Introduction to 1 Corinthians 13: 4-6

First Corinthians 13 is popularly called ‘The Love Chapter” because of its beautiful vision of love. While it is a popular reading for weddings, this chapter relates to every member of the family and teaches what Christian love looks like.

In order to speak about the joy of Christian marriage and family life we must speak about love. **While love is a deeply human experience, love is created by God, who is love, and he delights in the love of families.**

Chapter 4 of Amoris Laetitia, the Joy of Love, reveals each of the twelve characteristics of love in 1 Cor. 13: 4-7. Pope Francis encourages every Christian to consider the relevance, value and qualities of authentic love and how our families can be strengthened and grow into the image of this biblical vision of love.

Love is **PATIENT**

Patience refers to “the quality of one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense” (AL, 91). Patience “takes root when I recognize that other people also have a right to live in this world, just as they are” (AL, 92).

Even though there may be conflict in family life, patience does not mean “letting ourselves be constantly mistreated, tolerating physical aggression, or allowing other people to use us” (AL, 92). **As God is patient with us, the joy of love is learned through patience in families that live together without malice while acknowledging differences and difficulties.**

Love is **KIND**

This is the only place in the Bible where this word for “kind” is used. Kindness speaks of a “good person, one who shows goodness in his deeds” (AL, 93).

**In short, to love is to do good.** Kind love pays attention to the needs of others along with a willingness to be “ever ready to be of assistance” (AL, 93). Kind love allows us to experience when giving to others without counting the cost or expecting to be repaid. Kindness is serving others.

Love is **NOT JEALOUS**

Jealousy/envy is “a form of sadness provoked by another’s prosperity; it shows that we are not concerned for the happiness of others but only with our own well-being” (AL, 95).

Love is broken by envy when we are threatened by the success of others. **True love inspires in us an appreciation for the unique and varied gifts of each individual and their own right to happiness.** To love without envy is to live well the ninth and tenth commandments, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,” and “You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.”

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Visible Sign is a campaign of the Archdiocese of Washington Office of Family Life created to support marriage and family life.
Love is **NOT BOASTFUL**

Literally, a boastful person is “puffed up” or prideful and thinks he or she is wiser or more spiritual than anyone else.

Pope Francis points to a subtlety contained in boastfulness, that of “an obsession with showing off and a loss of a sense of reality” (AL, 97). He goes on to say, “Yet what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak” (AL, 97). **Christian love in family life is not marked by competition and domination but by humility.**

**It is NOT ARROGANT OR RUDE**

As an essential requirement of love, “Every human being is bound to live agreeably with those around him” (AL, 99).

Along the path that avoids all that is rude or impolite, “We must learn to imitate Jesus’ own gentleness in our way of speaking to one another” (AL, 100).

**Love does NOT INSIST ON ITS OWN WAY**

Stated positively, this means “love is generous.”

The Bible challenges a culture that places a high value on love of self, “the Bible makes it clear that generously serving others is far more than noble that loving ourselves. Loving ourselves is only important as a psychological prerequisite for being able to love others” (AL, 101).

Generous love challenges us to do more than the minimum, it leads to “laying down one’s life” for another.

**It is NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL**

Resentfulness is an interior attitude to a real, or perceived, injustice that causes hurt and indignation. The opposite of resentment is forgiveness.

If our families are to be joy-filled, we must learn to pray for each other, let go of a thirst for vengeance, and forgive like we are forgiven. “If we accept that God’s love is unconditional, that the Father’s love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us” (AL, 108).

**It does NOT REJOICE AT WRONG, BUT REJOICES IN THE RIGHT**

To rejoice in the right means to rejoice in the truth and the good of others.

When we cannot rejoice in the good works and dignity of others we condemn ourselves to a joyless life. Pope Francis points out, “The family must always be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that others will be there to celebrate it” (AL, 110).

**THIS WEEK:** Read First Corinthians 13:4-7 as an examination of conscience; replace the word ‘love’ with the word ‘I’. Ask, “Do I know and live the joy of love?”

Renew the joy of love in your family by praying together and serving others.

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