

Familia Fidelis



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Frederic Ozanam

“The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church. It is a community of faith, hope, and charity....”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2204)

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For Mom and Dad— Marriage as Covenant

“When the Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a covenant, it is using an ancient and rich biblical concept to describe how God’s steadfast and exclusive love for his people is a model for the loving union of a married couple. The Old Testament writers trace the relationship between God and the chosen people of Israel by speaking of the covenant he offers to them through Abraham, Moses. This covenant is an invitation to enter into a relationship in which “I will be your God and you will be my people” (see Exodus 19:5ff). A covenant is a commitment which God initiates. The Bible tells a story of Israel repeatedly straying from the demands of this covenantal relationship and God always trying to call the people back to their original commitment (see Jeremiah 22:9 and Hosea 2:4). Despite the fact that the people continually break the

covenant, God still promises them a new and everlasting covenant (see Jeremiah 31). These prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In his life, death and resurrection, God manifests in a definitive way his desire to draw us into a loving relationship with him and with one another. St. Paul teaches that marriage is a pre-eminent symbol (or sacrament) of the covenant which Christ has with his people. This is because marriage is a commitment by which spouses pledge to each other all aspects of their lives “until death do us part.” But also, in daily acts of kindness, service, mutual love and forgiveness couples are called to imitate, however imperfectly, the unconditional love which Christ offers to us. Seeing marriage as rooted in the broader covenant of love between God and humanity has led Pope John Paul II and others to say that marriage is a sacra-

ment “from the beginning” and not merely after the coming of Christ. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council placed special emphasis on understanding marriage as a covenant, while not ignoring that every marriage also involves contractual obligations between the spouses. Placing covenant at the heart of a marriage shows that the interpersonal relationship of the couple, their unitive love, is what makes all other dimensions of a marriage possible and, in some cases, bearable. Understanding marriage as a covenant which establishes between husband and wife a “partnership of the whole life” in which they “mutually hand over and accept each other” can greatly enrich our appreciation of this special union that is: (a) sacred in the plan of God; (b) permanent, faithful and fruitful; and (c) a living symbol of God’s love for his people.”

-ForYourMarriage.org

For Teens— Are the Stories in the Bible True?

(From *Did Adam and Eve Have Belly Buttons?* by Matthew Pinto)

Question: “Are the stories in the Bible true?”

Answer: Yes, all the stories in the Bible are true, but not all are intended to be read as history. The parables of Jesus contain life-changing truths that can lead us to a deeper understanding of God and His message of repentance, love, and truth. But that does not mean things described in the parables necessarily really

happened (Lk. 8:9-10). We do not have to think there really was a Prodigal Son, for example (Lk 15:11-32). Jesus used this story to illustrate the love of the Father for us.

On the other hand, when the biblical author intended to say that something really did happen, then it really did happen. The Gospel writers intended to say that Jesus really lived, suffered, died, and rose from the dead. That is not a parable, and they

did not intend it to be viewed as one (1 Cor. 15:14).

This requires a bit of common sense. Many think the Bible is one big fat book written in only one way. It is not. There are many different writers using several different styles or “genres” of writing. We see this in our own experience. The news anchor on CNN is telling the truth (we hope) in a different way than a play by Shakespeare or a song



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“Christianity is not about ideas but about deeds inspired by love.”

-Bl. Frederic



For Teens...Continued

by a poet or a sermon by a saint. Their “styles” are different and the way they speak the truth is different. You do not expect Shakespeare to deliver the truth via a stock market quote, and you do not expect the anchorman to burst into a sonnet to deliver the weather report. But both speak the truth in their own ways.

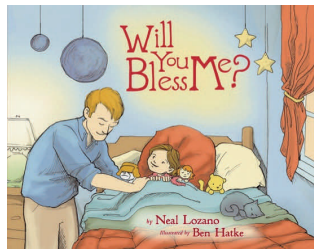
The same with the Scriptures. The Bible sometimes aims to give a historical chronicle of real events that really occurred. At other times it em-

plloys poetry, myth, or fiction, in order to convey truth according to that genre. Nobody thinks Jesus “lied” because there wasn’t really a Prodigal Son. Likewise, nobody thinks that because Jesus used parables or stories to teach a moral truth, it must therefore follow that nothing in the Bible is historical.

Whether a given story is history, then, depends on the intent of the author in telling it. How do we know what the writer intended? That requires

properly interpreting the Bible in accordance with the Tradition of the Church. It is the responsibility of the Magisterium (that is, the pope and bishops), with the assistance of trained biblical scholars, to guide us in this matter.

For Children—Will You Bless Me?



Will You Bless Me?, written by Neal Lozano is a nicely illustrated story that will, hopefully, encourage children and parents alike to bless one another. As the back of the book says, “An innocent

sneeze from young Anna—and her father’s casual ‘Bless you’ response—lead to a memorable discovery about true blessing. On the way to their discovery, father and daughter read a story about the boyhood life of Jesus, as he joyfully experiences a blessing—while asking his mother to tell him the story of his birth.”

This book is one of three by the same author and illustrator, the others being, *Can God*

See Me in the Dark? and *What Can I Give God?* I haven’t read the latter, but our children enjoy the story and artwork of *Will You Bless Me?* and *Can God See Me in the Dark?*

[This book is available at many bookstores and online at www.willyoublessme.com, as well as Amazon and a number of other online retailers.]

Friends for Families—Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Blessed Frederic Ozanam (1813-1853) was a husband, father, and brilliant academic. While a college student in France, Frederic organized public debates between Catholics and atheists. One night one of the students he was debating challenged him to do something to prove his faith, other than to merely talk about it.

Frederic took the words to heart and began to organize

visits to the poor, among whom he labored to assist them in their needs. Out of these efforts was born the St. Vincent de Paul Society which, within his own lifetime, would become a national movement. Today the society has over 950,000 members in 132 countries.

In the midst of all his charitable works, Frederic was a professor of literature at the Sorbonne in Paris, as well as a

devoted husband and father to his wife Amelie, and his daughter Marie. Throughout their marriage, Frederic would present his wife with a bouquet of flowers on the 23rd of each month in commemoration of their wedding day.

Never in great health, Frederic passed away in 1853 at the age of forty. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II on August 22, 1997 at Notre Dame in Paris.