

C. *The First Gospel*

But future victory is assured to the “seed” of the woman, a proclamation made to the serpent as well (Gen 3:15). In that prediction, Genesis anticipates the triumph of the Messiah (Rom 16:20; Heb 2:14) (CCC 410–11). The disobedience of Eve will be replaced by the obedience of **Mary**, so that where Eve brought death into the world, Mary will bring life (Saint Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.22; Saint Jerome, *Epist.* 22.21). For those reasons, Gen 3:15 has been called the Protevangelium (“first gospel”).

Man was not abandoned by God after the Fall. *Dei Verbum* expressed the wider plan of salvation revealed by the Genesis account: “After the fall, [God] buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show his solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing” (DV §3; cf. Gen 3:15; Rom 2:6–7). Genesis announces the future promise of the Messiah, the Redeemer, the “new Adam” (cf. 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45; Phil 2:8; Rom 5:19–20) (CCC 410–11).

II. CHRIST REVERSES THE FALL

The covenant curses imposed upon Adam and **Eve** and their progeny were thus remedial, but the assumption and bearing of the curse by **Christ**, through his sacrifice upon the Cross, became ultimately redemptive. This becomes especially prominent in the theology of Paul, who shows us how the rebellion of Adam was canceled by the righteous obedience of Christ. **Adam** made us sinners subject to death, but **Christ**, by a superabundance of grace, makes

us righteous heirs of eternal life (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22).

In Rom 5:12–21 Paul stresses the ultimate meaning of the Genesis account by contrasting the old Adam and the New Adam, Christ. Through Adam sin and death entered into the world, while through Christ eternal life is offered to all. Christ as the second Adam brings grace and righteousness, which defeat the sin and death brought by the first Adam. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians, Paul continues to see Adam and Christ as the two figures who have most shaped the whole of the human race: “For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ” (1 Cor 15:21–22). Likewise, “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49; cf. Rom 8:11). (See also **Garden of Eden**; **Justification**; **Sin**.)

FAMILY The most fundamental unit of human society. In its most basic form, the family consists of mother, father, and children; more broadly, “family” can mean grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and every degree of relation.

Christians call the family the “domestic church”: it forms a community of faith, and the love of the human family is an image of the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity.

I. *The Family of God*

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I. THE FAMILY OF GOD

A. *The Trinity as Family*

God Himself is a family—Father, Son, and Spirit. From eternity, God is a mystery of interpersonal and life-giving love. Earthly households mirror this mystery in varying degrees, but always imperfectly. The life of the Trinity is “the central mystery of Christian faith and life,” says the *Catechism* (234): “It is the mystery of God in Himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them.”

B. *Family Bound by Covenant*

The Trinity, then, is the essential context for approaching the question of the family in the history of salvation. The family in Israelite society dictated where its members would live, how they would work, and whom they might marry. A nation in the ancient Near East was largely a network of such families, as Israel was made

up of the twelve tribes named for Jacob's sons. Unifying each family was the bond of **covenant**. When a family welcomed new members, through marriage or some other alliance, both parties—the new members and the established tribe—would seal the covenant bond, usually by solemnly swearing a sacred oath, sharing a common meal, and offering a sacrifice.

C. *The Faithful Become God's Family by Covenant*

God's relationship with Israel was similarly defined by a covenant, as were his relationships with **Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David**. With each succeeding covenant, God opened membership in his covenant family to more people: first to a married couple, then to a household, then to a tribe, then to a nation, then to a kingdom—until, finally, the invitation was made universal with Jesus. Christ's “true family” consists of those who receive new birth as children of God through baptism (John 3:3–8), and who do the will of the Father in heaven (see Matt 12:49). They become His younger brothers (see Rom 8:14–15, 29).

II. FAMILY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. *The Extended Family*

In ancient Israel, the family was usually spoken of as the “father's house,” a term that stresses the patriarchal nature of the family. Such a family was not only the immediate nuclear family of husband, wife, and children, but consisted of the extended family, including those of the same blood (except those daughters who had married and thus entered their husband's families), male and female slaves

and their families, workers, and concubines. A typical family would consequently consist of several generations living under the same roof and could number dozens of people (cf. Josh 7:17; Judg 6:11, 27, 30; 8:20; 18:14).

The extended family was the most important unit in the nation of Israel, for it assured the continuation of the tribes of Israel and also served as the place where new generations were taught the faith, history, law, and traditions of Israel. The father had the obligation to teach his children about the Law of the Lord (Deut 6:7; 11:19; 32:46) as well as the traditions, feasts, and rites of Israel (Exod 12:26, 13:14; Deut 6:20–24; Josh 4:6, 21–23).

B. Consecration of the Firstborn Son

The family was patrilineal: descent was reckoned through the male line. Having sons was thus vital to carrying on the family line. The **firstborn** son was consecrated by the sacrifice or redemption of all firstborn animals (Exod 13:2, 12–15; 22:28; 34:1–20; Num 3:11–13; 8:16–18; 18:15). In the sacrifice, the firstborn son was a representation of the fact that Israel belonged entirely to the Lord, as well as a reminder of the way that the firstborn of Israel had been saved by the blood of the lamb in the **Passover**. In addition, the sacrifice was a way for God to declare his continuing fidelity to the covenant and to claim each new successive generation as his own.

C. Mutual Responsibilities in the Family

The bonds of the family were very tight, and fellow family members were always there to provide mutual support and defense. The family provided legal protection and also main-

tained rudimentary justice (see **Avenger of blood**). The family also answered for crimes and was responsible collectively for the misdeeds of its members. Punishment might extend, then, to the entire family, and sin could be punished over several generations (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9; Josh 7:24; cf. Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6).

III. FAMILY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. Family, the Center of Christian Life

The family household, not surprisingly, was a major feature of the early Christian community. Just as the Israelite family was the center of teaching, prayer, and the celebration of the Passover, so too was the early Christian family the center of worship and education in the faith. Luke writes, "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:46; cf. Acts 5:42; 12:12). When Gentiles became Christians, often the entire household converted to the Christian faith, starting with the significant conversion of the entire household of **Cornelius** (Acts 10).

B. Household Churches

Households were also the starting point for new churches in the cities where Paul's preaching took hold, and a large number of households can be mentioned: Philemon's at Colossae (Phlm 1); Nympha's at Laodicea (Col 4:15); Lydia's and the jailer's at Philippi (Acts 16:15, 31–34); the households of Stephanas, Crispus, and Gaius at Corinth (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14–16, 16:15; Rom 16:23); of Priscilla and Aquila, and

Onesiphorus at Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 1:16, 4:19); and of Aristobolus, Narcissus, and others at Rome (Rom 16).

IV. THE CHURCH AS FAMILY

A. The Christian's Extended Family: God and the Church

The Christian family itself was a powerful image of the wider membership in the Family of God that was offered by baptism and the new life in Jesus Christ: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). God is a family, and Christians are his. Christ founded one Church—his mystical body—as an extension of his Incarnation. By taking on flesh, Christ divinized flesh, and he extended the Trinity's life to all humanity, through the Church, his mystical body. Incorporated into the body of Christ, Christians become "sons in the Son." They become children in the eternal household of God. They share in the very life of the Trinity, becoming part of God's own family (CCC 1655).

The Church and the family are also more than "communities"; each is, like the Trinity, a communion of persons. And so they also bear a family resemblance to one another. As the Church is a universal family, the family constitutes a "domestic Church" (CCC 1656).

B. Christians Enter the Divine Family by Covenant

Baptism and the **Eucharist** are now the means by which men and women are incor-

porated into God's covenant family. They are the Christian's covenant oath, common meal, and sacrifice.

Receiving these sacraments makes a profound difference in a Christian's life; for now he can call God "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:4-6). Christians are truly children of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2), brothers and sisters and mothers of Christ (Mark 3:35), who is the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). Christians are "members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). The primary revelation of Jesus Christ is God's fatherhood (see John 15). Jesus reveals God first as Father to himself, and then by extension to Christians, as "sons in the Son."

The book of Revelation makes clear that this New Covenant is the closest and most intimate of family bonds. John's vision concludes with the marriage supper of the Lamb (Jesus) and the Lamb's bride (the Church). With this event—which tradition has understood as the Eucharist—Christians seal and renew their family relationship with God. With this sacrament they call God himself their true Brother, Father, and Spouse.

C. Family, the Image of the Divine Life

A household becomes an image of the divine life through marriage, itself a sacrament of the New Covenant. Saint Paul wrote: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:14-15). Earthly families, then, receive their "name," their identity, from God himself.

Thus, as an image of God, who is faithful and One, the family bond between husband

and wife must be permanent and indissoluble. Thus, too, as God is fecund and generous, a married couple must be open to life, willing to cooperate with the Father in the conception of children. In this context, it should be clear why the Church forbids acts of contraception, abortion, homosexuality, and adultery—all acts that distort the sanctity of marriage and the divine image in the family. As the domestic church, the family must be holy and ordered to the worship of God. (See **Church**; see also **Covenant**; **Elder**; **Firstborn**; **Marriage**.)

FAMINE Famines often happened in Palestine and surrounding countries. Common causes were droughts, plagues of locusts, unusually extreme flooding along the Nile in Egypt, and war. Periods of starvation were sometimes seen as a consequence of sin (Deut 28:20, 48; 32:24; Isa 51:19; Jer 5:12; Ezek 6:11), an image especially used by Jeremiah. Specific famines are mentioned in the time of Abraham (Gen 12:10), Isaac (Gen 26:1), and Jacob (Gen 47:1); Joseph accurately predicted the seven-year famine in Egypt (Gen 41:27). In later times, famines were mentioned during the time of David (2 Sam 21:1) and Ahab (2 Kgs 18:2). Metaphorically, Amos speaks of a famine, not of bread and water, but “of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11).

FASTING Abstention from food, either wholly or partially, as an act of mourning or penance.

According to the Law of Moses, there was only one day in the year appointed as a fast day, namely the tenth day of the seventh month,

the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29; 23:27, 32; Num 29:7). Nevertheless, fasting was also practiced in the Old Testament times in recognition of some great disaster (Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6, 14:24; 2 Sam 12:16; 1 Kgs 21:12, 27; 2 Chr 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Tob 12:8; Jer 14:12, 36:9; Joel 1:14, 2:15; 1 Macc 3:47; 2 Macc 13:12), and in times of mourning (Num 30:13; 1 Kgs 21:27; 1 Sam 31:13; 2 Sam 1:12, 3:25, 36). Likewise, private fasts were permitted, although a wife could fast only with her husband’s consent (Num 30:14–16). The prophets spoke of the proper spirit in which fasting should be done to make it acceptable to God: it must be an outward sign of real penance and amendment (Isa 58:1–6; Jer 14:12; Zech 7:5).

In the New Testament, the Pharisees fasted, as did the disciples of John the Baptist (Matt 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33, 18:12). Like the OT prophets before him, Jesus condemned the hypocritical fasting of the Pharisees (Matt 6:16). On the other hand, Jesus himself fasted for forty days before beginning his public ministry (Matt 4:2), as Moses did before he received the Law (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9). While he was with them on earth, Jesus’s disciples did not fast. When questioned on this, Jesus replied that one does not fast while with the Bridegroom, but when the Bridegroom is taken the time of fasting will come (Matt 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33). Christ also stressed the proper spirit in which we should fast (Matt 6:17–18) and declared the need for prayer and fasting by his disciples in order to be able to expel evil spirits (Matt 17:20). The apostles did fast before making important decisions and recommended fasting for the spir-