



The Catholic Family

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Crisis of Society is Crisis of Family

Pope States Family Is Attacked by Sectors of Society

VATICAN CITY, DEC 1 (ZENIT).-

Today's relativistic society attacks the very idea of the family presented by the Gospel, according to the Holy Father. "Not only are some models of family life contested, changing under the pressure of social transformations and new work conditions," he told the crowd gathered for the Wednesday Audience, "but even the very idea of family, that community founded on the marriage of a man and a woman, has been targeted in the name of a relativistic ethic that is making its way into large sectors of public opinion and even civil legislation."

Although the Pope did not mention the specific attacks, these include the new concept of "families" promoted in some U.N. international forums, which hope to get legal matrimonial recognition for all kinds of arrangements for living together.

The Greatest Crisis

For the Holy Father, the crisis of contemporary society is rooted in the family. "Many pathological phenomena -- from loneliness to violence to drugs -- are

explained by the fact that the nuclear family has lost its identity and function. Where the family diminishes, society loses its connective tissue," explained the Pope to the estimated 7,000 attendees from all over the world. "This has disastrous consequences, which destroy people, especially the weakest: from children to adolescents, to the handicapped, to the sick and aged."

In face of this situation, and on the eve of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, which will begin on Christmas Eve, John Paul II called for "reflection that helps not only believers, but all those of good will, to rediscover the value of marriage and the family."

Love: Key Word

John Paul II stated with clarity that the family cannot be understood without real love. "Far from closing the family in on itself, authentic love opens it out to all of society, so that the little domestic family and the large family of all human beings are not in opposition, but in intimate and authentic relationship."

The Pope emphasized the importance that roles in

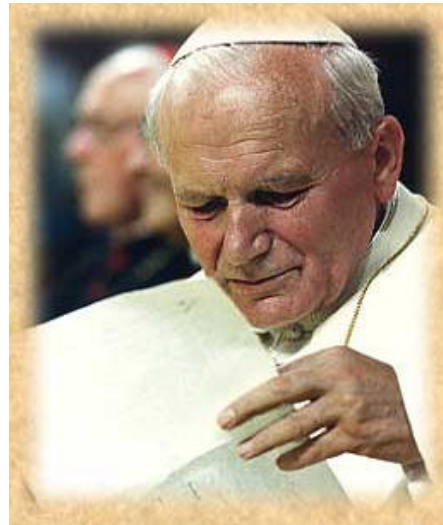
the family hold "in the reciprocal spousal relationship and in the communal responsibility of the parents, figures of man and woman in how they are called to live out their natural characteristics within the bounds of a profound, enriching and respectful communion."

He added, citing his 1994 Letter to Women, "To this 'unity of the two' God entrusts not only the work of procreation and the life of the family, but the very construction of history."

Therefore, the child is not a weight, or a stranger who comes to disturb the comfort of the couple. According to the Pope, the child "must be understood as the maximum expression of the communion between man and woman, the reciprocal acceptance/donation that is

realized and transcended in a 'third,' who is that child. The child is God's blessing. He transforms husband and wife into father and mother. Both 'go out from themselves' and express themselves beyond themselves in a person, the very fruit of their love."

Present in the Paul VI Audience Hall were several newly married couples. The Pope took advantage of the occasion to invite them to be generous and welcome the great gift of life.



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Children Are Not Convinced They Are Loved By a Profusion of Gifts

Best Present Is to Spend More Time with Them

ROME, DEC 6 (ZENIT).- A group of 50 pediatricians and psychologists consulted by the magazine "Burda," said that parents should not feel compelled to buy every item their children request for Christmas. 38% of the doctors interviewed said that too many gifts create a conviction in the child that he is owed that many, and if he does not get them, he feels unloved.

"Children are vulnerable to the hammering of television, and parents are left with no alternative but to give them what they want, thus assuaging their conscience for their lack of affection for which they are responsible," psychologist Serenella Salomoni said.

Psychologist Maria Rita Parsi was more direct. "The only present a parent can give a child is his/her presence, loving and playing." A sixth of the pediatricians questioned are convinced that too many toys unleash a race for more: the child is never satisfied with what he has and escalates his demands.

What do children really want today? According to Chiara Rapaccini, author of children's books, "the first thing they want is more time with their parents, and the second thing is to be with children of their own age." The writer does not feel a drastic cut in gifts is the answer. If they want a video game, for instance, Rapaccini suggests buying it, but the fact that they want it does reveal that the children need

entertainment because of their parents' absence.

Pediatrician Rosetta Braca feels that "it is right to criticize excessive gifts, but it must also be said that many games develop the ability and intelligence of children, and, in any event, stimulation of many senses is a good thing. Everything depends on the parents' attitude: if they fill their children with gifts, but are not involved with them, that is one thing. But if instead they play with them, help them, and participate, the picture obviously changes."

These experts think that the best gifts for children are: construction sets (41%), trains (27%); modeling clay (15%), puzzles (9%); chemistry sets (7%).

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From the President

Christmas and the Great Jubilee: Time for Families to Focus on Jesus

At Midnight on Christmas Eve, our Holy father will open the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica and the Great Jubilee 2000 will begin. For the last 3 years Catholics have been preparing for this time of grace and devotion, but many do not seem to grasp the significance of this event.

While our society talks about Y2K and the new millennium, Pope John Paul II is speaking about the Great Jubilee and a time of renewed evangelisation.

For families this means a renewed commitment to the sacred task we have been given of educating our children in the faith, and striving to live heroic and holy lives in a world that no longer values Christian morality.

The Great Jubilee gives us a unique opportunity to focus the attention of our families on the Word of God made flesh.

Jesus is the reason for the Jubilee, we celebrate and remember not only his birth 2000 years ago, but all the aspects of His life, teaching, death and resurrection.

If we are able to seize this opportunity to focus on the life of Jesus and His work of Salvation, then we can follow the Holy Father's call to evangelisation. First, to our families, then through our families. As the Holy Father recently reminded the German bishops, "The men and women of today are more sensitive to the witness of our life than the power of our speeches. They want to see in us persons whose life is totally oriented to Jesus Christ." This is as true for any Catholic as it is for the worlds Bishops.

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I was recently speaking to Mary-Clare Meaney who is the President of the Melbourne Association of Catholic Families and unofficial co-ordinator of the ACF in Australia. She was thrilled to hear how successful our inaugural Family day was in October despite the difficulties we faced. She informed me that there are four more ACF groups being formed in Australia in the next month or so. The best news is that the Toowoomba Association of Catholic Families is being registered with the NACF in England. This will give us a greater level of support and resources as we grow.

We are hoping to hold the next Family Day in January 2000. If anyone would like to offer a venue or assistance in the organisation of the day, please call me on the number below.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and Holy Christmas. Olivia and I pray that each of you will receive an abundance of grace during the Great Jubilee.

Mark Power M.I.

Feast of St John of the Cross

Ph: (07) 4632 8086

Pope Confirms Imminent Beatification of Fatima Children

Addresses Portugal's Secularization with Country's Bishops

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 30 (ZENIT).- On the occasion of the visit of the Portuguese Bishops "ad limina apostolorum," the Pope confirmed that Francisco and Jacinta Marto, the two shepherd children who, along with their cousin Lucia, had repeated visions of the Blessed Virgin in Fatima in 1917, will soon be beatified. Lucia, the eldest of the three, who today is in her 90s, is a cloistered nun in a Carmelite convent in Coimbra.

The decree of beatification of the two children, who died in 1919 and 1920, was promulgated in the Holy Father's presence in June of this year, by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, following a miracle due to their intercession.

After meeting with the Pope a few days ago, Bishop Serafim de Sousa Ferreira e Silva of Leiria-Fatima, explained to a Catholic radio station in Portugal that the Holy Father hopes to travel to Fatima on May 13, 2000 to beatify the two children. The Vatican Press Office has not yet confirmed this visit. The last time John Paul II was in

Fatima was on October 13, 1982, just over a year after the attempt on his life in St. Peter's Square. His pilgrimage to Fatima was in thanksgiving for the Virgin Mary's protection.

The whole of Portugal is overjoyed at the prospect of these beatifications, as Bishop Antonio Baltasar Marcelino, on behalf of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference told the Holy Father. The Bishop also shared with the Pope the tremendous pastoral challenges the Church faces in Portugal, given the frontal attacks on the family as an institution, and on life at all its stages. Bishop Marcelino referred to "the growing secularism in public life," especially promoted by the media.

Secularization

During his address, which was focused on spiritual preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Holy Father mentioned the results of a poll on participation in Sunday Mass carried out by the Portuguese bishops in 1991. The number of practicing Catholics in Portugal amounts to no more than 26% of the

population, according to this study. According to John Paul II, this is "significant data that [reveals] the immense pastoral task that must be undertaken."

John Paul II counseled the bishops that they must "overcome the all-too-common tendency that rejects every kind of saving mediation and presents the individual sinner as relating directly to God, because salvation comes to us, in the first place, through the mediation of the historical humanity of

Jesus and, after the resurrection, through his Mystical Body, which is the Church."

Return to the Sacraments

The Pope confirmed that the sacrament of Penance or Confession is the "ordinary way to receive pardon and the remission of sins committed after baptism," reminding his listeners that it would be foolish, as well as presumptuous, to attempt to do without the instruments of grace and salvation that the Lord has arranged.

Thus, quoting the papal bull "Incarnationis Mysterium" convoking the Holy Year, the Holy Father expressed the hope that "one of the fruits of the Great Jubilee of 2000 will be a generalized return to the practice of sacramental confession on the part of Catholic faithful."

With reference to attendance at Sunday Mass, John Paul II encouraged the Portuguese bishops to do everything possible "with delicate pastoral pedagogy," so that this Holy Year will be "an appropriate time to bring non-practicing Catholics, or those of 'occasional' practice or with 'ulterior motives' " (such as simply to obtain the benefit of an indulgence) to a "stable commitment to weekly participation" in the Mass.

John Paul II counseled the bishops to avoid two pitfalls: "activism, where the best pastoral plans and committed lives come to nothing" and "secularism, where God's voice is not heard or given space" among the people.



Jacinta & Francisco Marto will be Beatified in 2000



Kids Corner



Where's Joseph?

Joseph is not in the Stable with Mary and Jesus.

Draw Joseph to complete the Holy Family.

Stop Press

FRIDAY, DEC 17 - I received a phone call early on Friday morning from Dr. Tom Ward in England. Dr. Ward is the founder and president of the National Association of Catholic Families. He phoned to welcome the Toowoomba ACF into the International ACF family.

In a conversation that lasted over an hour Dr Ward and I covered many aspects of the ACF and its goals. "The NACF is not an organisation that promotes causes other than the Catholic family. It is not an association that has

been given to us by the clergy. It cannot be run by the clergy, it is an association setup by Catholic families for Catholic families." Dr Ward said. "Ultimately, the survival of the Church depends not so much on the orthodoxy of priests and bishops, but on the orthodoxy of Catholic families and their willingness to support each other in the struggle to live the faith in a hostile world."

Dr Ward has asked me to supply an article about our inaugural family day for the NACF's European and International publications. Dr Ward has registered our association and has promised us as much support as he can give.

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILIES

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Association of Catholic Families is dedicated to the support of family life. Membership of this association is open to individuals and families as well as religious and clergy who accept and support its general aims.

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

_____ POST CODE _____

PHONE _____ (_____) _____

E-MAIL _____

Statement of Application

I/we wish to apply for membership of the National Association of Catholic Families and I/we agree to support the general aims of the association and to contribute \$5.00 per family per annum.

SIGNATURE(S) _____

DATE _____ / _____ / _____

RETURN ADDRESS:

Association of Catholic Families

20 Charlotte Street

Toowoomba Qld 4350