

Family love gives security, ability to hope for better world, pope says

By Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY - A healthy society relies on citizens who learn love, responsibility, loyalty, acceptance of others and solidarity from their family relationships, Pope Francis said.

"The family is a 'center of love' where the laws of respect and communion reign, giving people the ability to resist the forces of manipulation and domination by worldly 'centers of power,'" the pope said in a message to the Latin American bishops' congress on pastoral work with families.

The congress, which convened Aug. 4-9 in Panama City, focused on the church's support of families and the role of families in "social development for a full life."

Within the family, Pope Francis said, "one learns and lives relationships based on faithful love until death," which describes not only the relationship of husband and wife, but also between parents and children and among siblings.

"When these basic relationships are broken," Pope Francis said, it is difficult for people to feel secure enough to open themselves to others. "It is important to encourage families to cultivate healthy relationships and to know how to say to one another, 'sorry,' 'thank you' and 'please,' and to turn to God using the beautiful name, Father."

"Family love is fruitful, and not only because it generates new life," he said, "but because it broadens the horizon of one's existence" and gives people a basis for hoping in a better world. The experience of healthy family life "makes us believe, despite any discouragement and defeatism, that peaceful coexistence based on respect and trust is possible."

Within the Christian community, the pope said, families are the key to helping people grow in openness to God and to recognizing him as a loving father. "In the family, faith is absorbed together with a mother's milk," he said.

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