



The Holy See

***SPEECH OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO DELEGATES OF THE
FORUM OF FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS***

Saturday, 18 December 2004

1. I greet with affection the Forum of Family Associations and thank the President, Prof. Luisa Santolini, for her words on behalf of you all. This meeting with you, the representatives of thousands of Italian families, is taking place close to Christmas. It is precisely by contemplating the mystery of God who became man and was welcomed into a human family that we can fully understand the value and beauty of the family.

Not only is the family at the heart of Christian life, but it is also the basis of social and civil life and thus constitutes a central chapter in Christian social teaching, as is clearly shown in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (cf. nn. 209-245). It is vital to deepen continually the profound personal importance and the social, original and unrenouncable consequence of the union between a man and a woman, which is brought about in marriage and gives birth to the family community. Those who destroy this fundamental fabric of human coexistence injure society deeply and do damage that is often irreparable.

2. Attacks on marriage and the family are unfortunately growing stronger and more radical every day, both on the ideological and legislative fronts (cf. *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 90). Attempts to reduce the family to a private emotional and socially unimportant experience; to confuse individuals' rights with those proper to the family nucleus constituted by the bond of marriage; to equate *de facto* unions with marriage; to accept, and in certain cases to advocate, the suppression of innocent human lives by means of voluntary abortion; to distort the natural process of begetting children by introducing artificial forms of procreation, are but a few of the contexts in which the subversion taking place in society is blatantly obvious.

No civil progress can derive from the social devaluation of marriage and loss of respect for the

inviolable dignity of human life. In many cases, what is presented as the progress of civilization or a scientific breakthrough is a defeat for human dignity and society.

3. The truth about human beings, their call to be welcomed with love and in love from conception cannot be sacrificed to the domination of technology and evil-doing over authentic rights. The legitimate longing for a child or for good health cannot be made an unconditional right to the point that it justifies the suppression of other human lives. Science and technology are truly at the service of humanity only if they safeguard and promote all the human beings involved in the process of procreation.

Catholic associations, together with all people of good will who believe in the values of the family and life, cannot yield to the pressures of a culture that is undermining the very foundations of respect for life and the promotion of families.

Hence, among the "manifold social service activities" already hoped for in *Familiaris Consortio*, whereby families should grow in awareness and assume the responsibility for transforming society (cf. n. 44), the prophetic voice of the Forum of Family Associations appears particularly relevant for Italy and for Europe.

4. In fact, the Forum, acting in a completely innovative and original way in Italian society, carries out the important and in many ways innovative task of being a voice for those who have no voice and a spokesman for the rights of the family, starting with those specified in the *Charter of the Rights of the Family* that is an integral part of the Agreement of your Association.

I thank you for all that you have done in the past 10 years and for what you are. As I urge you to continue in your commitment to the service of life and of the family I impart my Apostolic Blessing with affection to you all.