy as a family transpires in an atmosphere of a marriage feast, which in the Gospel of Saint John represents the Banquet of the Kingdom of God, the great celebration of the nuptial love of God-with-us.

2.1.1 Family life and the Banquet of the Kingdom

Throughout the Old Testament, God celebrates His covenant with His people through a festive meal. That is how it happened with Abraham, Moses and the prophets, and that is how it is appears described in the Book of Wisdom. When Jesus arrives, God comes so near that this meal can be taken in the home of every family. The first home where it was taken is naturally in Nazareth, where Jesus shared his meal with Mary and Joseph for thirty long years. Then the gospels tell of how the Banquet of the Kingdom took place in the house of the newly-wed couple in Cana, in the house of Zacchaeus, in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, in the home of Simon Peter, in the house of Simeon the Pharisee, and of how He became Eucharist in the house of Mark, called the Cenacle, and finally in the house at Emmaus. Also, the first Christians celebrated their faith in their houses, even to the point of Saint Paul, in his letters, addressing himself to “*the church that meets at [the] house*” (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15;) of certain families, that is, the church that shares a family meal and the Eucharistic meal.

The Families of Cana hope to recover the profoundly celebratory meaning of family life, as a sign of the conjugal alliance between God and His people. Therefore the marriage feast of Cana takes place in the family home as well as in the Eucharistic celebration at the church on Sunday.

2.1.2 Family life and unity

Throughout the Old Testament, the alliance of God with his people is made possible because of the “yes” of different families. Indeed, at the origin of the people of God we find not only Abraham as an individual, but Abraham as the head of a family, and it is with Sara his wife that he sets out for Canaan. And it is through her that the promise of a descendent is realised. Centuries later, arriving at Canaan, Joshua does not proclaim his own personal faith but that of his whole family in whose name he spoke: “*As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh*” (Josh 24:15). The “yes” of Mary required the “yes” of Joseph so that Jesus would live among us in family. The Acts of the Apostles describe the conversion of entire families that received baptism in a single celebration (cf. Act 16:33).

In today’s world, matters of faith seem to be generally incapable of assembling entire families. It is believed that each family member should have his or her own system of beliefs and choices without interfering with the other members of the family, and even the baptism of babies is postponed so that it can be they who choose their faith later in life. The response of Joshua, speaking in the name of his household, or the decision of the first converts to Christianity to baptise their families all at one time, seem in the eyes of the modern world to be outdated and authoritarian.

The Families of Cana hope to be part of the great biblical tradition and in that way contradict the scattering of modern families. According to the Second Vatican Council, they hope to be small Domestic Churches (Lumen Gentium, 11: AAS 57), where children are brought up in the Catholic faith from the cradle, because the

education they receive should challenge them to be holy and growing up should be an adventure as they journey towards heaven.

2.1.3 Fruits of the Holy Spirit

In this context of the Alliance, the Holy Spirit cultivates some specific fruits:

Joy: Families of Cana are full of joy and express it with festive songs and dancing, praying with their whole bodies, celebrating life, friendship, love and trying to nurture occasions of family recreation, pleasant conversation and cheerful games. When the Lord lets them share His cross, the joy becomes mingled with pain but does not become despair or lamenting, rather, it lets itself be infused with serenity for the yoke of the Lord is easy and His burden light (cf. Mt 11:30)

Sharing as a family: Families of Cana share family time and space as much as possible, contradicting what the Pope called “*the individualism of our postmodern and globalized era*” (Evangelii gaudium, 67). In this way, Families of Cana find time and a space in their homes to share conversations, games and activities, not allowing television to silence the sharing of life, nor allowing extracurricular activities, work or even apostolic undertakings to hinder family engagement and collaboration between brothers and sisters. Starting from the very meaning of the word Feast or Banquet, and from the whole biblical tradition that culminates in the festive meals of Jesus, family mealtimes are absolutely central, and, along with family prayer, are part of family “prime time”.

Simplicity: The Wedding at Cana was certainly very different from the vast majority of modern day weddings. Pope Francis refers to these modern day weddings in his exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, and appeals to fiancés: “*Short-term preparations for marriage tend to be concentrated on invitations, clothes, the party and any number of other details that tend to drain not only the budget but energy and joy as well. The spouses come to the wedding ceremony exhausted and harried, rather than focused and ready for the great step that they are about to take. (...) Here let me say a word to fiancés. Have the courage to be different. Don’t let yourselves get swallowed up by a society of consumption and empty appearances. What is important is the love you share, strengthened and sanctified by grace. You are capable of opting for a more modest and simple celebration in which love takes precedence over everything else*”. (AL 212) Families of Cana try to recuperate the biblical sense of the wedding not only at the beginning of their family life but also during their entire journey, living their family love with great simplicity and austerity too, far from the mundaneness that infects today’s world.

Generosity: Families of Cana are generous with the Lord, since He is generous with them by not allowing a shortage of new wine in their houses. This generosity is expressed firstly within the bosom of the family itself, which is opened to life in accordance to the doctrine of the Church, as expressed in the papal encyclicals and exhortations *Humanae vitae*, *Familiaris consortio* and *Amoris Laetitia*. Their openness to life is also expressed in their willingness to imitate Mary by serving their extended families, their communities and parishes, the poor, the abandoned, the marginalised, friends and neighbours, with doors and windows open to everyone and being close to everyone.

2.2 Spirituality

2.2.1 Clay jars instead of stone pots

With the faith that Mary instilled in them, the servants at Cana brought Jesus six empty stone water pots. At Jesus’s Word, they filled them with water. And it was then that the miracle happened.

The Families of Cana do not have stone pots but clay jars. And why?

:: For a question of size: the stone water pots at Cana could hold up to one hundred litres of water. The clay jars that the Families of Cana present to the Lord are small, so that everybody, from the youngest to the oldest, can carry them. Indeed, in the Families of Cana the children have the same central role as adults in holding out their little clay jars to Jesus, sharing the right that baptism confers.

:: For a question of material: The pots at Cana were made of stone but we “*we are only earthenware jars that hold this treasure*” (2 Cor 4:7). As simple sinners, we live suspended in the mercy of the Lord, Who works wonders in the small and humble ones, “*to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us*” (2 Cor 4:7), just as happened in Cana.

So each Family of Cana offers Jesus six small “clay jars” that they try to empty of everything that is worldly. At Jesus’s word, they fill them with “water” until they overflow in ready and generous obedience. Finally they experience the abundance of the love of Jesus, Who, through the intercession of Mary, will not allow the “wine” of faith, hope and love come to an end in their homes.

2.2.2 The six clay jars

(i) Communion – We, Jesus

Families of Cana live in the joy of the “Marriage of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9), of the “New Covenant” (Lk 22:30), in their daily lives, building the communion between husband and wife, parents and children, among brothers and sisters, in family and the Church - each one of us and Jesus. To deepen this mystery of communion, they pray this short prayer several times a day, “We, Jesus!”.

In this way, they become part of the great mystery of faith, what we call “*the communion of saints*”, allowing them to participate with their small efforts and sacrifices in the work of the Jesus’s salvation, in keeping with the words of Saint Paul, “*It makes me happy to suffer for you , as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can do make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church*” (Col 1:24). Each little suffering is a drop of water poured into the chalice of the Blood of Jesus, as the mystery of the Eucharist reveals to us and as the miracle of Cana pre-announced.

(ii) The Word of God

In Cana, Mary told the servants to do everything that Jesus told them (cf. Jn 2:5), thus presenting Jesus as the Word of God made man (cf. Jn 1:14) that needs to be listened to and then put into practice. Saint Paul affirms “*Faith comes from what is preached, and what is preached comes from the word of Christ*” (Rom 10:17). And the great commandment that Moses gives to believing parents is this, “*let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart. You shall repeat them to your children and say them over to them whether at rest in your house or walking abroad, at your lying down or at your rising; you shall fasten them on your hand as a sign and on your forehead as a circlet, you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates*” (Deut 6:6-9).

At the start of a family’s journey in faith is the Word of God, Jesus the Lord himself reaching us through the Bible and the teachings of the Church. Educating children in the faith means proclaiming the Word of God to them, meditating on the readings of daily mass, telling the youngest ones the stories of the Bible, recounting the lives of the saints, teaching the catechism and meditating on the papal teachings, with special emphasis on the Pope who in the midst of each age steers the Church. In this way the children grow to become disciples, just like the young Samuel, “*Speak, Yahweh, your servant is listening*” (1 Sm 3:9).

Because the Word of God is Jesus Christ himself, this daily time of proclaiming and listening to the Word “*concentrate[s] on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time*

most necessary” (Evangelii gaudium, 35), that is “*the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead*” (Evangelii gaudium, 35).

(iii) Sacramental life

Families of Cana meet with Jesus in the sacraments:

Matrimony

Matrimony is the founding sacrament of the family that the episode of the Wedding at Cana announced. According to the doctrine of the Church, and in the light of the mystery of Cana, in which Jesus is at once the Priest that transforms the water to wine and the Spouse that has finally arrived, and in which the marriages are simultaneously human and divine, Christian matrimony “*has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church*” (Ep 5:32).

In the context of John 2, matrimony is a truly divine feast where openness to grace and life is fulfilled in the completely unexpected abundance of the “best wine”. So the necessities of faithfulness, indissolubility, constant openness to life and unity are not experienced as burdens but as gifts. And, in the wonderful words of Pope Francis, “*Each marriage is a kind of “story of salvation”*” (AL 221).

Not every Family of Cana is born from the sacrament of matrimony. But all the families have it in their sights as the most beautiful sign of Jesus’s gift of Himself to us on the cross where the new and eternal covenant was accomplished.

Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist

Baptism is the sacrament that makes us children of God and brothers and sisters of one another. A Christian family, first and foremost, is a family of baptised people just like the first Christians witnessed it to be by administering baptism to entire families (cf. Ac 16:33). Families of Cana baptise their children as early as possible, with a hurry characteristic of someone who loves, the same haste with which they later ask for the sacrament of confirmation for the members of their family who reach maturity in faith. In the festive atmosphere of marriage, the baptism and confirmation anniversaries of each member of the family are a cause of celebration.

The Wedding at Cana announces the mystery of the Cross on which Jesus shed His blood as the “best wine” kept for last. The Eucharist is the memory and the realisation of the mystery of the Cross, and so it too is announced in the Wedding at Cana, where everybody drank the wine of Jesus until they were satisfied; the wine of the new and everlasting covenant. It is at this Source of Life (cf. Jn 19:34) that the Families of Cana fill their clay water jars.

Families of Cana are truly Eucharistic families. Sunday mass is the high point and centre of their lives, and as such they try to prolong it whenever possible in strong moments of Eucharistic adoration. As a sign of joy, festivity and of the union present in the mystery of the Wedding at Cana, Families of Cana endeavour to participate in Sunday mass as a family. Not all of the family members can receive holy communion, but each one, without exception, can be saved by the Eucharistic love of Jesus just like the roman centurion, “*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*” (cf. Mt 8:8).

Reconciliation

In order to live in deep union with one another and with God as announced in the mystery of the Wedding at Cana, it is necessary to make a continued effort towards reconciliation, asking for and offering forgiveness. For the Families of Cana, sacramental confession is the response to the statement of Our Lady, “*They have no wine*”. Each time the wine runs out the Families of Cana are invited to a sacramental reconciliation with God

and with one another through the blood shed by Jesus, the wine of the new and everlasting Covenant (cf. Lk 22:20).

Families of Cana confess very regularly, including children, from the first moment they become conscious of their sin. Even couples that cannot receive sacramental absolution are invited to confess their sins, conscious that humility is heaven's door.

Anointing of the Sick

In accordance with the doctrine of the Church, Families of Cana receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick whenever necessary, when one of their members is gravely ill or when the hour of death is close. This sacrament also occurs in the atmosphere of the Wedding of Cana, with total confidence in God who gives life and death, who makes miracles and for whom nothing is impossible, and with the joyful hope of finally meeting the only Spouse that can satisfy the deepest human yearnings for happiness.

Holy Orders

At the Wedding at Cana, Jesus is the Priest who turns the water into wine. There are no Families of Cana without priests, who are the ministers of the new and everlasting covenant (cf. Lk 22:20). Therefore, Families of Cana endeavour to be a true family for their parish priest, welcoming him and putting themselves at his service, available to do everything he says insofar as he is the interpreter of God's will.

Families of Cana pray to the Lord from the harvest asking Him to send workers to the harvest (cf. Mt 9:38) and rejoice when the Lord calls to their houses for brothers, nuns and priests. A vocation to the priesthood is the greatest gift the Lord can give them.

(iv) Family Prayer

The Family Prayer Corner

Families of Cana build a Family Prayer Corner in a central place in their homes, where they come together once a day to dedicate the "prime time" of their family life to the Lord.

Because the Prayer Corner should assemble the entire family, from the youngest to the oldest, it should be attractive, beautiful and expressive in accordance with the aesthetic and religious sensitivity of all members of the family. It should also accompany the rhythm of the liturgical year, with creativity and simplicity, making it possible for the family to pray with the Universal Church.

At the Prayer Corner the family unites in prayer and the parents evangelise their children, always beginning from the Word of God as revealed in the Bible and the teachings of the Church. Even decorating the Prayer Corner at the start of each liturgical season is in itself a beautiful moment of religious instruction that appeals to the senses, intelligence and the heart.

Family prayers

Family prayer should involve praise, thanksgiving, petition, intercession, plea for forgiveness and reconciliation. It should contain moments of silence, words, listening, sharing, song and even dance. It should not be complicated nor excessively solemn, so as not to disrupt but rather to increase family intimacy and warmth. The Bible tells us that Moses would speak with God "*as a man speaks with his friend*" (Ex 33:11), and that is how we also want to pray.

Daily prayer begins with the affirmation of the primacy of God, revealed in love of our neighbour:

Shema

(Lk 10:27-28)

“Hear O Israel

The Lord our God is one God

You must love the Lord with all your heart

With all your soul and with all your strength

And you must love your neighbour as yourself.

Do this and you will find happiness”.

Amen!”

The Rosary

In his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Saint John Paul II recalls the episode of the Wedding at Cana in which Mary adopts the role of teacher, *“as she urges the servants to do what Jesus commands”* (RVM 14). In this way, the Pope concludes, *“contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to “read” Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.”* (RVM 14).

Just like the servants at Cana, the Families of Cana want Mary as their teacher, learning with her to meditate on the whole life of Jesus by praying some part of the Rosary every day as a family. This prayer is as appropriate for adults as it is for Children according to what our teacher taught us in Fatima when she asked the little shepherds, who were seven, nine and ten years old, to pray the rosary every day.

The mysteries of the Rosary are truly the simplest way of telling children the story of the Gospel. A family that prays the rosary every day makes its way through the most important episodes of the Gospel in the space of one week, growing in gratitude and contemplation before a God that for us became a baby, a child and an adult and who gave himself up for us until death, and rose for us, and opens the door to heaven for us. From the meditation of the mysteries of the rosary the catechism is taught and learned and the childish riches of the Gospel are discovered. Like Mary, families that pray the rosary daily *“treasure all these things and ponder them in their hearts”* (cf. Lk 2:19).

(v) Service to the family – living sources of water

Just like Mary in Cana, the Families of Cana are very attentive to the material and spiritual needs of their neighbouring families. Recognising urgent situations where *“there is no more wine”*, Families of Cana become *“living sources of water”* (*Evangelii gaudium*, 86), offering everyone the *“new wine”* of Jesus.

Like this we can find Families of Cana working in parishes in different ministries helping religious orders in active life in work with the poor and with children; working in politics, in pro-life movements and in all fields of lay apostolates; serving neighbours and friends in all areas of personal, family and social life.

(vi) Consecration to Our Lady

At the Wedding at Cana, Mary anticipated Jesus’s hour, but she also anticipated her own hour as She who intercedes for us with God. The Mother of Cana is therefore the most perfect image of the Help of Christians in the gospel.

The Families of Cana were born at the Mary Help of Christians National Sanctuary, in Mogofores (Portugal), and has the Mother of Cana, venerated in a small oratory dedicated to her (the “canto de Caná”) that stands in the shade of the Sanctuary, as their Queen.

According to tradition, Mary was already a widow at the Wedding at Cana. Nevertheless, her life and the life of Jesus continued to reflect like a mirror the tenderness, care and love of Joseph, the guardian of the Sacred Family. From the very beginning, and throughout her whole life, the “yes” of Mary required the “yes” of Joseph, and so both one and the other were “servants of the Lord”. So we also want to place our families into the care of Joseph just as God the Father placed Jesus into Joseph’s care.

As the Families of Cana renew their consecration to Mary every day, they imitate Joseph, the first ever person to be consecrated to Our Lady.

Like children that place themselves in the care and tenderness of their Mother, before even being conscious of it, the members of the Families of Cana also consecrate themselves without need for any previous preparation except absolute confidence in Our Lady and unconditional love for Her.

Invocation

*“Mary Help of Christians, Mother of Cana,
Teach us to do whatever Jesus tells us”*

Consecration

*“Mary Help of Christians, Mother of Cana,
Today and forever we consecrate our family to you.
We trust in your motherly intercession,
That in our house we will never want for
the wine of faith, of hope and of love.
Make us servants of the Lord
like you and Joseph your husband
And teach us to do whatever Jesus tells us.
Amen!”*

2.3 Mission

2.3.1 Messengers of joy

The mission of the Families of Cana is to convey the joy of the Wedding at Cana to as many families as possible, in keeping with the Word of the Gospel: “go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding.” (Mt 22:9)

The insistence on the dynamics of family prayer and sacramental life as a family may appear to close the family inward but in fact the opposite happens. Pope Francis says in *Amoris Laetitia*: “*The work of handing on the faith to children, in the sense of facilitating its expression and growth, helps the whole family in its evangelizing mission. It naturally begins to spread the faith to all around them, even outside of the family circle. Children who grew up in missionary families often become missionaries themselves.*” (AL 289)

2.3.2 – The two appeals of Pope Francis

The Families of Cana Movement seeks to respond to the persistent appeals of Pope Francis as expressed both in *Evangelii gaudium* and in *Amoris Laetitia*, and two in particular:

To be the “*Church in her missionary outreach*”, able “to reach all the “*peripheries*” in need of the light of the Gospel” (AE 20), especially the peripheries of family that exist as much in the midst of material poverty as, and in particular, in the spiritual poverty of the western world. Nobody should remain outside wedding feast.

The give priority the kerygma, the proclamation of Jesus Christ the Saviour, a proclamation that should precede and be present in all doctrinal catechesis. Pope Francis says: “*This first proclamation is called “first” not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment*” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 164)

2.3.3 Fulfilment of the mission

The context of the wedding feast, which in Jesus’s time assembled an entire village, gives the members of this movement valuable indications about its charismatic form to respond to these calls:

The mission should have a trait that is particular to each person or family, which, like Mary did, responds with personal or family initiative to the need identified while presenting families to Jesus and Jesus to families.

The mission should also be the mission of the “village”, like in Cana, where the servants at the marriage feast hurried to carry out the Word of Jesus by serving the “new wine” together. From here the “Villages of Cana” are born – small groups of at least two or three Families of Cana who meet in their parish or in the houses of the different families, and open to whoever wants to join in to deepen the spirituality of the movement and find ways of serving the community together.

The mission should have moments of “feasting”, that is, meetings, reunions, retreats or gatherings that will attract, by means of words and life testimonies, those found at the “crossroads” and offer all of them the charism of the Families of Cana.