



Pastoral for Family

"The Christian proclamation on the family is good news indeed"
AL 1

Flashes of Amoris Laetitia in the writings of Luis Amigó



Flashes of Amoris Laetitia in the writings of Luis Amigó

Luis Amigó's sensitivity for the family and his ecclesial experiences at the beginning of the XIXth century prompted him to write, as Bishop of Segorbe, two pastoral exhortations addressed to the faithful people. On "The Christian Family", dated November 30, 1922 and "On Marriage" dated March 2, 1930.

In the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Pastoral Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, we delve into these exhortations of Luis Amigó discovering in them the reflection of the words of Pope Francis, inviting us to live the joy of love in the family, a love that Luis Amigó fostered so that it would be firm and constant in the everyday of family life.

Perhaps, today we find a strong language expressed in the words of Luis Amigó; to understand it we have to place ourselves in the 19th century, when Pope Leo XIII, who in his Encyclical *Inscrutable Dei Consilio* n^o. 10 and 11 (1878), called for the restoration of the family and the education of Christian principles, with the desire to transform the social disorder that occurred in the human race. In the year 1892 in the *Brief "Neminem Fugit"*, he established in Rome the association of the Holy Family, in order to unify all the associations instituted under the same title. In 1893 he decreed the feast of the Holy Family.

In this ecclesial context, the gift of life, fruit of conjugal, faithful and exclusive love of the matrimony formed by Don Gaspar Amigó y Chulvi and Ms. Genoveva Ferrer y Doset, was given to this family on October 17, 1854, in the town of Massamagrell-Valencia, with the birth of a child who was baptized with the name of José María Amigó, who years later, when he became a friar, would be changed to Luis.

Luis Amigó was a person capable of reading the signs of the times and the events of his life from faith. When contemplating his autobiography, he himself tells us about his family, made up of Don Gaspar and Doña Genoveva, a very Catholic couple, with seven children, who with their example of life transmitted the faith to them and maintained a piety, warm and healthy environment. His parents were his great example on the human and faith level: "*My father distinguished himself by an innocent and compassionate heart and by a very firm faith*" ... "*And of my mother I can say that I have not met a woman who suffered much but so prudent, that you never knew from her countenance the troubles or pains that tormented her, because she said that no one was to blame for our tribulations*"¹.

In these words, we discover a father who transmitted to his children a great treasure, faith. And to a sorrowful mother, who suffers for her own because she loves them dearly. It was this maternal figure that was engraved in José María, as a school of human suffering for love.

And of LOVE as the most important value that keeps the family together, he speaks to us in his pastoral exhortation on the Christian family, with a message of concern for the great deterioration of the institution of the family and what it entails for the future of society.

¹ OCLA 6.

A. THE FAMILY IS THE BASIS OF SOCIETY

After a brief analysis of the society of his time, he laments the deplorable state in which the society finds itself, oriented towards "the abyss of its ruin and perdition along the path of religious indifference, debauchery and the most depraved customs... the unbridled appetite for goods and material pleasures, without thinking at all of the hereafter" and guides the faithful to focus *"on the way of being, of ruling and governing families in the present time"*; in addition, he affirms the following *"the family is the base and society depends on it"*, objecting that society will be prosperous when families *"are strong and powerful by fulfillment of the law and the fear of God"*. He gives the example of the holy family of Nazareth: *"Beloved children, if individuals who make up the families would faithfully fulfill the respective duties that the Lord imposes on them, fixing their gaze on the holy family of Nazareth, a model that he presents to them to imitate, what joy, what peace and what happiness would be enjoyed in the world, and how these families would influence even the material progress of society"*².

A great man of faith, Luis Amigó, nourished by the Word of God, invigorates his words with two quotations from the Gospel: *"If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches (Romans 11, 16) ...And a bad tree cannot bear good fruit (Mt 7, 18)"*³.

And today, this message of Luis Amigó is still alive in the Church; we find it in the Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, with the following words: *"The family is a good which society cannot do without, and it ought to be protected"*⁴. *"The covenant of love and fidelity lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth illuminates the principle which gives shape to every family, and enables it better to face the vicissitudes of life and history. On this basis, every family, despite its weaknesses, can become a light in the darkness of the world"*⁵.

B. IN MARRIAGE THE SECRET IS LOVE

Luis Amigó points out the great value of the mission of each one of the spouses in the construction of the family, from a Franciscan spirituality, in which closeness, humility prevail and as a great secret so that each one of the members can lead the other along the path of good, he tells us that without a doubt it is love *"...the spring that (the woman) must use to conquer the will of her husband and to make him practice good is love"*⁶.

If he highlights the great importance of the man's mission *"what the Lord works in the universe, he wants man to second it in the family"*⁷ and his authority, likewise also invites you to do this mandate from service, from love: *"your authority is very sovereign and august by its origin because you represent God... do not disappoint their hopes or the high designs of the Lord on you and about your family. His infinite wisdom has linked you to him with the close bond of love, so that through him you treat your wives as companions and not as slaves."*⁸. He considers women the same as men, although with a different mission: *"But the high and difficult mission of the father in the family needed, beloved children, help and support that would ensure the effects of his education on the children. It was not convenient, says the sacred text, for man to be alone, and when the Lord gave him a companion similar to himself and made her the mother of his offspring, he wanted her to share with her the great responsibility of educating his children. Therefore, if the man is considered the king of the family, the woman is also its queen"*⁹.

In his exhortation on marriage, Luis Amigó reminds us of Saint Paul's words for married couples: *"the norm of love that you should profess to each other is none other than the same love that Jesus Christ had for his spouse, the Holy Church"*¹⁰. And Luis Amigó continues exhorting the spouses *"... you spouses must love each other; with firm and constant love, that does not decrease due to the vicissitudes, setbacks and work, typical of your state; may you always be ready and willing to sacrifice yourselves for each other, especially when the*

² Cf. OCLA 1096.

³ Ibid., 1067-1068.

⁴ Exhortación Apostólica Amoris Laetitia 44.

⁵ Ibid., 66.

⁶ OCLA 1080-1081.

⁷ Ibid., 1074.

⁸ Ibid., 1077.

⁹ Ibid., 1079.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1429.

Lord visits you with illness, regardless of your well-being and health; that both of you are very diligent in seeking what is necessary to attend to the sustenance and other needs of your family..."¹¹.

We can see God's love with our eyes in the concrete reality of the family, Pope Francis tells us, in marriage, which is an "Encounter of love". The conjugal love "living sculpture" that manifests to the family, total love and dedication towards the other, selfless love, love that is driven and encouraged day by day by the spouses who give their gifts to the service of the family, they are building it and building in a domestic Church, in which love is the inner force. Love, not only understood as a feeling "*... it should be understood along the lines of the Hebrew verb "to love"; it is "to do good"*"¹².

Pope Francis exhorts spouses to be perfect in love with the grace of the sacrament of marriage, cultivating it among themselves and with their children, teaching them to celebrate the joy of others:

- rescuing the characteristics of true love from the Hymn to love of St. Paul (1Cor 13, 4-7): patience, recognizing that the other people have a right to live just as they are; service; healing envy, going out from ourselves, valuing other's achievements, accepting the different gifts and unique paths in life; not become "puffed up" before others, knowing how to place oneself in the place of the other without being the center; being kind in words and having pleasing gestures; with detachment and surrender for others; without interior indignation, ending the day making peace; forgiving; rejoicing with others, celebrating one's own successes and those of others; excusing everything; trusting, having relationships in freedom; hoping and accepting that things do not happen as one wishes; enduring everything, coping all the setbacks with a positive spirit ¹³.
- with concrete gestures "three words need to be used. I want to repeat this! Three words: 'Please', 'Thank you', 'Sorry'. Three essential words! In our families when we are not overbearing and ask: 'May I?'; in our families when we are not selfish and can say: 'Thank you!'; and in our families when someone realizes that he or she did something wrong and is able to say 'Sorry!', our family experiences peace and joy"¹⁴.

Another invitation from Pope Francis is to accompany families with the attitudes of Jesus, very typical of the Amigonian charism: mercy and tenderness, so that these may be built on pillars of Evangelization. It is the sacrament of marriage in which the family receives the grace of being light for the world, and a vocation to holiness, as Luis Amigó exhorted in 1930 to the faithful of the diocese of Segorbe (Castellón): "*... Those of you who are already in this state of marriage... love each other, keep the fidelity promised, embrace the crosses of the state, try to be good parents for your children and in this way you will be worthy of society and above all blessed by God in time and in eternity*"¹⁵.

C. RESPONSIBLE PATERNITY AND MOTHERHOOD

Karol Wojtyla tells us in his book Love and Responsibility that biologically man and woman give birth to a new being and become father and mother. But there is a deeper meaning, which is inside the person and expresses the content of the concepts "fatherhood" and "motherhood". In other words, it does not consist only of introducing a child into the world, but it has a deeper meaning, since the one who transmits life, the father and the mother, is a person¹⁶.

Parents contribute to the creative and saving work of God, not only begetting their children, but they also have an educational task to effectively help their child to live a fully human life. Luis Amigó says it in these words: "*... God did not create man just to serve him on earth, but rather he wanted that he may praise and enjoy with him later in heaven; and, therefore, the main mission and obligation of parents is to raise their children for heaven*"¹⁷.

In this regard, Pope Francis comments, "*every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father; both are necessary for a child's integral and harmonious development... we are speaking not simply of the*

¹¹ *Ibíd.*,

¹² Cf. Exhortación Apostólica *Amoris Laetitia* 94.

¹³ *Ibíd.*, 90-118.

¹⁴ *Ibíd.*, 133.

¹⁵ Cf. OCLA 1431.

¹⁶ Cf. WOJTYLA, K. *Amor y responsabilidad*. Madrid, Ediciones Palabra, 3ª edición 2011, pág. 317.

¹⁷ Cf. OCLA 1425.

love of father and mother as individuals, but also of their mutual love, perceived as the source of one's life and the solid foundation of the family. Without this, a child could become a mere plaything. Husband and wife, father and mother, both "cooperate with the love of God the Creator, and are, in a certain sense, his interpreters". They show their children the maternal and paternal face of the Lord. Together they teach the value of reciprocity, of respect for differences and of being able to give and take. If for some inevitable reason one parent should be lacking, it is important to compensate for this loss, for the sake of the child's healthy growth to maturity"¹⁸.

Luis Amigó presents the panorama of the ideal family according to the model of Nazareth. And as a man of his time, with the conception of a patriarchal family, but not considering the woman second degree but with equal dignity to the man, he assigns duties and obligations to the father and mother, from responsible fatherhood and motherhood.

When he speaks of the father's mission, he does so as "head of the family", authority: *"paternity is based on the absolute dependence that the son has on him as the author of his being, after God... granting him the prerogative to reproduce... entrusting him of its nourishment, direction and surveillance. So that what the Lord works in the universe wants to be seconded by man in the family"*¹⁹.

Enhancing greatness to the figure of the father, he makes another consideration comparing the Catholic marriage, which represents the union of Christ with the Church and Jesus Christ is the head of it, since that is how the father is in the family. The head has superiority over the other members and it rules, directs and governs them; likewise, for Luis Amigó, this is how the father should be with his family.

This sovereign authority, which represents God, with which he regulates, orders, defends and admonishes his family, must be exercised by the father with love, without disappointing the hopes that God has placed in him and in his family. His intelligence, his counsels and the example of his actions will lead to its perfection.

Pope Francis also highlights the figure of the man with a decisive role in family life, especially in the protection and support of his wife and children: *"Many men are conscious of the importance of their role in the family and live their masculinity accordingly"*²⁰. It extols the characteristics of his masculinity such as the closeness to his wife, to share everything, to the children to accompany them in their growth and invites him to be a present father, always, without being controlling because he would run the risk of annulling his children, *"children need to find a father waiting for them when they return home with their problems"*²¹.

The need for father and mother to jointly carry out the difficult mission of educating their children is introduced by Luis Amigó when, in his Exhortation on the family, he speaks to us about the mother's mission. As I have already mentioned, he places her, on an equal footing with her husband, as the queen of the family, assigning her the role of powerful mediator; she performs the functions of her heart, being the helper and consolation of her husband and the shelter and protection of her children. She shares with the man the responsibility of educating the children, instructing and correcting them. And he highlights being an example because she is a mirror of the child who repeats her words and in her they look at each other continuously²².

Pope Francis emphasizes the joy of love, in these thoughts of identical dignity between men and women that Luis Amigó already promoted were put into practice in the first half of the XXth century. Almost a century later, it is a sign of joy that *"within families there is a growing reciprocity"*, considering the working of the Spirit *"the clearer recognition of the dignity and rights of women"*²³.

In the exhortations, Luis Amigó introduces a contribution to family pedagogy, specifically in the following text, where the Amigonian charism is reflected from the texts of the parables of mercy: *"be prudent, knowing how to distinguish in the punishment the offenses committed by malice from those committed by fragility or thoughtlessness; and uniting to the integrity of character the sweetness and kindness that captivates the heart of the son, so that the correction does not exasperate him, but makes him recognize his guilt and correct*

¹⁸ Cf. Exhortación Apostólica Amoris Laetitia 172.

¹⁹ Cf. OCLA 1074.

²⁰ Cf. Exhortación Apostólica Amoris Laetitia 55.

²¹ *Ibíd.*, 177.

²² Cf. OCLA 1079-1087.

²³ Exhortación Apostólica Amoris Laetitia 54.

himself... And if perhaps the angered father extreme the punishment in the son, do not forget the mother, her role as mediator between both, mitigating the pain without undermining the paternal authority"²⁴.

Children are given a series of instructions on how to behave with their parents: *"the veneration and respect that you owe to the authors of your existence, to whom after God, you are indebted for everything you are and you have."* Warning them that their parents can only be paid with love and in them they have to look to God. He suggests that they be respectful in speaking, humble, listening and being receptive of the reprimands and punishments that are imposed on them, come out in defense of their parents, help them in the needs that arise in the family and provide for their old age giving them support and comfort, curing their illnesses *"until they close their eyes when they die and to give them a Christian burial"*²⁵.

One of Luis Amigó's concerns is the separation of the man from the family, on the one hand, due to excessive work in the desire to earn money and on the other, the desire for leisure time. It tells us that these new social experiences have made parents forget their family duties, raising children who are poorly educated, disrespectful... because they neither have the good example of their parents nor proper education and correction. This concern is also presented in *Amoris Laetitia*, *"The absence of a father gravely affects family life and the upbringing of children and their integration into society. This absence, which may be physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual, deprives children of a suitable father figure"*²⁶.

And Luis Amigó continues to warn that to this paternal absence is added with the figure of mothers who have been contaminated of the indifference which it breathes and they lose their invaluable virtues. Luis Amigó questions his faithful *"what can be expected from a society in which those who are heads of families neglect it?"*²⁷. *"Well, many young people no longer have respect for their parents because they allow "their children to protect them, treating them as equals; and mainly because of the bad example they give them by abandoning the obligations of the family and the spouses roaming around for their respects, each living as they please"*²⁸.

*"It is a very great misfortune for children to be born to such parents, who put them in grave danger... it distresses and horrifies... to think about the future of this society"*²⁹. And if the family in his heart is destroyed, it will not be the inventions, nor the laws that will save the degradation of society. Strong words, those that Luis Amigó addresses to his faithful, as a Pastor concerned about his flock, wanting to alert of the testimony that young generations can pass to future ones, if parents do not go before their children with the example *"which is the best preacher, and whose force of persuasion is irresistible"*³⁰.

And currently, all this does not ring a bell? We could say that these words are addressed today by Luis Amigó to the parents of our XXIst century society and echo the words of Pope Francis *"A society with children who do not honor parents is a society without honor... It is a society destined to be filled with surly and greedy young people"*³¹. Many of these young people are what Luis Amigó calls *"young people separated from the path of truth and goodness"*, because they are disoriented in life, most of the time because they do not have a suitable family environment.

The Church, today, cannot fail to be the voice of children who silently suffer wounds in their souls due to conflictive situations experienced in their families, *"Do we feel the immense psychological burden borne by children in families where the members mistreat and hurt one another, to the point of breaking the bonds of marital fidelity?"*³².

In order to fight against the tide, from the social environment in which families live, Luis Amigó proposes that they look at the family of Nazareth: *"Young people learn from the Child Jesus the submission and obedience with which Mary and Joseph were subjected. The mothers imitate the Blessed Virgin's recollection,*

²⁴ Cf. OCLA 1086.

²⁵ *Ibíd.*, 1080-1095.

²⁶ Cf. Exhortación Apostólica *Amoris Laetitia* 55.

²⁷ OCLA 1100.

²⁸ *Ibíd.*, 1345.

²⁹ *Ibíd.*, 1100-1101.

³⁰ *Ibíd.*, 1087.

³¹ Cf. Exhortación Apostólica *Amoris Laetitia* 189.

³² *Ibíd.*, 246.

*industriousness and all-embracing dependence on the Patriarch St. Joseph. And you, parents, follow in the footsteps of the holy Patriarch in his vigilance and paternal concern to fulfill the lofty mission that the Lord entrusted to him as head of the Holy Family*³³.

It is in the family home where faith is cultivated, especially in the early years of childhood, considering this the "golden age of faith", because from their infancy, children have no barriers to letting themselves be loved by anyone, less by Jesus. And this role Luis Amigó considers that it corresponds fundamentally to the mother, since she has the greatest ascendancy over whom she has carried in her womb and to whom the child is entrusted in the first years of his life, therefore, she must teach him "to know, love and serve God from the moment the use of reason points in him"³⁴.



Luis Amigó refers to this duty of parents, to give living testimony so that the children begin to pray: "... we mainly ask parents not to stop praying it (the Rosary) with their children and in the home daily so that aside from giving them this good example that our parents bequeathed to us, they bring upon themselves and their children the divine mercy and graces necessary for their sanctification and salvation, of which the Blessed Virgin is the trustee and dispenser..."³⁵.

This statement is also collected in Amoris Laetitia: "The Church assumes a valuable role in supporting families, starting with Christian initiation, through welcoming communities". At the same time I feel it important to reiterate that the overall education of children is a "most serious duty" and at the same time a "primary right" of parents"³⁶.

Amoris Laetitia invites us to renew Pastoral Care for Family, with a greater integration of all the faithful in the Church: "It is a matter of reaching out to everyone, of needing to help each person find his or her proper way of participating in the ecclesial community and thus to experience being touched by an "unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous"³⁷. To everyone, to those who have begun a married life, to the divorced who are living a new union, to mixed marriages (Catholic and non-Catholic), single-parent families... we all need to feel welcomed by a Church that lives with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the family of Nazareth, the Family of God to which we are called to be united as all his children.

To conclude, we read the blessing of Luis Amigó at the end of his apostolic exhortation, "The Christian family":

*"If you, do it this way, we will have Christian families that are the help and support of society; and after saintly fulfillment of the lofty mission that the Lord entrusts to you, you will obtain the reward that He reserves for you in Heaven; which your Prelate and servant in Christ wishes you, who blesses you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"*³⁸.

❖ After reading the text, echo the aspects that most caught our attention.

Sr. Manuela del Pilar Pérez Hervás, tc

³³ Cf. OCLA 1102.

³⁴ Ibid., 1085.

³⁵ Ibid., 324.

³⁶ Exhortación Apostólica Amoris Laetitia 84.

³⁷ Ibid., 297.

³⁸ OCLA 1103.