



VOICE OF THE FAMILY MANIFESTO

This manifesto has been issued by the lay Catholic faithful of the international pro-life and pro-family coalition *Voice of the Family* in order to fulfil our responsibilities as outlined in Canon 212. §3 of the Code of Canon Law:

According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they [the Christian faithful] have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.¹

“The future of humanity passes by way of the family”

The family is the basic cell and building block of society. It was ordained by God to be the privileged place where new life is brought into the world and nurtured towards adulthood. It is here that children are to be educated and first learn those moral values that are the bedrock of any truly flourishing society. It is here also that those who are made weak or vulnerable through age, illness or disability, are to be cherished and cared for.

Every family is comprised of human beings who are wounded by the effects of original sin and therefore no family ever fulfils the ideal perfectly. For this reason families need to be supported by the Church and by the state, which must acknowledge the structure of the family as willed by God. The good of any society is dependent on the good of the families of which it consists; “the future of humanity passes by way of the family.”²

The union of marriage is “the beginning and the foundation” of the family.³ This union was established by God at the beginning of time when He created our first parents, Adam and Eve.

¹ *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 212 §3.

² Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 86

³ Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum Divinae*, no. 5

“God thus, in His most far-reaching foresight, decreed that this husband and wife should be the natural beginning of the human race, from whom it might be propagated and preserved by an unending fruitfulness throughout all futurity of time.”⁴

The essence of marriage is the joining together of man and woman in conjugal union, which is contracted by the mutual consent of the spouses.⁵ God blessed the first man and the first woman with the words "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen 1:28) The union of marriage is ordered primarily towards the procreation and upbringing of children and secondarily towards the mutual assistance of the spouses.⁶

Our Lord Jesus Christ raised the natural bond of marriage to the level of a sacrament when he established the new and everlasting covenant. He also confirmed the original plan of God for marriage: “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 flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mt 19:4-6)

Sacramental marriage is a profound symbol of the indissoluble union between Christ and His Church. (cf. Eph 5:22-33). The Church has clearly and repeatedly taught that “no power can dissolve the bond of Christian marriage whenever this has been ratified and consummated.”⁷ Consequently “those husbands and wives are guilty of a manifest crime who plan, for whatever reason, to be united in a second marriage before the first one has been ended by death.”⁸

The situations which cause “divorced” or separated persons to enter new unions are manifold and many personal situations call forth great sympathy. However true pastoral care must always be founded on the truth. It is always the free choice of the individual, and that alone, which separates them from the sacramental life of the Church. The Church excludes none of her children from Holy Communion except those who have first chosen to exclude themselves by committing manifest grave sin.

God always gives the graces necessary to remain free from mortal sin. The witness of the many spouses who do not enter into new unions testifies to the reality of this assistance. Such spouses ought to be honoured and receive all necessary assistance from the Church.

The majority of human beings who reach adulthood will enter into marriage, which will be the source of many of their most profound joys. Marriages are often however marked by sufferings and difficulties of many kinds and married couples need the help and support of other families, friends, the Church and the state. This assistance is more necessary than ever in our own time, when the family faces grave new challenges resulting from the ever increasing dominance of false and pernicious ideologies throughout political, social and religious institutions.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ ST Sup. q. 44 a.2; *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1057

⁶ ST Sup. q. 41. a.1; Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, no. 11

⁷ Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum Divinae*, no. 41

⁸ Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum Divinae*, no. 41

An appeal to the hierarchy of the Church

As Catholic laity working in the pro-life, pro-family movement, we are well aware, from our daily experiences, of the profound challenges facing the family in the modern world. We know also that there is nothing more essential to our success in responding to these challenges than the courageous witness of the bishops of the Catholic Church. The consequences for the family are devastating whenever this witness is absent.

Having diligently studied the documents produced at each stage of the synodal process, and having noted with alarm the increasing tendency of prominent figures within the hierarchy of the Church to promote positions contrary to the Catholic faith and the natural moral law, we now call on the Holy Father, on cardinals, bishops, and all others who exercise teaching authority within the Church, to take all necessary steps to protect the integrity of Catholic doctrine and, by so doing, to protect our families from the ravages of the culture of death.

In particular we call on the Synod Fathers at the Ordinary Synod to firmly and unambiguously:

- uphold the doctrine that marriage is an exclusive and indissoluble union of one man and one woman and to reaffirm that all sexual acts outside of marriage and in all forms of non-marital union are a grave offence to God and gravely injurious to individuals and to society⁹
- affirm that adultery is a grave sin and that those who live in adultery cannot receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion without repentance and amendment of life¹⁰
- reaffirm the teaching of the encyclicals *Casti Connubii* and *Humanae Vitae* that the separation of the procreative and unitive ends of the sexual act by contraceptive methods is gravely contrary to the moral law and has devastating consequences for the family, for society and for the Church¹¹
- oppose “gender theory” which denies the fundamental division of the human race into two sexes, male and female, each of which possesses those complementary characteristics and differences that are proper to them¹²

⁹ Canons and Decrees of the Twenty Fourth Session of the Council of Trent, Promulgated 11 November 1563; Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum Divinae*, 10 February 1980; Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 31 December 1930.

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22 November 1981; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the Admission to Holy Communion of the Faithful who are Divorced and Remarried*; 4 September 1994; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Concerning some Objections to the Church’s Teaching on the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful*, 1st January 1998; Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, *Declaration concerning the Admission to Holy Communion of the Faithful who are Divorced and Remarried*; 24 June 2000.

¹¹ Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 31 December 1930; Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 25 July 1968.

¹² Pope Benedict XVI, *Christmas Address to the Roman Curia*, 21 December 2012.

- assert that homosexual acts are gravely contrary to the natural moral order, are destructive of individuals and society and that no form of union between persons of the same-sex can be approved in any way¹³
- oppose all methods of artificial reproduction, which degrade human sexuality by separating procreation from the sexual act and which, in the great majority of cases, lead directly to the destruction of human life in its earliest stages¹⁴
- assert and defend the right to life of every unborn child from the moment of conception and to take concrete action towards ending the scourge of abortion in all its forms, including abortifacient methods of contraception¹⁵
- assert the right of parents to be the primary educators of their children and take immediate steps to defend parents and children against all violations of this right, which are becoming ever more pressing and grave¹⁶
- identify and take steps to remedy the threat posed to all members of the human family by the proliferation of pornography, especially when directed deliberately towards children, as is the case in many “educational” programmes¹⁷
- defend all men and women who are disabled, seriously or terminally ill, or reaching the end of life by strongly condemning all forms of euthanasia and “assisted suicide” and issue a call for concrete action to combat this threat.¹⁸

In issuing this call Voice of the Family acts in accordance with the duty mandated in Canon 211 of the Code of Canon Law:

“All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land.”¹⁹

It is only through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness that a renewed Christian civilisation can be established on solid foundations amidst the ruins of our present culture of death.

¹³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1 October 1986; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, 3 June 2004.

¹⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae*, 22 February 1987; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitatis Personae*, 8 September 2008.

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995.

¹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22 November 1981.

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2354; Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 8 December 1995.

¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995.

¹⁹ *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 211.