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**Remaining in the Truth of Christ
on Holy Matrimony**

Introduction

It is my great honor and pleasure to speak with you about Holy Matrimony. I am particularly honored by the presence of Bishop Mark Davies of the Diocese of Shrewsbury who has welcomed me warmly to the Diocese, whom I greatly admire, and with whom I have been able to have a good visit earlier in the day. I express my deepest gratitude to Mr. John Smeaton of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children and of Voice of the Family for the invitation to meet with you today and to address the urgent concerns regarding marriage and the family in our time, especially in the light of the current work of the Synod of Bishops.

I have admired the apostolate of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children for years and, in recent years, have had the privilege to get to know personally John Smeaton, Chief Executive Director. Most recently, during the October 2014 session of the Synod of Bishops, I witnessed the work of Voice of the Family, an alliance of 23 pro-life and pro-family organizations, which is managed by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. I am happy to have the occasion to express my esteem for John Smeaton and the staff who worked tirelessly with him to communicate accurately the work of the 2014 session. Their competence was evident. What was also evident was their deep love of Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church.

I thank the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children and Voice of the Family for your most important service to the Church and to society at a most challenging time. I promise to continue my daily prayers for God's blessing upon your critical work offered for the good of all in the Church and especially of the most needy and defenseless. In a particular way, in a culture which is so profoundly confused and in error about the fundamental truth of marriage and the family, I commend your efforts to hold up the truth about marriage in all of its beauty and goodness. It is my sincere hope that my presence and my words will offer inspiration and strength to your critical mission of safeguarding and fostering the integrity of

marriage and the family as the cradle of human life and the first school of its growth and development.

In my presentation, I will first address the current discussion regarding the fundamental truth of marriage in the Church, indicating the importance of the studies provided in the book, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, to assist the Synod of Bishops in addressing the situation of the family in our time. Then, I will address the state of the secular culture in which the Church is called to carry out her mission on behalf of the family. Thirdly, I will speak about the fundamental form of the Church's mission, a new evangelization, and the critical role of the family in the mission. Fourthly, I will treat the fundamental part of the Gospel of Life in a new evangelization, including, in particular, a treatment of the integrity of the conjugal act. Finally, I illustrate the relationship of the natural moral law to the Church's teaching on human life and human sexuality.

Current Discussion regarding the Fundamental Truth of Marriage

At the present moment in the Church, there is perhaps no more critical issue for us to address than the truth about marriage. In a world in which the integrity of marriage has been under attack for decades, the Church has remained a faithful herald of the truth about God's plan for man and woman in the faithful, indissoluble and procreative union of marriage. In the present time, certainly under pressure from a totally secularized culture, a growing confusion and even error has entered into the Church, which would weaken seriously, if not totally compromise, the Church's witness to the detriment of the whole of society.

The confusion and error became evident for the world during the recent session of the Third Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The Assembly, dedicated to the discussion of the subject, "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," found itself addressing, in a confused and sometimes erroneous manner, practices which contradict the Church's constant teaching and practice regarding Holy Matrimony. I refer to practices which would give access to the Sacraments to those who are living in a public state of adultery, and which would condone, in some manner, conjugal cohabitation outside of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and sexual relations between persons of the same sex. The report given at the midpoint of the Synod made strikingly clear the gravity of the situation. The report itself, which lacked practically any consistent reference to the constant magisterium of the Church, was a manifesto, a kind of incitement to a new approach to fundamental issues of human sexuality in the Church.

The confusion and error was first expressed in a presentation by Cardinal Walter Kasper during the Extraordinary Consistory of February 20th and 21st of 2014. The heart of the Extraordinary Consistory was a lengthy presentation on marriage and the family by Cardinal Kasper which was followed by an intense discussion by the Cardinals present. Cardinal Kasper's presentation was quickly published in various languages and became a focus of a wide discussion, especially in the secular media.¹ Cardinal Kasper's presentation raised a number of serious questions about what the Church has always taught and practiced regarding the indissolubility of marriage, basing himself on an interpretation of the Fathers of the Church and on a practice developed in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Clearly, his presentation called for a discussion which began in earnest already during the Extraordinary Consistory.

After the Extraordinary Consistory, a number of Cardinals, including myself, decided to respond as fully and as profoundly as possible to the positions taken by Cardinal Kasper. Five Cardinals contributed to the study. We Cardinals also called upon the help of Archbishop Cyril Vasil', S.J., an expert on the practice of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, Father Paul Mankowski, S.J., an expert in the Sacred Scriptures, and Professor John M. Rist, an expert on the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. We also called upon the help of Father Robert Dodaro, O.S.A., President of the Patristic Institute *Augustinianum* in Rome, for the editing of the book. Apart from his tireless and highly qualified work of editing so important a volume in various languages, Father Dodaro made two treasured additions to the book, a summary of the argument of the entire book and an appendix, "Excerpts from Select Documents of the Magisterium."

The fruits of our efforts are found in the book, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, published in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish editions in time for the study of the Synod Fathers.² As I have already mentioned, at the very beginning of the book, Father Dodaro, the editor, gives a summary of

¹ Cf. Cardinal Walter Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, tr. William Madges (New York: Paulist Press, 2014); Cardinal Walter Kasper, *L'Évangile de la famille*, tr. Joseph Hoffmann (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2014); Walter Kardinal Kasper, *Das Evangelium von der Familie. Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder GmbH, 2014); Walter Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia*, tr. Gianni Francesconi (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 2014); Walter Kasper, *El evangelio de la familia*, tr. José Pérez Escobar (Maliaño, Cantabria: Editorial Sal Terrae, 2014).

² Robert Dodaro, ed., *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014); Robert Dodaro, ed., *Demeurer dans la vérité du Christ. Mariage et communion dans l'Église catholique* (Paris: Artège Éditions, 2014); Robert Dodaro, Hg., *In der Wahrheit Christi bleiben: Ehe und Kommunion in der katholischen Kirche* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag GmbH, 2014); Robert Dodaro, ed., *Permanere nella verità di Cristo. Matrimonio e comunione nella Chiesa cattolica* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli S.r.l, 2014); Robert Dodaro, ed., *Permanecer en la Verdad de Cristo. Matrimonio y Comunión en la Iglesia Católica* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad S.A., 2014).

the material presented in each of the nine essays which comprise the volume. The essays in turn present, in a thorough manner, the truth of Christ regarding the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony as contained in the Holy Scriptures and as taught and practiced in the early Church. They then address the particular practice of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and its coherence with doctrine, and the historical challenges to the Lord's teaching as recorded in the Gospels. The beauty of the truth of Christ on Holy Matrimony is then illustrated by presentations of the Church's theological doctrine and her moral teaching. The last two essays take up the safeguarding and fostering of the truth of Christ regarding Holy Matrimony in the Church's discipline, her canon law.

Time does not permit me to summarize adequately for you the richness of the contents of the nine essays. Truly, I commend the book to your reading. While it is scientifically solid, every effort was made to edit the contributions in such a way that they would be accessible to the reading and understanding of serious Catholics or persons of good will. The book has enjoyed a wide readership in the different language editions already published. At present, translations into Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese and Slovak are being prepared. The book is truly a point of reference for the most serious matter of discussion during the current sessions of the Synod of Bishops.

The State of Secular Culture and the Mission of the Church in Our Time

As Christians today, we find ourselves in a completely secularized society. Pope Saint John Paul II, in his teaching on the mission of the lay faithful in the world, reminded us, in an unmistakable manner, that many today, even in what were once Christian countries, live as if they have no relationship with God or to His plan for us and for our world. He described the contemporary situation of the Church in the world with these words:

Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World, in which economic well-being and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and sustains a life lived "as if God did not exist". This indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life's very serious

problems, are not less worrying and upsetting when compared with declared atheism.³

To remedy the situation, the saintly Pontiff observed, “a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world.”⁴

He hastened to add that, if the remedy is to be achieved, the Church Herself must be evangelized anew. Fundamental to understanding the radical secularization of our culture is to understand also how much the secularization has entered into the life of the Church. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “[b]ut for this [the mending of the Christian fabric of society] to come about what is needed is to *first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself* present in these countries and nations.”⁵

In a similar vein, Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2010 Christmas Address to the Roman Curia, reflecting on the grave evils which are destroying us as individuals and as a society, and which have generated a culture marked predominantly by violence and death, described a relativism in contemporary moral theology, called proportionalism or consequentialism, which has generated profound confusion and outright error regarding the most fundamental truths of the moral law.⁶ It has led to a situation in which, in his words, “[m]orality is replaced by a calculus of consequences, and in the process it ceases to exist.”⁷ If, therefore, the irreplaceable moral order, which is the way of our freedom and happiness, is to be

³ “Integrae regiones nec non nationes in quibus antea tempore religio et vita christiana florebant, quae vivacis ac operosae fidei communitates excitabant, nunc rebus adversis premuntur ac non raro radicitus sunt transformatae, gliscentibus indifferentismo, saecularismo et atheismo. Agitur praesertim de regionibus et nationibus «Primi Mundi» qui dicitur, in quibus oeconomica prosperitas et consumendarum rerum cupiditas, quamquam etiam terribilibus paupertatis et miseriae adiunctis commixtae, inhiant ac proclamant ita esse vivendum «etsi Deus non daretur». At religiosa indifferentia et practica Dei completa negligentia ad vitae quaestiones licet graviore exsolvendae non minus affligunt animum nec minus videntur evertentes quam proclamatus atheismus; ...” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica *Christifideles Laici*, “De vocatione et missione Laicorum in Ecclesia et in mundo,” 30 Decembris 1988, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 81 (1989), 454, n. 34. [Hereafter, CL]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30 December 1988, “On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World” (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, nd), p. 95, no. 34. [Hereafter, CLEng].

⁴ “... consortium humanum spiritu christiano ubique denuo imbuendum est.” CL, 455, no. 34. English translation: CLEng, p. 96, no. 34.

⁵ “... [i]d [consortium humanum spiritu christiano imbuendum] tamen possibile erit, si *christianus communitatum ipsarum ecclesialium contextus*, quae his in regionibus et nationibus degunt, *renovetur*.” CL, 455, no. 34. English translation: CLEng, p. 96, no. 34.

⁶ Cf. Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Litterae Encyclicae *Veritatis Splendor*, “De quibusdam quaestionibus fundamentalibus doctrinae moralis Ecclesiae,” 6 Augusti 1993, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 85 (1993), 1193-1194, n. 75.

⁷ “La morale viene sostituita da un calcolo delle conseguenze e con ciò cessa di esistere.” Benedictus PP. XVI, Allocutio, “Omina Nativitatis novique Anni Curiae Romanae significantur”, 20 Decembris 2010, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 103 (2011), 37. [Hereafter, ChristmasAddress2010]. English translation: Pope Benedict XVI, “Benedict XVI’s Christmas greeting to the College of Cardinals, the Roman Curia and the Governorate: Resolved in faith and in doing good,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, 22-29 December 2010, p. 13. [Hereafter, ChristmasAddress2010Eng].

restored, we must address with clarity and steadfastness the error of moral relativism, proportionalism and consequentialism, which permeates our culture and has also entered, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, into the Church.

To confront this ideology, Pope Benedict XVI urged a new study of the teaching of Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, “On the Fundamentals of the Church’s Moral Teaching.” In *Veritatis Splendor*, Pope John Paul II, in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “indicated with prophetic force in the great rational tradition of Christian *ethos* the essential and permanent foundations of moral action.”⁸ Reminding Catholics of the need of man to form his conscience in accord with the moral teaching of the Church, he also reminded them of “our responsibility to make these criteria [the essential and permanent foundations of moral action] audible and intelligible once more for people today as paths of true humanity, in the context of our paramount concern for mankind.”⁹

A New Evangelization as the Form of the Church’s Mission

The Christian life, if lived with integrity today, is necessarily countercultural. As Pope John Paul II so frequently reminded us, Christians today are called to a new evangelization of culture. The situation can be described thusly: the Gospel has been proclaimed and taken deep root in Christian countries but then has been forgotten. The forgetfulness leads to a hostile reaction, when the truth of the Gospel is once again proclaimed. The faith no longer has deep root in the lives of the successive generations. What is needed then is a new evangelization of the society and culture which, in fact, can no longer be considered Christian. The Christian faith and its practice must be imparted anew, as if for the first time, as it was during the first Christian centuries and at the time of the evangelization of our native lands. The Christian character of the culture is no longer a given, even though it may have been for centuries.

We must respond today with ever greater enthusiasm and energy to Our Lord’s command at His Ascension: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”¹⁰ Before the challenges of living the faith in our time, Pope John Paul II recalled to our minds the urgency

⁸ “... indicò con forza profetica nella grande tradizione razionale dell’*ethos* cristiano le basi essenziali e permanenti dell’agire morale.” ChristmasAddress2010, 37. English translation: ChristmasAddress2010Eng, p. 13.

⁹ “... nostra responsabilità rendere nuovamente udibili e comprensibili tra gli uomini questi criteri [le basi essenziali e permanenti dell’agire morale] come vie della vera umanità, nel contesto della preoccupazione per l’uomo, nella quale siamo immersi.” ChristmasAddress2010, 37. English translation: ChristmasAddress2010Eng, p. 13.

¹⁰ Mt 28, 19.

of Christ's mandate given to the first disciples and given, no less, to missionaries down the Christian centuries and to us today. He declared:

Certainly the command of Jesus: "Go and preach the Gospel" always maintains its vital force and its ever-pressing obligation. Nevertheless, the *present situation*, not only of the world but also of many parts of the Church, *absolutely demands that the word of Christ receive a more ready and generous obedience*. Every disciple is personally called by name; no disciple can withhold making a response: "Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel" (*1 Cor 9:16*).¹¹

The obedience which is fundamental and essential to the new evangelization is also a virtue acquired with great difficulty in a culture which exalts individualism and questions all authority, except the self. Yet, it is indispensable if the Gospel is to be taught and lived in our time.

We take example from the first disciples, from the first missionaries to our native places, and from the host of saintly brethren who have given themselves completely to Christ throughout the Christian centuries, calling upon the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit to purify themselves of any rebellion before God's will and to strengthen them to do God's will in all things. Before the great challenge of living the Christian faith today, we, with them, draw courage from the promise with which Our Lord concluded His missionary mandate: "[A]nd lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."¹²

The Critical Role of the Family in a New Evangelization

The great challenge which confronts the whole Church confronts, in particular, the Church in the first cell of Her life, the family. It is the challenge which Pope John Paul II described in his *Apostolic Letter "At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, "Novo Millennio Ineunte,"* as the "high standard of ordinary Christian living."¹³ Pope John Paul II

¹¹ "Equidem mandatum Iesu: «Euntes praedicate evangelium» sua vi perpetuo viget ac inoccidue urget: verumtamen *praesens rerum conditio*, non solummodo in mundo sed in pluribus quoque Ecclesiae partibus, *omnino requirit ut Christi verbo promptius ac magis dilatato corde obtemperetur*; quivis discipulus ita in sua ipsius persona interpellatur, ut nullus se in proprio responso eliciendo retrahere possit: «Vae enim mihi est, si non evangelizavero!» (*1 Cor 9, 16*). CL, 454, n. 33. English translation corrected by the author: CLEng, p. 94, no. 33.

¹² Mt 28, 20.

¹³ "... «*superiorem modum*» *ordinariae vitae christianae*." Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "Magni Iubilaei anni MM sub exitum," 6 Ianuarii 2001, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 93 (2001), 288, n. 31. [Hereafter, NMI]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000," 6 January 2001 (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2001), p. 43, no. 31. [Hereafter, NMIEng].

taught us the extraordinary nature of our ordinary life, because it is lived in Christ and, therefore, produces in us the incomparable beauty of holiness. He declared:

The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living*: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction.¹⁴

Seeing in Christian families the fruit of the daily conversion of life by which the family members strive to meet the “*high standard of ordinary Christian living*,” the culture will discover the great mystery of ordinary life upon which God daily showers His ceaseless and immeasurable love. Clearly, the “mending of the Christian fabric of society” can only come about by the remaking of “the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community,” beginning with the individual in his family, at home.¹⁵

Pope John Paul II taught us clearly that the way to meet the challenge of the “*high standard of ordinary Christian living*” is “found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition.”¹⁶ He reminded us that it is the same program of Christian living as it has always been in the Church, the program of holiness of life.¹⁷ Regarding Christian marriage and the family, and the call to evangelization, in his 1981 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, he declared that “the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity.”¹⁸

¹⁴ “Multiplices enim sanctitatis existunt viae atque cuiusque congruunt cum vocatione. Grates Domino referimus Nobis quod concessit his proximis annis tot christianos et christianas inter beatos adnumerare ac sanctos, ex quibus plures laici sanctimoniam sunt communissimis in vitae condicionibus adsecuti. Omnibus ergo tempus est iterum firmiter hunc proponere «*superiorem modum*» *ordinariae vitae christianae*: ad hanc namque metam conducere debet omnis vita ecclesialis communitatis ac familiarum christianarum.” NMI, 288, n. 31. English translation: NMIEng, p. 43, no. 31.

¹⁵ “... consortium humanum spiritu christiano ubique denuo imbuendum est...*christianus communitatum ipsarum ecclesialium contextus*.” CL, p. 455, no. 34. English translation: CLE, p. 96, no. 34.

¹⁶ “... quod de Evangelio derivatur semper vivaque Traditione.” NMI, 285, n. 29. English translation: NMIEng, p. 39, no. 29.

¹⁷ Cf. NMI, 285-288, nn. 29-31.

¹⁸ “... christiana enim familia est prima communitas, cuius est Evangelium personae humanae crescenti annuntiare eamque progrediente educatione et catechesi ad plenam maturitatem humanam et christianam perducere.” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica *Familiaris Consortio*, “De Familia Christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis,” 22 Novembris 1981, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 74 (1982), 823, n. 2. [Hereafter, FC]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, “Regarding

Noting the multiple and grievous attacks on marriage and the family in our time, he stressed the importance of witnessing to the truth about marriage and the family, so that the family may evangelize the whole of society. He declared:

At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God.”¹⁹

Recognizing the irreplaceable evangelizing power of the family in the whole of society, the Church is even more impelled to devote Herself to safeguarding and fostering the truth of married and family life.

In my own homeland, as may be the case here, there is a predominance of the phenomenon of secularization, although there also remain individual Catholic families of deep religious faith, practice of the faith and devotion, and, where a number of these families are nearby one another, they form a certain social and spiritual fraternity. All of us, no matter what may be our state in life, should foster the solidarity among families who are all striving to hand on the faith and its practice with integrity.

In our Christian witness and apostolate, we must give special attention to the sanctity of marriage, to the fidelity, indissolubility and procreativity of the marital union. Catholic home life is necessarily a sign of contradiction in today’s society. We must inspire courage in Catholic couples to give the witness to the truth about marriage and family which our culture so sorely needs. We must help Christian homes to be the domestic Church, according to the ancient description, the first place in which the Catholic faith is taught, celebrated and lived. The whole Church must help parents to live generously and faithfully their vocation to the married life. We must be especially attentive to families who are in trouble, so that even in their suffering they may enjoy the graces of unity and peace of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World,” 22 November 1981 (Vatican City State: Vatican Polyglot Press, nd), p. 4, no. 2. [Hereafter, FCEng].

¹⁹ “Hoc tempore historiae, quo familia multis impetitur viribus, eam delere aut saltem deformare nitentibus, Ecclesia, probe conscia salutem societatis suamque ipsius arcte cum fausta condicione familiae conecti, modo vehementiore et urgentiore munus suum percipit omnibus consilium Dei de matrimonio ac familia declarandi, cuius plenum vigorem et promotionem humanam et christianam in tuto collocet, ac sic conferat ad renovationem societatis ipsiusque Populi Dei.” FC, 84, n. 3. English translation: FCEng, pp. 6-7, no. 3.

In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II underlined the irreplaceable service of the family in a new evangelization. Citing the teaching of his predecessor, Pope Paul VI, on evangelization,²⁰ he declared:

To the extent in which the Christian family accepts the Gospel and matures in faith, it becomes an evangelizing community. Let us listen again to Paul VI: “The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighbourhood of which it forms part.”²¹

It is clear that, if a new evangelization is not taking place in marriages, in the family, then it will not take place in the Church or in society, in general. At the same time, marriages transformed by the Gospel are the first and most powerful agent of the transformation of society by the Gospel.

The witness of the family is, therefore, at the heart of a new evangelization. Making reference to the teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on the reality of the family “as the domestic church” or the little church (*ecclesiola*),²² the Catechism of the Catholic Church declared:

In our time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason, the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example ... first heralds of the faith with

²⁰ Cf. Paulus PP. VI, Adhortatio Apostolica *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “De Evangelizatione in mundo huius temporis,” 8 Decembris 1975, *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 68 (1976), 60-61, n. 71.

²¹ “Christiana familia, quatenus Evangelium amplectitur et ad maturitatem in fide progreditur, eatenus fit evangelizans communitas. Exaudiamus denuo Paulum VI: «Familia, haud secus atque Ecclesia, habenda est campus, quo affertur et unde diffunditur Evangelium. Quamobrem, apud familiam huius muneris consciam, omnia eiusdem familiae membra evangelizant atque evangelizantur. Parentes non tantum communicant cum filiis Evangelium, sed ab ipsis possunt recipere idem Evangelium penitus vita expressum. Eadem familia Evangelii nuntia fit apud alias multas familias, atque circumstantem, cui inseritur, convictum».” FC, 144, n. 52. English translation: FCEng, p. 97, no. 52.

²² “... velut Ecclesia domestica.” Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio Dogmatica *Lumen Gentium*, “De Ecclesia,” 21 Novembris 1964, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1966), 16, n. 11. English translation: Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), p. 16, no. 11.

regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”²³

We see, in fact, in an unmistakable way the evangelizing power of marriage and the family in the primary duty of parents to help their children to know their vocation in life and to embrace it with an undivided heart. The fundamental evangelizing power of parents in what pertains to the vocation to the married life is evident.

At the heart of marriage and of family life is divine worship and prayer which give form to every other aspect of life. Sacred worship, the highest and most perfect expression of our life in Christ, is at the heart of family life. In the worship of God, in prayer, and in devotion the family receives the power to evangelize and, at the same time, evangelizes the world most powerfully. Once again making reference to the teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Catechism of the Catholic Church declares:

It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way “by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.” Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and “a school for human enrichment.” Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous – even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life.²⁴

The family experiences its deepest being, when it is at prayer, especially at divine worship. From prayer and divine worship, every aspect of the personal life of each member of the family and of the family itself flows. The family at prayer and at worship manifests Christ alive in the Church most powerfully and, therefore, attracts many other families to Christ in His Church.

²³ “Nostris diebus, in mundo saepe fidei alieno et etiam hostile, familiae credentes maximi sunt momenti tamquam viventis et elucens fidei foci. Hac de causa, Concilium Vaticanum II familiam, cum vetere quadam expressione, *Ecclesiam domesticam* appellat. In familiae sinu, parentes sunt «verbo et exemplo [...] pro filiis suis primi fidei praecones, et vocationem unicuique propriam, sacram vero peculiari cura, foveant oportet».” *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), n. 1656. [Hereafter, *CCE*]. English translation: Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc. – Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 1656. [Hereafter, *CCEEng*].

²⁴ “Hic, modo praeclaro, *sacerdotium baptismale* exercetur patris familias, matris, filiorum, omnium familiae membrorum «in sacramentis suscipiendis, in oratione et gratiarum actione, testimonio vitae sanctae, abnegatione et actuosa caritate». Familia, hoc modo, prima schola vitae christianae et «schola quaedam uberioris humanitatis est». Ibi patientia et laetitiae laboris, amor fraternus, indulgentia generosa, etiam iterate, et praecipue divinus per orationem et propriae vitae oblationem cultus discuntur.” *CCE*, n. 1657. *CCEEng.*, no. 1657.

The Fundamental Part of the Gospel of Life in a New Evangelization

One of the critical evangelizing fruits of prayer and worship in the family is the witness to the Gospel of Life. Pope John Paul II taught us how essential to a new evangelization is proclaiming the Gospel of Life and how the family is the first locus of the proclamation. The situation of secularization has become so grave, that many no longer understand life to be the gift of God and, therefore, no longer respect the inviolable dignity of human life, created in the image and likeness of God²⁵ and redeemed by the Most Precious Blood of God the Son Incarnate.²⁶ In a new evangelization regarding human life, the central and irreplaceable service of the family is most clearly seen.

The fundamental locus of the proclamation of the Gospel of Life is the family, in which the children witness the Gospel of Life in the relationship of their parents with one another and in the relationship of the parents with them. Such witness pertains not only to the beginning of human life, in the correct understanding and living of human sexuality, but also to the end of life in the acceptance of human suffering as the way of unconditional love of others, in accord with the teaching of the Lord which Saint Paul articulated in first chapter of the Letter to the Colossians.²⁷ The Gospel of Life is integral to the spiritual worship at the heart of the family. Lifting up their hearts to the Heart of God, parents and children are purified and strengthened to live their relationships with each other in pure and selfless love. Pope John Paul II made this clear in his Encyclical Letter on the Gospel of Life, declaring:

As part of the spiritual worship acceptable to God (cf. *Rom* 12:1), the *Gospel of life* is to be celebrated above all in *daily living*, which should be filled with self-giving love for others. In this way, our lives will become a genuine and responsible acceptance of the gift of life and a heartfelt song of praise and gratitude to God who has given us this gift. This is already happening in the many different acts of selfless generosity, often humble and hidden, carried out by men and women, children and adults, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick.²⁸

²⁵ Cf. Gen 1, 26-27.

²⁶ Cf. Rom 5, 9.

²⁷ Cf. Col 1, 24.

²⁸ “In ratione spiritalis cultus Deo grati (cf. *Rom* 12, 1), Evangelii vitae celebratio suam postulat effectiorem praesertim in cotidiana exsistentia, quae in caritate erga alios agitur atque sui ipsius oblatione. Hac ratione tota nostra exsistentia fiet vera et officii conscia acceptio doni vitae atque sincera grataque laus in Deum qui nobis talem tribuit donationem. Quod iam accidit plurimis in signis donationis, modestae saepe et absconditae, quae

In no. 92 of the Encyclical Letter, Pope John Paul II treated at length what he called the “*decisive responsibility*” of the family for the proclamation of the Gospel of Life.²⁹ He illustrated at some length the critical role of the family not only in teaching the welcome due to new human life but also in teaching the meaning of suffering and death. As he observed, “[t]he family has a special role to play throughout the life of its members, from birth to death.”³⁰

A New Evangelization regarding Human Life and the Integrity of the Conjugal Act

In this regard, it is important to make clear the relationship between a new evangelization regarding human life and the practice of the virtues of purity, chastity and modesty. Respect for human life is related essentially to respect for the integrity of marriage and the family. The attack on the innocent and defenseless life of the unborn has its origin in an erroneous view of human sexuality, which attempts to eliminate, by mechanical or chemical means, the essentially procreative nature of the conjugal act. This error maintains that the artificially altered act retains its integrity. The claim is that the act remains unitive or loving, even though the procreative nature of the act has been radically violated. In fact, it is not unitive, for one or both of the partners withholds an essential part of the gift of self, which is the essence of the conjugal union. The so-called “contraceptive mentality” is essentially anti-life. Many forms of what is called contraception are in fact abortifacient, that is, they destroy a life which has already been conceived and begun to develop.

The manipulation of the conjugal act, as Pope Paul VI courageously observed, has led to many forms of violence against marriage and family life.³¹ Through the spread of the contraceptive mentality, especially among the young, human sexuality is no longer seen as the gift of God which draws a man and a woman together in a bond of lifelong and faithful love, crowned by the gift of new human life, but, rather, as a tool for personal gratification.³² Once sexual union is no longer seen to be procreative by its very nature, human sexuality is abused in ways that are profoundly harmful and indeed destructive of individuals and of

primos exhibent actores viros et mulieres, parvulos et adultos, iuvenes et seniors, sanos et aegrotos.” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Litterae encyclicae *Evangelium vitae*, “De vitae humanae inviolabili bono”, 25 Martii 1995, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995), 498, n. 86. [Hereafter, EV]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, “On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life,” 25 March 1995 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), p. 152, no. 86. [Hereafter, EEng].

²⁹ “... *decretoria ... responsalitas*.” EV, 505, n. 92. English translation: EEng, p. 163, no. 92.

³⁰ “Familia provocatur per totum vitae ipsius sodalium spatium, ab oriente vita ad mortem.” EV, 506, n. 92. English translation: EEng, p. 164, no. 92.

³¹ Cf. Paulus PP. VI, Litterae encyclicae *Humanae Vitae*, “De propagatione humanae proles recte ordinanda”, 25 Iulii 1968, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 60 (1968), 493-494, n. 17.

³² Cf. EV, 414-415, n. 13; and 511-512, n. 97.

society itself. One has only to think of the devastation which is daily wrought in our world by the multi-billion dollar industry of pornography, or the incredibly aggressive homosexual agenda which can only result in the profound unhappiness and even despair of those affected by it and in the destruction of society, as it has always done historically. Fundamental to the transformation of Western culture is the proclamation of the truth about the conjugal union in its fullness and the correction of the contraceptive thinking which fears life, which fears procreation.

In our society, there is a confusion about the meaning of human sexuality which is reaping a harvest of profound personal unhappiness often to the point of the breakdown of the family, of the corruption of children and young people, and, ultimately, of self-destruction. Disordered sexual activity, sexual activity outside of marriage, and the constant and potent false messages about who we are as man and woman served up by the communications media are the signs of a desperate need of a new evangelization. We must witness to the distinct gifts of man and woman to be placed at the service of God and His holy people through a chaste life. Christian marriage is the primary locus of that critical witness. Through sound family life our society will be transformed. Without sound family life, it will never be transformed.

It is instructive to note that Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, made special reference to Pope Paul VI's Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, underscoring its importance "for delineating the *fully human meaning of the development that the Church proposes*."³³ Pope Benedict XVI makes clear that the teaching in *Humanae Vitae* is not simply a matter of "individual morality," declaring:

Humanae vitae indicates the *strong links between life ethics and social ethics*, ushering in a new area of magisterial teaching that has gradually been articulated in a series of documents, most recently John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*.³⁴

Pope Benedict XVI made clear the essential part which a right understanding of human sexuality has in true human development.

³³ "... ut progressionis prorsus humana significatio describatur, quam Ecclesia proponit." Benedictus PP. XVI, Litterae encyclicae *Caritas in Veritate*, "De humana integra progressionem in caritate veritateque", 29 Iunii 2009, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 101 (2009), 651, n. 15. [Hereafter, CV]. English translation: Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, "On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth," 29 June 2009 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009), p. 20, no. 15. [Hereafter, CVEng].

³⁴ "Litterae encyclicae «*Humanae vitae*» solida vincula designant, quae inter vitae ethicam et ethicam sociale intercedunt, magistrale quoddam insinuantes argumentum, quod gradatim variis in documentis auctum est, novissime in Ioannis Pauli II Litteris encyclicis *Evangelium vitae*." CV, 651, n. 15. English translation: CVEng, p. 21, no. 15.

In treating the question of procreation, Pope Benedict XVI underscored the critical importance of the right understanding of human sexuality, marriage and the family. He wrote:

The Church, in her concern for man's authentic development, urges him to have full respect for human values in the exercise of his sexuality. It cannot be reduced merely to pleasure or entertainment, nor can sex education be reduced to technical instruction aimed solely at protecting the interested parties from possible disease or the "risk" of procreation. This would be to impoverish and disregard the deeper meaning of sexuality, a meaning which needs to be acknowledged and responsibly appropriated not only by individuals but also by the community.³⁵

The restoration of respect for the integrity of the conjugal act is essential to the future of Western culture, the advancement of a culture of life. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, it is necessary "once more to hold up to future generations the beauty of marriage and the family, and the fact that these institutions correspond to the deepest needs and dignity of the person."³⁶ Correspondingly, Pope Benedict XVI noted that "states are called to *enact policies promoting the centrality and integrity of the family* founded on marriage between a man and a woman, the primary vital cell of society, and to assume responsibility for its economic and fiscal needs, while respecting its essentially relational character."³⁷

For the sake of our young people, we must give particular attention to the fundamental expression of our culture which is education. Good parents and good citizens must be attentive to the curriculum which schools are following and to the life in the schools, in order to assure that their children, our children, are being formed in the human and Christian virtues and are not being deformed by indoctrination in the confusion and error concerning the most fundamental truths of human life and of the family, which will lead to their slavery to sin and, therefore, profound unhappiness, and to the destruction of culture. Today, for

³⁵ "Ecclesia, cui cordi est verus hominis progressus, monet eum ad plenam valorum observantiam, in sexualitate quoque exercenda: quae ad meram rem hedonisticam ludicramque redigi non potest, sicut educatio sexualis in technicam institutionem coartari non potest, si tantum cura habeatur eos quorum interest arcendi a quodam contagio vel a generandi «periculo». Hoc modo pauperior fieret et altus sexualitatis sensus extenuaretur, qui econtra agnoscere et accipi debet cum responsalitate tam singularum personarum quam communitatis." CV, 680, n. 44. English translation: CVEng, pp. 73-74, no. 44.

³⁶ "... novis generationibus adhuc proponendi pulchritudinem familiae et matrimonii, congruentiam huiusmodi institutionum cum altioribus postulatis cordis dignitatisque personae." CV, p. 681, no. 44. CVEng., p. 75, no. 44.

³⁷ "... Status vocantur ad *normas politicas edendas, praeeminentiam integritatemque familiae promoventes*, quae matrimonio nititur unius viri uniusque mulieris, quaeque exstat prima vitalisque societatis cellula, atque in se recipit etiam quaestiones oeconomicas et nummarias, quod ad ipsius necessitudinis indolem attinet." CV, 681, n. 44. English translation: CVEng, p. 75, no. 44.

example, we sadly find the need to speak about “traditional marriage,” as if there were another kind of marriage. There is only one kind of marriage as God has given it to us from the Creation and as Christ has redeemed it by His saving Passion and Death.

Let us also teach our children and young people all that it means to remain true to the faithful and enduring covenant of divine love in the married life, as God has planned it from the beginning. In the life of holy couples, we see reflected the splendor of the truth about the union of one man and one woman in faithful, enduring and procreative love. Let us teach, in particular, the words of Our Lord when he responded to the Pharisees who were testing him about the possibility of divorce. Our Lord answered their question by teaching the observance of the eternal law according to which God has created man and woman:

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one”? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.³⁸

When His disciples questioned Christ about the demand of God’s law for the married, our Lord responded that, with the call to the married life, God gives the grace to live in faithful, enduring and procreative love: “Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given.”³⁹

In advancing the respect for the inviolable dignity of innocent human life and for the integrity of marriage and the family, proper attention must also be given to the laws which govern the life of society. While the transformation of hearts is the most fundamental means of the new evangelization, Catholics and all persons of good will must be attentive to promote laws which safeguard the dignity of human life and respect the integrity of marriage and the family. At the same time, one cannot ignore the irreplaceable role which law plays in culture. Pope John Paul II observed:

Although laws are not the only means of protecting human life, nevertheless they do play a very important and sometimes decisive role in influencing patterns of thought and behavior. I repeat once more that a law which violates an innocent person’s natural right to life is unjust and, as such, is not valid as a law. For this reason I urgently appeal once more to all political leaders not to pass laws

³⁸ Mt 19, 4-5.

³⁹ Mt 19, 11.

which, by disregarding the dignity of the person, undermine the very fabric of society.⁴⁰

In this regard, involvement in political life is essential to the advancement of the cause of life. Already in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II had declared:

The social role of families is called upon to find expression also in the form of *political intervention*: families should be the first to take steps to see that the laws and institutions of the State not only do not offend but support and positively defend the rights and duties of the family. Along these lines, families should grow in awareness of being “protagonists” of what is known as “family politics” and assume responsibility for transforming society; otherwise families will be the first victims of the evils that they have done no more than note with indifference.⁴¹

The Holy Father repeated the same exhortation to families in *Evangelium Vitae*.⁴²

Natural Law and the Formation of the Conscience in the Family

So often, today, a notion of tolerance of ways of thinking and acting contrary to the moral law seems to be the interpretative key for many Christians. Today’s popular notion of tolerance is not securely grounded in the moral tradition, yet it tends to dominate our approach to the extent that we end up claiming to be Christian while tolerating ways of thinking and acting which are diametrically opposed to the moral law revealed to us in nature and in the Sacred Scriptures. The approach, at times, becomes so relativistic and subjective that we do not even observe the fundamental logical principle of non-contradiction, that is, that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time. In other words, certain actions cannot at the same time be both true to the moral law and not true to it.

⁴⁰ “Tametsi leges non unicum sunt instrumentum, quo vita humana defendatur, partes tamen magni momenti explicant, immo praegraves aliquando, in cuiusdam mentis consuetudinisque provectione. Iterum dicimus: norma quae naturalem legem violat ad vitam cuiusdam innocentis pertinentem, est iniusta ideoque legis momentum habere non potest. Quam ob rem fortiter iteramus exhortationem Nostram ad omnes viros politicos ne promulgent leges quae, personae dignitatem neglegentes, funditus ipsam civilem convictionem extenuent.” EV, 503-504, n. 90. English translation: EEng, p. 160, no. 90.

⁴¹ “Sociale familiae munus etiam ratione *politici interventus* est procurandum: familias nempe eniti oportet imprimis ut leges institutionesque Civitatis non modo non laedant, verum fulciant ac defendant firmo modo iura familiae necnon officia. Ita profecto familiae magis consciae debent fieri se «primas partes agere» in «re politica familiari», quae vocatur, in seque recipere officium transformandae societatis: alioquin erunt familiae illorum malorum veluti victimae primae, quae indifferenti animo solum aspicere voluerunt.” FC, 136, n. 44. English translation: FCEng, p. 85, n. 44.

⁴² Cf. EV, 507-508, n. 93.

In fact, charity alone must be the interpretive key of our thoughts and actions. In the context of charity, tolerance means unconditional love of the person who is involved in evil but firm abhorrence of the evil into which the person has fallen.

Fundamental to the Catholic life of virtue is the understanding of human nature and conscience. Critical to the deplorable cultural situation in which we find ourselves is the loss of a sense of nature and of conscience. Pope Benedict XVI addressed the question of the loss of a sense of nature and conscience, with respect of the foundations of law, in his address to the *Bundestag* during his Pastoral Visit to Germany in September of 2011. Taking leave from the story of the young King Solomon on his accession to the throne, he recalled to political leaders the teaching of the Holy Scriptures regarding the work of politics. God asked King Solomon what request he wished to make as he began to rule God's holy people. The Holy Father commented:

What will the young ruler ask for at this important moment? Success – wealth – long life – destruction of his enemies? He chooses none of these things. Instead, he asks for a listening heart so that he may govern God's people, and discern between good and evil (cf. 1 Kg 3:9).⁴³

The story of King Solomon, as Pope Benedict XVI observed, teaches what must be the end of political activity and, therefore, of government. He declared: "Politics must be a striving for justice, and hence it has to establish the fundamental preconditions for peace.... To serve right and to fight against the dominion of wrong is and remains the fundamental task of the politician."⁴⁴

Pope Benedict XVI then asked how we know the good and right which the political order and specifically the law are to safeguard and promote. While he acknowledged that in many matters "the support of the majority can serve as a sufficient criterion,"⁴⁵ he observed that such a principle is not sufficient "for the fundamental issues of law, in which the dignity

⁴³ "Was wird sich der junge Herrscher in diesem Augenblick erbitten? Erfolg – Reichtum – langes Leben – Vernichtung der Feinde? Nicht um diese Dinge bittet er. Er bittet: „Verleih deinem Knecht ein hörendes Herz, damit er dein Volk zu regieren und das Gute vom Bösen zu unterscheiden versteht“ (1 Kön 3,9)." Benedictus PP. XVI, Allocutio "Iter apostolicum in Germaniam: ad Berolinensem foederatum coetum oratorum," 22 Septembris 2011, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 103 (2011), p. 663. [Hereafter, *Bundestag*]. English translation: *L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 28 September 2011, p. 6. [Hereafter, *BundestagEng*].

⁴⁴ "Politik muss Mühen um Gerechtigkeit sein und so die Grundvoraussetzung für Frieden schaffen.... Dem Recht zu dienen und der Herrschaft des Unrechts zu wehren ist und bleibt die grundlegend Aufgabe des Politikers." *Bundestag*, p. 664. English translation: *BundestagEng*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ "...kann die Mehrheit ein genügendes Kriterium sein." *Bundestag*, p. 664. English translation: *BundestagEng*, p. 6.

of man and of humanity is at stake.”⁴⁶ Regarding the very foundations of the life of society, positive civil law must respect “nature and reason as the true sources of law.”⁴⁷ In other words, one must have recourse to the natural moral law which God has inscribed upon every human heart.

What Pope Benedict XVI observed regarding the foundations of law in the concepts of nature and conscience points to the fundamental work of education, namely, to develop in students “the listening heart” which strives to know the law of God and to respect it by development in the life of the virtues.

As Christians, we must help society to recognize a certain order which permits the individual to pursue his own good, while at the same time respecting the good of others who form a community with him. The good is defined by the order found in the nature of persons and of things, by which the same persons and things are directed to objective ends. In truth, the individual must understand that his own good cannot be served while the good of others and the order of creation are violated. The individual cannot achieve his proper end – and, therefore, happiness – apart from respect for the proper end and ultimate happiness of his neighbor, and for the proper end of the things with which he interacts. Life in common is otherwise reduced to the tyranny of whatever group is able to prevail by winning the support of a majority.

Without the recognition of the common good, to which the individual good is essentially related and which it serves, society breaks down and is soon beset by the violence and destruction which are the inevitable fruits of unbridled individualism and self-pursuit. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council described the common good precisely in the context of the formation of a political community:

Individuals, families, and the various groups which make up the civil community, are aware of their inability to achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts; they see the need of a wider community in which each one will make a specific contribution to an even broader implementation of the common good. For this reason, they set up various forms of political communities. The political community, then, exists for the common good: this is its full justification and meaning and the source of its

⁴⁶ “...in den Grundfragen des Rechts, in denen es um die Würde des Menschen und der Menschheit geht.” Bundestag, p. 664. English translation: BundestagEng, p. 6.

⁴⁷ “...Natur und Vernunft als die wahren Rechtsquellen.” Bundestag, p. 665. English translation: BundestagEng, p. 6.

specific and basic right to exist. The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfillment.⁴⁸

The English word “fulfillment” translates the original Latin word, *perfectio*. Fulfillment does not signify some self-defined condition but rather the perfection of the individual or group, according to man’s proper nature and end.⁴⁹

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council also taught the necessary relationship of the legal and juridical order of a society with the common good and, therefore, the moral order. It declared:

It follows that political authority, either within the political community as such or through organizations representing the state, must be exercised within the limits of the moral order and directed toward the common good (understood in the dynamic sense of the term) according to the juridical order legitimately established or due to be established. Citizens, then, are bound in conscience to obey. Accordingly, the responsibility, the dignity, and the importance of those who govern is clear.⁵⁰

The objectivity of the common good, as it is discovered by right reason in the natural order, determines the good order of a nation.⁵¹

Children and young people must be educated to safeguard the common good which rests on the reality of the nature and end of the persons and of the things with whom or with which they relate. It is essential that citizens be educated in the virtues which help them to

⁴⁸ “Homines, familiae et varii coetus, qui communitatem civilem constituunt, propriae insufficientiae ad vitam plene humanam instituendam conscii sunt et necessitatem amplioris communitatis percipiunt, in qua omnes, ad commune bonum semper melius procurandum, cotidie proprias vires conferant. Quapropter communitatem politicam secundum varias formas constituunt. Communitas ergo politica propter illud commune bonum existit, in quo suam plenam iustificationem et sensum obtinet, et ex quo ius suum primigenum et proprium depromit. Bonum vero commune summam complectitur earum vitae socialis condicionum, quibus homines, familiae et consociationes, suam ipsorum perfectionem plenius atque expeditius consequi possint.” Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio Pastoralis *Gaudium et spes*, “De Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis,” 7 Decembris 1965, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 58 (1966), 1095-1096, n. 74. [Hereafter, GS]. English translation: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1975, pp. 980-981, no. 74. [Hereafter, GSEng].

⁴⁹ Cf. GS, 1095-1096, n. 74. English translation: GSEng. p. 1096, n. 74.

⁵⁰ “Sequitur item auctoritatis politicae exercitium sive in communitate ut tali, sive in institutis rem publicam repraesentantibus, semper intra fines ordinis moralis ad effectum deducendum esse, ad commune bonum – et quidem dynamicè conceptum – procurandum, secundum ordinem iuridicum legitime statutum vel statuendum. Tunc cives ad obedientiam praestandam ex conscientia obligantur. Exinde vero patet responsibilitas, dignitas et momentum eorum, qui praesunt.” GS, 1096, n. 74. English translation: GSEng, p. 981, no. 74.

⁵¹ Cf. GS, 1096, n. 74. English translation: GSEng, p. 981, no. 74.

understand the common good and to obey the law which safeguards it. Bishops and priests, their principal co-workers, are called to be the first teachers of these fundamental truths in the Church and in society in general.

In his Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI takes up the question of the common good which, in his words, “is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it.”⁵² Dedication to the common good, as Pope Benedict XVI makes clear, is an obligation imposed by both justice and charity. He concludes: “The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them.”⁵³

The thoroughly galvanized anti-life and anti-family agenda of our time advances, in large part, because of a lack of attention and information among the general public. The pervasive mass media, the principal promoter of the agenda, confuse and corrupt minds and hearts, and dull consciences to the law written by God upon every human heart. In his Encyclical Letter on the Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II declared:

What is urgently called for is a *general mobilization of consciences* and a *united ethical effort* to activate a *great campaign in support of life*. *All together, we must build a new culture of life*: new, because it will be able to confront and solve today’s unprecedented problems affecting human life; new, because it will be adopted with deeper and more dynamic conviction by all Christians; new, because it will be capable of bringing about a serious and courageous cultural dialogue among all parties. While the urgent need for such a cultural transformation is linked to the present historical situation, it is also rooted in the Church’s mission of evangelization. The purpose of the Gospel, in fact, is “to transform humanity from within and to make it new.” Like the yeast which leavens the whole measure of dough (cf. *Mt* 13:33), the Gospel is meant to permeate all cultures and give them life from within, so that they may express the full

⁵² “Non...per se ipsum conquisitum, sed personarum gratia, quae communitatem socialem participant atque in ea tantum reapse et efficaciter bonum suum consequi possunt.” CV, 645, n. 7. English translation: CVEng, p. 9, no. 7.

⁵³ “Eo efficacius proximus amatur, quo magis bonum commune colitur, quod veris necessitatibus occurrat.” CV, p. 645, n. 7. English translation: CVEng, p. 10, no. 7.

truth about the human person and about human life.⁵⁴

What Pope John Paul II affirmed about the mobilization of consciences regarding the inviolability of innocent human life surely applies as well and as strongly to the mobilization of consciences regarding the integrity of marriage and family life.

Pope John Paul II did not fail to note that such efforts must begin with “*the renewal of a culture of life within Christian communities themselves.*”⁵⁵ The Church herself must address the situation of so many of her members who, even though they may be active in Church activities, “end up by separating their Christian faith from its ethical requirements regarding life, and thus fall into moral subjectivism and certain objectionable ways of acting.”⁵⁶

The first constitutive element of the moral law is the truth about the inviolability of innocent human life and the integrity of the conjugal union of man and woman which is written upon every human heart. The first precept of the natural moral law is the safeguarding and promotion of human life, and the second is the respect for the integrity of the inclination to the conjugal union.⁵⁷ At the very beginning of his Encyclical Letter on the Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II made clear the relationship of the Church’s teaching regarding human life to the moral law which can be known by reason. He declared:

The Church knows that this *Gospel of life*, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person – believer and non-believer alike – because it marvellously fulfils all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. *Rom 2:14-15*) the sacred good of

⁵⁴ “Quam primum inducantur necesse est *generalis conscientiarum motus moralisque communis nisus*, qui excitare valeant *validum sane opus ad vitam tuendam: omnibus nobis simul coniunctis nova exstuenta est vitae cultura: nova*, quae scilicet possit hodiernas de vita hominis ineditas quaestiones suscipere atque solvere; nova, utpote quae acriore et alacriore ratione omnium christianorum conscientiam permoveat; nova demum, quae accommodata sit ad gravem animosamque culturalem suscitandam comparationem cum omnibus. Huius culturalis conversionis necessitas coniungitur cum aetatis nostrae historica rerum condicione, at praesertim inhaeret in ipso evangelizandi munere quod proprium est Ecclesiae. Evangelium enim eo spectat «ut perficiat interiorum mutationem» et «humanitatem novam efficiat»; est velut fermentum quo pasta tota fermentatur (cfr *Mt 13, 33*), atque, qua tale, perfundere debet omnes culturas easque intus pervadere, ut integram declarent de homine deque eius vita veritatem.” EV, 509, n. 95. English translation: EVEng, pp. 168-169, no. 95.

⁵⁵ “... *vitae cultura renovanda intra ipsas christianas communitates.*” EV, 509, n. 95. English translation: EVEng, p. 169, no. 95.

⁵⁶ “... seiunctionem quandam inferunt inter christianam fidem eiusque moralia circa vitam postulata, progredientes hac ratione ad moralem quandam subiectivismum adque vivendi mores qui probari non possunt.” EV, 509-510, n. 95. English translation: EVEng, p. 169, no. 95.

⁵⁷ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 94, art. 2.

human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest decree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded.⁵⁸

What then is the relationship between the natural moral law and the Church's moral teaching? While God has first revealed to every human heart the truth about human life by the mystery of the Creation, He has perfectly revealed the truth in all of its splendor by the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation of His only-begotten Son. What is more, the coming of God the Son as man into the world, His saving Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, and His abiding presence in the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit give man the grace to live fully in accord with the truth which he first knows by reason.

Pope John Paul II explained the relationship thus:

Through the words, the actions and the very person of Jesus, man is given the possibility of “knowing” *the complete truth* concerning the good of human life. From this “source” he receives, in particular, the capacity to “accomplish” this truth perfectly (cf. *Jn* 3:21), that is, to accept and fulfil completely the responsibility of loving and serving, of defending and promoting human life. In Christ, the *Gospel of life* is definitively proclaimed and fully given. This is the Gospel which, already present in the Revelation of the Old Testament, and indeed written in the heart of every man and woman, has echoed in every conscience “from the beginning”, from the time of creation itself, in such a way that, despite the negative consequences of sin, *it can also be known in its essential traits by human reason.*⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “Novit Ecclesia illud *Evangelium vitae* sibi a Domino suo commendatum intus resonare permovereque unumquemque hominem sive credit sive non, quandoquidem admirabili modo ei respondet, dum eius simul expectationes infinita quadam ratione excedit. Valet enim quilibet homo, inter difficultates licet ac dubitationes, ad veritatem tamen ex animo apertus adque bonitatem, adiutus rationis ipsius lumine et arcana gratiae impulsione, pervenire eo quidem usque ut legem naturalem in corde inscriptam (cfr *Rom* 2, 14-15) agnoscat, sacrum vitae humanae bonum a primis initiis ad finem ipsum, necnon ius cuiusque adserat hominis ut hoc suum principale bonum summopere observatum videat. In eiusdem ideo iuris agnitione hominum nititur consortio ipsaque politica communitas.” EV, 402, n. 2. English translation: EEng, pp. 4-5, n. 2.

⁵⁹ “Ideo ex verbo, ex operibus, ex ipsa Iesu persona facultas tribuitur homini ut *omnem veritatem* de humanae vitae bono «cognoscere possit»; et ex illo «fonte» peculiari modo provenit facultas adamussim talem veritatem faciendi (cfr *Io* 3, 21), id est, suscipiendi necnon funditus exsequendi officium vitam humanam amandi, ei serviendi, eamque tuendi et promovendi. In Christo enim absolute nuntiatur et plene traditur illud *Evangelium vitae* quod iam traditum in revelatione Veteris Testamenti, immo scriptum quodam modo in ipso corde cuiusque hominis et mulieris, in unaquaque conscientia morali resonat «ab initio», hoc est ab ipsa creatione, ita ut,

The human conscience, if it has not been corrupted by grave confusion and error, naturally recognizes the inviolable dignity of every human life and commands that it be safeguarded and promoted, and it recognizes the integrity of the conjugal union of man and woman, and commands that it be respected.

A new evangelization of the family, of the Church and of society should be marked by a profound confidence in the human heart upon which the moral law has been inscribed. At the same time, it should be ready to refute the false claim that unconditional respect for the inviolable dignity of innocent human life and for the integrity of the conjugal union is merely a confessional matter and to illustrate how it is at the very foundation of the common good.

Conclusion

We live in a time when the fundamental truth of marriage is under a ferocious attack which seeks to obscure and sully the sublime beauty of the married state as God intended it from the Creation. Divorce is a common place in society, as is the pretension to remove from the conjugal union, by mechanical or chemical means, its procreative essence. And now, society has gone even further in its affront to God and His law by claiming the name of marriage for liaisons between persons of the same sex.

Even within the Church, there are those who would obscure the truth of the indissolubility of marriage in the name of mercy, who condone the violation of the conjugal union by means of contraception in the name of pastoral understanding, and who, in the name of tolerance, remain silent about the attack on the very integrity of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. There are even those, too, who deny that the married receive a particular grace to live heroically in faithful, enduring and life-giving love, while Our Lord Himself has assured us that God gives to the married the grace to live daily in accord with the truth of their state in life.

In our day, our witness to the splendor of the truth about marriage must be limpid and heroic. We must be ready to suffer, as Christians have suffered down the ages, to honor and foster Holy Matrimony. Let us take as our examples Saint John the Baptist, Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More, who were martyrs in defending the integrity of the fidelity and indissolubility of marriage. Before the confusion and error about Holy Matrimony, which Satan is sowing so widely in our society today, let us follow their example and let us invoke

adversis peccati vinculis non officientibus, suis in essentialibus rationibus humana quoque mente percipi possit." EV, 434, n. 29. English translation: EEng, p. 53, n. 24.

their intercession, so that the great gift of married life and love will be ever more revered in the Church and in society.

Thank you for your kind attention. May God bless you.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE