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Married Love

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In the homily you gave in Pamplona last October during the Mass you celebrated at the Assembly of the Friends of the University of Navarre, you spoke of human love in words which made a deep impression on us. Many readers have written commenting on the impact they felt on hearing you. What would you say are the most important values of Christian marriage?

The majority of the members of Opus Dei are married people, so in this field I can speak from the experience of many years of priestly activity in many countries. For the married members of Opus Dei human love and marriage duties are part of their divine vocation. Opus Dei has made of marriage a divine way, a vocation, and this has many consequences for personal holiness and for apostolate. I have spent almost forty years preaching the vocational meaning of marriage. More than once I have had occasion to see faces light up as men and women, who had thought that in their lives a dedication to God was incompatible with a noble and pure human love, heard me say that marriage is a divine path on earth!

The purpose of marriage is to help married people sanctify themselves and others. For this reason they receive a special grace in the sacrament which Jesus Christ instituted. Those who are called to the married state will, with the grace of God, find within their state everything they need to be holy, to identify themselves each day more with Jesus Christ, and to lead those with whom they live to God.

That is why I always look upon Christian homes with hope and affection, upon all the families which are the fruit of the Sacrament of Matrimony. They are a shining witness of the great divine mystery of Christ's loving union with His Church which St. Paul calls *sacramentum magnum*, a great sacrament (Eph 5:32). We must strive so that these cells of Christianity may be born and may develop with a desire for holiness, conscious of the fact that the Sacrament of Initiation – Baptism – confers on all Christians a divine mission that each must fulfil in his own walk of life.

Christian couples should be aware that they are called to sanctify themselves and to sanctify others, that they are called to be apostles and that their first apostolate is in the home. They should understand that founding a family, educating their children, and exercising a Christian influence in society, are supernatural tasks. The effectiveness and the success of their life – their happiness – depends to a great extent on their awareness of their specific mission.

But they mustn't forget that the secret of married happiness lies in everyday things, not in daydreams. It lies in finding the hidden joy of coming home in the evening, in affectionate relations with their children, in the everyday work in which the whole family cooperates; in good humour in the face of difficulties that should be met with a sporting spirit; in making the best use of all the advantages that civilisation offers to help us rear children, to make the house pleasant and life more simple.

I constantly tell those who have been called by God to form a home to love one another always, to love each other with the love of their youth. Any one who thinks that love ends when the worries and difficulties that life brings with it begin, has a poor idea of marriage, which is a sacrament and an ideal and a vocation, It is precisely then that love grows strong. Torrents of worries and difficulties are incapable of drowning true love because people who sacrifice themselves generously together are brought closer by their sacrifice. As Scripture says, *aquae multae*, a host of difficulties, physical and moral, *non potuerunt extinguere caritatem*, cannot extinguish love (Song 8:7).

Conversations with Msgr. Escriva, Princeton New Jersey: Scepter, 1993, no. 91.