# **Falling In Love With “Real Families”**

by [John Freund, CM](https://famvin.org/en/author/john-freund-cm/) | Mar 19, 2021 | [Formation](https://famvin.org/en/category/formation/), [Reflections](https://famvin.org/en/category/formation/reflections/), [Vincentian Family](https://famvin.org/en/category/vincentian-family/)

### ****“Real families”****

I think that in my eighties I can be called a “retired” marriage and family therapist. In my active years, I often heard **two seemingly contradictory thoughts about parents.** (In the days of my training in the field, the terminology had evolved from “Marriage therapist” to “Marriage and Family Therapist.’ I believe the term today for my professional association has evolved to focus on “relationship therapy.”)

**On the one hand … “As my father (mother) always said…” is completed by something we learned and treasure to this day.**

**On the other hand… “I can’t believe it. I swore I would never… [fill in the blanks for what mother (father) did] Yet here I am doing exactly the same thing.”**

**Such  comments show that we have not yet learned to “take the best and leave the rest.”**

I can also admit to hearing these two sets of voices in my head about the very real and human family I grew up in. **I suspect each of you can recall your own variations on these themes.**

### ****The Year of the Family is about “real families”****

March 19, 2021 marks the beginning of a “Year of the Family”. Perhaps the above recollections are why I appreciated Pope Francis reminding us that

The Bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises.  This is true from its very first page, with the appearance of Adam and Eve’s family with all its burden of violence but also its enduring strength (cf. Gen 4) to its very last page, where we behold the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb (Rev 21:2, 9).

Jesus’ description of the two houses, one built on rock and the other on sand (cf. Mt 7:24-27), symbolizes any number of family situations shaped by the exercise of their members’ freedom, for, as the poet says, “every home is a lampstand”.

… 19. The idyllic picture presented in Psalm 128 is not at odds with a bitter truth found throughout sacred Scripture, that is, the presence of pain, evil and violence that break up families and their communion of life and love.

**Throughout his lengthy reflection of the family today he is at great pains to address the complex reality of marriage and family relations as well as a wider range of relationships.**

**It is a shame that most people only hear polarized pundits cherry-picking from a select few paragraphs, or even just footnotes. in reality it is an inspiring document describing and addressed to the real family of today.**

### ****Is a year enough?****

When I first heard that Pope Francis was marking the fifth anniversary of the publication of his encyclical “Amoris Laetitia” (The Joy of Love) I was puzzled about the overlapping of the “Year of Joseph.” Then I came across this statement from the Vatican office kicking off this year. They encouraged everyone to

**“fall in love with the family, just as did St. Joseph did, who took care of his own family with dedication, tenderness, and love.”**

His family was not the family he expected!

**As I began to reread “The Joy of Love” my perspective shifted to… is a year enough?**

I recognize that not everyone has time to read his book-length reflections.

So I thought I would make my little contribution. I will try to reflect periodically on some of the respect-filled and beautiful insights of Pope Francis in “The Joy of Love”.

### ****Two suggestions****

* Take a long loving look at the real family you grew up in and the paradoxes you will undoubtedly find.
* Find time to read the beautiful insights he offers on the real families in the Bible.

This post originally appeared in [“Vincentian Mindwalk”](http://johnfreund.net/).