

## PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY

### ***BISHOP LAFFITTE'S ADDRESS TO COUPLE TO COUPLE LEAGUE***

#### **Introduction**

It is apt and proper to acknowledge with gratitude at the beginning of this talk the great initiative of the Couple to Couple League to make its members more aware of the duties of the Pontifical Council for the Family. The council believes that this effort certainly opens many ways for further collaborative effort to uphold the grandeur of Conjugal love and the family

Effectively, marriage and the Family constitute one of the most precious of human values. *Gaudium et Spes* says the well being of the individual person and of the human society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and the family. Nevertheless, if we are to honestly ask ourselves whether such excellence or importance is reflected with equal brilliance in our contemporary society, such is a big point for reflection for all of us.

I would like to proceed then with this talk elaborating the context where we all find ourselves in thus further understanding the immensity of the Church's concerns. To do this is to try to outline the actual challenges that confront marriage and the family today, its implications and effects.

Afterwards, we look into what the reflection of the Church has been in this field at the theological, anthropological, ethical and spiritual level. This eventually leads us to grasp the importance of the mission of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

#### **I - Today's Challenges to Marriage and the Family**

It is commonplace to qualify Western society of today as permissive. Effectively, in the matters of social mores, sexuality, and marriage, we are well within a permissive society where subjective or partial values are exalted, values that in reality are not experienced at an ethical level.

Among them, absolute individual liberty, well-being under its hedonistic form (the search for the greatest possible pleasure), or still the casting off of moral constraints; within the sphere of the affective life, only immediate emotion, affective well-being and physical desire are so considered to be constitutive of the nature of love. A strict separation is worked between liberty and nature. Eventually, this contributes to the destruction of the structural and foundational link between marriage and family.

##### ***a) A systematic deconstruction of the structures of Marriage and Family***

We see today a total separation between the traditional and religious conception of Marriage and the so called new family model proposed by the post modern culture. Traditionally, there was no difference between what the civil authorities and the religious families understood about the concept of marriage.

Till 30 or 40 years ago, when a man and a woman would come to the Mayor to be civilly married,

they were asked to take the same vows a Christian couple does in a Christian marriage. They promised each other fidelity, and manifested their openness to welcome eventual fruits of their love; and naturally marriage was fundamentally understood as the union between a man and a woman. The only difference was the Christian education the Christian couple commit had to give to their Children.

It is important to note that the Church never changed in this.

Still today she requires the same from the engaged couple who come to the parish to receive the sacrament of Marriage. The Church with all the due preparations assures the spouses of her support and acceptance as a new couple in the Christian community and helps them in building a better family.

In all this, the Church remains perfectly relevant and consistent. She has always recognized the fact that the family is founded upon a contractual commitment between a man and a woman called marriage, an institution inscribed in the nature of man: a fact that even the entire body of legislations accepted until several decades ago.

On the contrary we can say that a systematic deconstruction of the institution of Marriage and Family is at the fore; to wit, in some countries, marriage does not mean anymore the union between man and a woman but "between persons".

How is this possible? Simply by denying the existence of two different ways of being human, masculine and feminine; and sexual difference is reduced to a mere question of choice and culture. It is exactly what the ideology of the gender proposes.

But where does this bring us?

Consequently, any disregard of the natural law boils down to the relativization of the public good and the foundations of human life held for centuries. Let us look into the so called "new models of family"; the extension of the term "family" and of the term "marriage" to all kinds of social realities: reconstructed families, free unions (with no other founding act other than the sole wish of the partners), homosexual unions, etc.. What underlies all these? That living together, is founded no longer on an objective good of a communal scope (an objective good of the society), but only upon the individual desires of persons; desires which invoke the principle of equality, meant not in the classical sense of the term but in its ideological sense. The genuine principle of equality between men is an equality of dignity that, when it is recognized by the law, means that the citizens are equal in fact by right. The rights that are recognized of a family founded upon marriage are, normally, a recognition that the family unit is a good for society, this unit favors a progressive socialization of future adult citizens by means of the education of children, and finally the family participates in the stability of the social bond. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, affirms that the family is the fundamental core of society and of the State and, as such, it must be recognized and protected. This allows us to affirm that, if the family has so great an importance for society and for the State, it is because it fulfills a public and general interest.

### ***b) Banalization of Human Sexuality***

Corollary to the first problem we have just mentioned, the systematic deconstruction of the structures of marriage and family, is the obscuring of the true meaning of human sexuality.

Marriage has always been esteemed as the only and proper locus for the exercise of man's sexual faculty. This has been put into question by present realities. Human sexuality is perceived nowadays only from the perspective of personal gratification and feeling, therefore, forgetting the intrinsic value of conjugal act as intrinsically aimed at transmitting life; at the moment sexuality is emptied of its social significance, from the transmission of life within the stable relation between man and woman, what you have is a mere revindication of pleasure. Thus, it results to contraceptive sex and the practice of homosexuality for the sake of seeking a maximum sexual satisfaction. In this manner, sexuality ceases to be a language of total self-giving and the importance of the complementarity of the sexes is lost.

Furthermore, if sexuality is exercised only for the sake of pleasure, then marriage and family become just a private locus where the individual continues to find gratification for his sexual and affective aspirations. And all the attempts to extend the meaning of marriage and family to whatever kind of social realities that resemble marriage and the family are connected to this: same sex unions, de facto unions etc.. Unfortunately, the State begins to consider it as an exercise of one's right; afterwards, it enacts laws to guarantee it as liberty of private choice. In effect, the individual is considered to be possessing "the right" to form a family, according to the so-called "new models" of family; nevertheless, since this "so-called right" rests only on the personal desire of the person, then everything is arbitrary. In the end, marriage and the family wouldn't require absolute commitment anymore. Commitment comes to be a limited responsibility. The gift of oneself signified by the sexual act is denatured and transforms itself into a loan, of provisional duration, if it intentionally includes the hypothesis of a subsequent change.

The exercise of the sexual faculty itself loses its richness of meaning from the moment when it no longer expresses an irrevocable gift, solely and exclusively of the spouses.

If the physical union of the spouses is not founded upon an absolute fidelity, excluding absolutely everything seeking the unity of marriage, it ceases to express symbolically (nuptial symbolism) conjugal love; though rewarding, it limits itself thus only to be an affective expression.

### ***c) From a Sexual Revolution to a Political Revolution***

The above mentioned challenges nevertheless are born of the sexual revolution of the 20th century, a cultural revolution which effectively has turned itself to a political revolution.

We are pretty much aware of different states and governments putting into laws what has been scandalous and disdainful till half centuries ago. For example, very recently, is the legalization of homosexual union as an alternative to marriage in Argentina. We can mention of the other european countries and few states of America having the same such legislations. This makes things rather more complicated. We are dealing here not just anymore with the problem of an individual but a political problem with the force of law.

A glimpse of the story of this evolution would certainly be of help to understand further even indirectly its implications. In 1920, Wilhelm Reich and Otto Gross worked to develop at the sociological level the work of Sigmund Freud. But taking what Freud wanted to study in the context of personal therapy into the social context, they opened a horizon that affected particularly the social conception of sexuality. The sexual discourse that had always remained accompanied with reservation and modesty became little by little a subject of public debates, provoking a series of studies and researches and even a political revindication. Before, a discourse on sexuality was always connected to procreation; now, the discourse on the exercise of the human sexual faculty is only considered in its pure physical and gratifying dynamism; and in a way, it has become totally

autonomous from its relation to a possible transmission of life. Sooner or later, such theories turned to concrete practices within the society. Meanwhile, other subjects related to sexuality never discussed before continuously occupy public debates and discussions; homosexual practices, the search for maximum pleasure in a relation and the revindication of asexuality outside of any commitment and responsibility.

Eventually, the great sexual revolutionists in the name of Reich and Marcuse explicitly referred the sexual revolution to the dialectic materialism of Karl Marx, giving it an ambit not just personal but social; the revolution then had become a social revolution which radically contested the institution of conjugal love and of the family which civilly is the only sphere where the exercise of the sexual faculty is normally carried out.

Consequently, even the position of the Church who is the main promoter of an ethical and spiritual discourse on sexual matters, had been challenged. All these elements help us understand that a discourse that banalizes the exercise of sexuality in diverse and contradictory forms contributes to the radical destruction of all the values that have been structuring society for centuries: the exclusivity of loving relations between spouses, the veneration of human life, which was always considered a blessing, the love for the child, the respect of the precedent generation, the sense of belonging to a familial history, etc..

Obviously, the emergence of this permissive morality is accompanied by the destruction of any form of authority in all its aspects: family, politics, education, religion. Systematic refusal and defiance of figures of authority follows; the paternal figure at the womb of the family, the figure of a government leader at the heart of the nations, the figure of the educator at the educational system; at the end, the figure of the moral and spiritual authority of the priests, bishops and the magisterium of the Church in general.

In reality, the passage from the discourse founded on natural law to a truly social revolution leads little by little to a political revolution in all possible aspects of human life. Here follows some historical observations; this revolution became symbolically strong in the 30's; in 1948 the study of the personal sexual behavior of man by Kinsey was published and some years later the same study was done for the woman. This was the object of the famous report of Masters and Johnson in 1966; at the end of the 50's, contraceptive pill for the woman was invented and got into the US market in 1960, and later, in Europe. Contraception became the subject of debates during this period. We recall, it was on 25 July 1968 that "Humanae Vitae", the church definitive document on contraception was published.

During this period too, a strong feminist movement came about; in 1975 in France, the first law that depenalizes abortion was legislated; at the beginning of the 80's "In Vitro Fertilization" was developed; within this period, the suppression of the difference between legitimate and illegitimate child took place and the public debate on euthanasia grew; in 1998, juridical status was given to "De Facto Union"; within this period, the development of the application of genetics beyond therapeutic perspective thrived, which is in the end eugenics; and presently, we have the legislations on same sex unions.

Through this historical illustration, we see clearly today, an attempt to separate the two dimensions of human sexuality, unitive and procreative. The consequences of this are of two sorts. On the one hand, a sexuality excluding procreation becomes hedonistic and devoid of any responsibility; it develops a recourse to contraception and implies the progressive loss of the sense of beauty of transmitting human life; pregnancy becomes a menace, and sexual intercourse has to be "protected". On the other hand, the recourse to a procreation totally detached from a concrete loving intercourse

implies a kind of a manipulation of human life, where a child is seen as merely the satisfaction of a personal desire. The essential interest of the child and his right to be born in a stable and loving relationship of his parents are not taken into account. This same thing can be said of the sad reality of divorce. All these signal as well the loss of the sense of the sanctity of marriage.

Above all these reforms is the intention to impose a new morality. There exists a political pressure from international organizations to impose new ethical criteria. They do this by introducing new concepts such as: reproductive health, the liberalization of abortion as right of the woman over her body, etc. Within this pretext of imposing new culture and ethical criteria, what is aimed at is to acquire a perfect dominion over human life, in particular over its transmission. This explains then the presence of national legislations which are anti-life and anti-family in many different countries at present.

## **II - Human love and hope: the teachings of the Church**

The little overview of the actual societal realities we've just done appears to be alarming; socially, politically and morally. But I hope that I have not given you an impression that we are in a desperate situation. Yes, our present situation maybe difficult, but not without hope. But with the actual realities, we ask, is there really a reason for our hoping?

Benedict XVI in his 2nd Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, speaks of the nature of hope as something rooted on anything that is constant and stable. The fact that the church has never wavered on her teachings on sexuality, marriage and family, the Church becomes the basis of our hope and she remains the only institution that has the capacity to direct and guide us. I believe, contrary to the actual circumstances, as christians and people of good will, these realities become a providential invitation for us to profoundly deepen our perceptions and understanding of human life and its transmissions thru the exercise of human sexuality.

Briefly, let us see how the Church has been a constant and relevant guide for us. During the 20th century where all these circumstances we have seen a while ago, took place and developed, there, came along paradoxically, a new fervor for the spirituality of married couples, which without doubt, was a positive response to the Encyclical Letter of Pius XI "*Casti Connubii*". In effect, "*Casti Connubii*" reaffirmed marriage and family to be the true and proper way for the spouses's perfection and therefore their sanctification.

Considerably, the personalistic philosophy that thrived during this century, stimulated as well this fervor among married christians. This makes us realize that never the Church abandoned her faithful particularly in the times of great trials. To mention a few among the magisterial documents of the Church that have been published, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Humanae Vitae*, the Instruction *Donum Vitae*, Apostolic Exhortations *Familiaris Consortio*, the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*; the Encyclical on the sanctity of life *Evangelium Vitae*, the Catechesis of JP II on Human Love sometimes known as the Theology of the Body, the *Deus Caritas Est* of Benedict XVI which focuses on reunderstanding love; all these documents are apt to help and guide us.

Equally important to have in mind, in favor of marriage and the family is the creation and mobilization of a great number of ecclesiastical structures; the Pontifical Council for the Family, the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, The Pontifical Academy for Life, and the active political presence of the Church in the international organizations and assemblies. I would like to invite you now to join me and let us have another look on some of the essential subjects which have been deepened by the Magisterium concerning marriage and family.

### ***a) The nature of marriage***

The Church always speaks of marriage as an intimate community of life and love founded by the Creator with its own proper laws.

She understands that man and woman have been structurally created in such a way that they are capable of giving oneself totally to another for the rest of their lives. It is man's nature to tend to communion, as he was created by God according to God's nature which is a communion of Divine Persons. JP II speaks of man's fulfillment not in man's solitude but when he is in communion. Truly man becomes an image of God when he is experiencing a true communion with the other. This means that when the Church speaks of marriage and family, she is doing it from the logic of nature which is accessible to human reason. In effect, the human being created as masculine and feminine, is called to a communion of persons.

This communion of man and woman in marriage is directed towards the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. Such communion is destined to be indissoluble. In a society that is marked by permissiveness and individualism, indissolubility becomes questionable, a delimitation of one's liberty and many times contested to be a mere imposition by the Church. However in reality, the indissoluble characteristic of the conjugal bond belongs to the nature of conjugal love itself and never an imposition by the Church. Properly, marriage is a personal gift in which man and woman exclusively vow themselves to one another, an expression of a total giving of oneself. A gift presupposes totality without which one cannot speak of fidelity in marriage. Otherwise, as I've mentioned before, the gift turns out to be a loan. At times, this indissolubility is tested, but the church always believes that if the Creator made man for this communion, He must have given man the same capacity to live by it.

Some of you may ask, why there exists a Sacrament of Marriage if it is true that indissolubility belongs to the nature of conjugal love? The Sacrament consolidates the indissolubility of the union, making the spouses more capable to live their union according to their spiritual nature. God entered into a definitive covenant with his people and the sacrament of marriage becomes the actual realization of such great love of God for his people.

### ***b) The Family as the place for the transmission of life***

The Church considers marriage as the natural place in which life is transmitted and therefore the family is the place where human life is cared for through the education of the children. There is nothing original to this. However, the explosion of the family in the West with its consequences to the children, the technologies that render scientifically possible a procreation independently from the loving relation of the spouses, they call for a profound anthropological question related to human life and its transmission. If marriage is ordained to the procreation and education of children, it is according to this natural predisposition of the creator, that we would be able to understand that the union between man and woman can be fecund to have a consequence the birth of a new human being. In marriage, this union is an expression of a donation of oneself that is total, exclusive, and definitive. In such a manner, the spouses become cooperator of the love of God, at the same time procreators with God. God remains the sole creator. It is God alone that can create the soul that gives life to the human body. Thus human life always comes as a gift and the couple must be open to receive it. Therefore, this implies that the spouses do not possess the right to have a child; they are gifted with a child. If to have a child is held as a spouses's right, then it may lead to hostile practices of contraceptive sex, or to scientific practices that make procreation possible outside the conjugal act, or to practices that entail violation of the exclusivity of marriage.

This boils down to stripping the child of his dignity as a gift to be cherished, and not only as something that satisfies the interest of the couple. On the one hand, the decision not to have a child expresses something like a lack an internal lack of hope: either the spouse don't see any value that they can transmit; or they do not consider themselves valuable enough, worthy of being transmitted. Somebody who does not have the sense of posterity doesn't therefore believe much in himself. This is an anthropological pessimism. Christian hope is something that animates human action and is not only a static virtue that does not have any influence on one's way of action.

Here we have been talking about the couples choosing not to have a child for whatever reason, and not of the couples having the sincere desire of a child and not being in the position of having it for whatever reason. We all know that sterility is difficult to accept for many couples. But the presence and the intensity of their desires are already a testimony of human and Christian hope, and that human life is good, worthy to be desired, defended and promoted

### *c) The Family in the Society*

Conjugal communion is not an end in itself. But it constitutes a foundation that edifies the family which the church considers a communion truly of service to the person first of all; secondly, to the diverse interpersonal relations among persons: paternity, maternity, filiation, fraternity. The family is a place of natural contact between members of different generations, and assumes the role of mediation among individuals and society, and serves as the first institution for socializations among persons. Familiaris Consortio speaks of the family as a school of deeper humanity.

Through the absolute spirit of gratuity, love and respect experienced within the family, man knows how to be human. In effect, the existence of a sound and healthy family is an efficient social subject and resource for the humanization and personalization of the society.

There exists therefore a grand number of family functions that renders necessary the defense of the family: the education of the children, the care of the sick and the assistance to the aged which no other institution could do better. It is for this reason why the church defends the family strongly according to its classical model; otherwise, its decadence renders possible the collapse of the society. The society's common good can only be served by institutions that fundamentally and essentially contribute to it: the marriage between man and woman on which is founded the true essence of the family. No other alternative form of unions except the union between man and woman that can guarantee the common good of the society.

For reason of time, I have limited the reflection on the contribution of the Church to the fundamental topics of the indissolubility of Marriage, on marriage as the place for the transmission of life and on the family and its service to the society. There are many other aspects the Church has been dealing with especially in the last fifty years. At this juncture, I would like to present to you now the mission of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

### **III -The mission of the Pontifical Council for the Family**

May 13, 1983 is a day to reckon not only because it's the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima but because it is the day when the attempt against John Paul II was carried out. On that very same day, during the audience, the Pope intended to announce the creation of two very important institutions, willed to concentrate on matters related to Marriage and the Family: the creation of an Academic Institute known now as the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family which through the years has acquired a worldwide distinction in the field of Marriage and Family; then the

creation of the Pontifical Council for the Family as an organism of the Curia of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council had been established on May 9, 1981 replacing actually the Committee for the Family that Pope Paul VI had established in 1973.

The pope considered equally important an academic approach and a pastoral one, to safeguard the dignity of marriage and family.

For while the Institute has been commissioned to deepen understanding of the different aspects of human love, marriage and the family from the theological, ethical and anthropological point of view, the Pontifical Council was mandated to offer pastoral service to the universal Church for the benefits of families. It has to assist bishops, family associations, universities and various organisms of the Roman Curia in line with those among their functions which relate them to the family. Thus, as both institutions, John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family the Pontifical Council for the Family, work on their particular fields, they but compliment fundamentally for the service of marriage and the family.

#### ***a) Structure of the Council***

In the Palazzo San Calisto in the famous quarter of Trastevere, there, work for the service of the family, 12 to 15 people under the Presidency of His Eminence Ennio Antonelli, the Secretary and the Under Secretary. It also has created its body of members and consulters each group comprised of 40 persons. This system allows us to be constantly updated as regards the different realities surrounding the family in the world and be immediately aware especially of any anti-family and anti-life legislations in the national and international level with which the Council can act accordingly. The Council does much certainly with the help of the family associations, movements, local Church organizations, committed couples, families and single individuals devoted to uphold the dignity of marriage and the family.

#### ***b) The General Concerns of the Council***

Just like any other dicastery of the Roman Curia, the Pontifical Council for the Family receives bishops from around the world when they do their Ad Limina visit to Rome. It means that we are able to receive more or less 3,500 bishops of the Church every five years. Normally we receive at the Council's office a visit of a "National Bishops' Conference" every after two weeks.

If the Council can address the challenges to the Family, it is thanks to these bishops whom we dialogue with and who inform us of the concrete situations of the families in their respective dioceses.

Moreover, the Council for the Family functions independently but in collaboration with the various Family and Pro-life Associations around the world. To my personal knowledge, at present we are in contact with around 350 to 400 Associations from about 70 countries. Some associations come to visit us at the council while others invite us to be part of what they organize in their respective localities such as colloquia, congresses and seminars; exactly what you the Couple to Couple League have done. Thank you for giving me this happy opportunity to meet, thank you and encourage you further to continue with the useful activities you are doing for the Church and in particular for the Family. The presence of the various movements and associations committed to the service of life signify further realizations of the value of marriage and family.



Another significant concern the Council does is to work hand and hand as well with the different organisms of the Holy See, most especially with the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and the Secretary of the State. Moreover, we work closely as well with the Apostolic Nunciatures around the world, not solely for diplomatic purposes, but to help National Episcopal Conferences dealing with anti family legislative issues in their respective countries. In such a case, the Bishop's Conference may bring up a particular issue to the Nunciature, who in turn asks the Holy See for an expert, to help them deal with the issue. The informal colloquia with responsible politicians on any debatable legislative matters, the good relations with different civil and political institutions, all these build up the council's capacity to shed light on political matters. To wit, I've been asked to visit next month the European Parliament and meet up with a certain number of Christian European Legislators.

### *c) Programs and Undertakings*

Among other things, the most important activity that the Council organizes is the World Meeting of Families. You must have heard of the last meeting held in Mexico in January 2009, or of the previous one in Valencia, Spain, in July 2006, or of the one in Manila last 2003. With the impact and successes they all these previous meetings had, the council looks forward with great anticipation to the next meeting which will take place in Milan, Italy, from May 30 to June 3, 2012. Obviously you may take this announcement as an invitation. The preparation is extremely demanding.

I've mentioned earlier that the council works in close collaboration with pro-life and pro-family movements and associations. In this aspect, the council more importantly creates an avenue where all these movements and associations meet in view of working together and enriching one another thru a sharing of experiences and resources. For instance, we had last March a three day congress in which 30 pro-life associations had the opportunity to meet and work together on different topics. Come November, we shall organize as well a meeting of different family associations which will be working on the theme "The Family: Subject of Evangelization." The venerable John Paul II many times elaborated and deepened the fact that the Family is not only a recipient and object of pastoral activity but likewise a true and first agent of evangelization. The idea is to gather a certain number of associations and ask them to explain how they involve and help families realize such an evangelical identity. Why do we do this? It's because there exist tremendous beautiful and fruitful pastoral experiences in many various countries which have made the families immensely involved in evangelization. Coming together to share those experiences, we hope to contribute in building a better communion and communication among these movements and associations, so that they profit from one and the other's experiences; as what can be effective in one country may be tried in another. The first of this kind took place in Rome in 2009. For this year 2010, it will focus on two particular subjects: Preparation for Marriage and "Ministering" to the Family. This November 27-29 congress would be concluded by a prayer vigil at the Basilica of St. Peter with the probable presence of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI as presider. In lieu of these aims, the Council has begun to create a Vademecum (Pastoral Manual) that would serve as reference and guide for pastors, priests and couples doing the preparation of the engaged couple, in view of their reception of the sacrament of marriage.

Finally, the council has also initiated a huge inquiry on the topic "The Family: A resource for Society." It's a study on the relevance of the traditional family set up vis-a-vis the new model of family being introduced today. It's a scientific sociological study that would delve on the efficacy of the traditional family in relation to the stability of the society; it is to let the fact speak

that the traditional family set up, albeit imperfect in some aspects, is fundamentally and largely beneficial to the society, while the so-called new model of family life menaces it. In Italy this has been started. The Episcopal Conference of Spain will be doing the same and we do hope that these would be replicated in four other countries. We are hoping that even in the States such study would be conducted.

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion, I would like to express a personal conviction. First, Christians should never be conditioned by the diffusion of these post modern ideologies or by the actual realities that confront marriage and family, alarming as they are. I understand it is easy to be discouraged and distressed seeing all these realities. Nevertheless, the family remains rich in itself by grace, nature, and mission entrusted to it; therefore, we have to love it. And loving the family means appreciating its values and capabilities, and fostering them always. Furthermore, we can love the family by identifying the dangers and the evils that menace it and overcome them; loving the family means endeavouring to create for it an environment favourable for its development. As we look around, we could see other regions in the world, in which their social life is largely permeated by a sound family life, especially in Asia and Africa, and this is something that should inspire us. By faith we know that we have an extra reason to care for this reality which is the family.

Second, while we have to give a testimony of reasonable optimism, it should be always grounded on the good news of the gospel. If man and woman find happiness in building a family, it is because God created them capable of establishing this kind of communion. And into their communion, He offers his spirit of love, and the grace of His Son enables the spouses to live well this communion. When God imbued the family with His Presence thru the Incarnation of His Son within its bosom, family life has never been the same; its splendour has been manifested and her mission revealed: as truly a way for man's perfection and his salvation. In the end, we have to hear again the resounding challenge of John Paul II to every family: "Family become what you are"!