

SECTION 50
Education of the children
Part 2: A Spirituality of the Heart
and the formation of conscience...

Both in his way of interacting with people, the decisions he takes, and in his writings, Pope Francis shows that he is guided by a Spirituality of the Heart. For example, the words "heart" or " heartfelt" appear more than a hundred times in "Evangelii Gaudium" ("the Joy of the Gospel") and almost sixty times in *Amoris Laetitia* ("the Joy of Love").

For Pope Francis, a Spirituality of the Heart is rooted in faith in the Trinity: "*Every child formed in the womb of the mother has a place in God's heart*" (AL 168). Jesus' Heart "*was open to all*" (AL 144). The Holy Spirit "*gives us a new heart*" (AL 120) and enables, among other things, "*that man and woman may love one another as Christ has loved us*" (AL 120).

Thanks to the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we too may be guided by a Spirituality of the Heart. Then, however, our hearts must be shaped so that we can also let them speak. For Pope Francis, the formation of the heart is therefore very important in the education of children. Parents form the hearts of their children when they themselves set an example of how to relate to one another from the heart. For example, children learn from their parents to listen to one another "*with the ear of the heart*" (AL 232) and, in certain situations, to speak to one another "*from heart to heart*" (AL 234). Parents who have "*a big heart*" show children how to pay attention not only to the limited circle of family and friends, but also to the poor, sick, disabled, and those people who got stuck in life (AL 196-198).

Responsible parenthood also includes the formation of conscience. In the midst of their limitations and in often difficult circumstances, many parents try to meet the ideals of the Gospel as well as possible (AL 37). They may also help their children learn to listen to God's voice in the depths of their hearts. Parents and other educators, says the Pope, are called "*to form conscience, not to replace it*" (AL 37).

He therefore invites everyone to make room for conscience. In that context, he quotes the Second Vatican Council, which taught, "*Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of all human beings. There everyone is alone with God, whose voice resounds in the depths of their hearts.*" (*Gaudium et Spes* ("Joy and Hope") n 16; AL 222).

Reflection

*"The presence of the Lord
lives in real and concrete families,*

*with all their daily problems and struggles,
joys and hopes...*

*The spirituality of love in the family
is made up of thousands of small but real gestures.
In that variety of gifts and encounters
that deepen togetherness,
God has his dwelling place.*

*This mutual commitment to each other
brings the human and the divine together,
for it is filled with the love of God.*

*In the end, the spirituality of marriage
is a spirituality of relationship,
in which divine love dwells."*

(Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* n. 315)