

Among Ourselves

The Family...

Journeying With Church As Family To A Civilisation Of Love

The family has been the focus of much study and scrutiny, both in society and in the Church in the recent past. The reasons, are obvious. The fundamental cell of society has become the most vulnerable victim of a systemic onslaught from a variety of forces at every level, in a manner that is unprecedented in human history. There is an urgency, for wanting to understand this phenomenon, and to seek realistic and effective ways to counter these threatening forces.

We are all aware that the process of globalisation today, is radically affecting every aspect of human life,

not just the economic but also the social, cultural and the political and most importantly our innermost being, as reflected in the expression of our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, “an eclipse of the sense of God”. We, cannot any longer sit and mourn about the situation but to conscientiously attempt to understand, what is really happening to the families and how the members of the family are affected by these globalising powers. A clear thinking will only emerge, when we realise that this fundamental cell is so intimately related to every facet of human life today, and how radically it is influencing all its members, especially the young today. The market and media managers have a grip on them as life-long consumers of their world view. This is not just limited to the overt and visible forces but the hidden and the subtle that aim at transforming the fundamental and core humanising values in society today. We need to understand what these are. What seems urgent is to stir the consciousness of individuals and communities to the moral obligation to think clearly and to identify sound and practical ways to overcome the current crises of the family. Globalisation has brought the family to the doorstep of the human family. We cannot talk of solving the problems of the family (the Local) without understanding the state and the fate of the human family (the Global) We have therefore to ask, the difficult question.... What is the role of the Local Church that is truly Universal, with reference to the Family?

It is also obvious that the family, the fundamental building block of society, subject to the market driven and media manipulated forces of globalisation, is unable to fully comprehend the deluge of contradicting

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processes. It is thus unable to recognise both its identity and role in the world today nor its responsibility in the creation of new world order, based on universal values of the dignity of the human person and the restoration of the common good. The grandiose exhortations, by political and civil leaders and also religious leaders, of the divinely sanctioned nature of the family come to nothing, when no new vision is offered to families in their day to day struggles to live fully as human persons in community. What is demanded is a systemic analysis of the way in which families are being moulded and transformed in keeping with the master plans of the dominant powers in the world today. We have today, for example, created “planetary families” and “fragmented families” as result of the non-critical acceptance of market-driven labour export, maximisation of profits and narrow nationalism as the only way to economic growth. We need a total diagnosis, before we can offer some relevant and viable prescriptions as alternatives. As members of families, parents and children we need to understand the dehumanising forces and recognise the life-giving influences. We need to be aware of what are the adverse aspects of globalisation in the context of each of our nations and regions. The family needs to be helped to become who they really are in keeping with the plan of God for the whole human family. Can we really bring changes to the future of families, without recognising the vital role of social advocacy, as a means to make changes in the public arena?

It is in this context that we need to raise a number of questions that may be relevant, if we are to move ahead into the future. Some of these can be: “How has the Church enabled families to ‘read the signs of the times’”? Do our Pastors and leaders in the Church, really understand what is happening to the family, in order guide them, amidst their confusion? Have we a listening attitude, to enable the young to raise fundamental questions about the workings of the adult world? Can the leaders in the Church, afford to be silent in the face of the barrage of attacks that are undermining the most sacred values attached to the family? Do we see the interconnectedness of the political, economic, social and cultural forces that is creating a cleavage in the foundations of the family today? These are questions, we need to ask and thus be ready to search together for some coherent and credible answers. This call for a clear thinking and be the light in determining the future of the family.

Besides the above teaching and guiding role of the Church, we see the importance of the witnessing role of the Church, to every member of the family. The most urgent task therefore, for the Church in Asia

is to recognise the fact that Pastoral Care of Families, will only be viable and applicable if it is rooted in the on-going process of Permanent Cures, applied to all the People of God. The urgent call of the Bishops of Asia at the 7th Plenary Assembly; A Renewed Church: Mission of Love and Service, can only become a reality with our common realisation that the fundamental cell of society needs to be fully nurtured, in a life-giving milieu of the Church as Family. It is this critical insertion of the family in a truly life giving community that can enable the family to evolve, within this body of the Church, as the Body of Christ. Without the return to a fuller insertion in the life-giving body there can be no alternative to the “death-dealing” forces in society today. If the mission of the Church to become the salt and leaven of evangelisation and to influence every strata of humanity, it can only be nurtured in a Church as Communion.

There is also the growing realisation among many in the Church today, that just as the basic family unit is being torn apart by the forces of globalisation, the Church too, as an organisation and institutions, is also being affected adversely in the same way. It is in this context that we have to see the Renewal of the Family as being related to the Renewal of the Church.

Some Challenges Ahead – Some Food for Thought

We cannot talk of the revitalisation of the family, the parents, the siblings, the children without talking about the relationships between the members of the People of God. The family of the era of globalisation, is becoming a functional unit - marriage for security, education of children for economic and career opportunities with little time for the forging of relationships within the family. Young people should be able to say, “Society dictates but at least our parents listen”. In this context, there is a growing consciousness of the need for a more Relational Church. It is a desire for relationship within a community and not get the feeling of being dictated and told what to do by the pastors and leaders. There has to be a relationship between the participatory leadership style in the family and in the Church as family. The structures of governance have to see change, if the family is to see change. Structures of accountability and transparency will restore confidence in a community that accepts the role and responsibility of each individual member. The values of union and communion emphasised in the family should also be the obvious values in the small communities within the People of God, namely the Community of Bishops (Conference), Community of

Clergy (Presbyterium) Community of Religious (Religious Houses) and all other community of Lay Leaders. The Church as Family has to be an Experience of Communion.

We cannot talk about the renewal of the family, without questioning the effectiveness of our catechetical process, and our celebrations of the sacraments, especially the Sunday Liturgy if it is really to be the “source and summit” of Christian faith and life. Without the inclusion of more creative ministries of youth and children in the Pastoral Care of Families the path ahead seems doubtful. Renewal of Family, seems to be impossible due to the lack of participation in the catechetical and liturgical life of the Church. We need to ask the question, Why?

We cannot talk about the role model of parents without talking of the role model of our Bishops as Pastors, Clergy as Men of Faith and Love and Religious and Laity as living the Gospel in the context of the challenges of globalisation. The Family as witness to the Gospel, is related to the Church as witness and thus the acceptance of diversity and participation in decision-making in the context of globalisation that homogenises and marginalises. The faith that is caught in the Family, is also the same

Family that expresses its faith more fully in Church as Family, preparing itself to be the life of the Human Family. Families witnessing to each other and communities within the Church, witnessing to the way of Jesus, seems to be the new way of faith formation for all the members of the family. The communities within the People of God, becoming Family, is also the greatest challenge to the witnessing to the world, that communion is our path to a globalisation of solidarity.

We, in this issue and the following issues of the INFO on Human Development want therefore to examine the various aspects of the Family today. We hope to trace some broad perspectives, as to how we as Church can continue to work towards the renewal of the Family and a Renewed Family can also be the basis for the Church to be Renewed as Family. A renewed Family and a renewed Church can more fully exercise its prophetic role of bearing witness to the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the new millennium..

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Quotes on the Family

The family is the normal place where the young grow to personal and social maturity and through which life is passed on from generation to generation. The family occupies a very important place in Asian cultures; values like filial respect, love and care for the aged and the sick, love of children and harmony are held in high esteem in all Asian cultures and religious traditions.

The family is also “the domestic Church” where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life and the gift which the family members bring to the wider community. The Church cares for the family but is also its most effective agents of evangelisation. Although being called to witness to the Gospel today the family itself is threatened by an array of forces.

The family should therefore be active in parish life, partaking of the sacraments and being involved in service to others. Parents foster opportunities for prayer, for Bible reading and reflection, for appropriate rituals presided over by the parents and for healthy recreation. Such a participation will enable all in the family to experience God’s love and share with one another in the family and with others whom they encounter. Children have a role in evangelisation, both in their family and in the wider community. (No. 46, *Ecclesia in Asia*) ◆

At a time in history like the present, special attention must also be given to the pastoral care of the family, particularly when this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis. In the Christian view of marriage, the relationship between a man and a woman — a mutual and total bond, unique and indissoluble — is part of God’s original plan, obscured throughout history by our “hardness of heart”, but which Christ came to restore to its pristine splendour, disclosing what had been God’s will “from the beginning” (Mt 19:8). Raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, marriage expresses the “great mystery” of Christ’s nuptial love for his Church (cf. Eph 5:32).

On this point the Church cannot yield to cultural pressures, no matter how widespread and even militant they may be. Instead, it is necessary to ensure that through an ever more complete Gospel formation Christian families show convincingly that it is possible to live marriage fully in keeping with God’s plan and with the true good of the human person — of the spouses, and of the children who are more fragile. Families themselves must become increasingly conscious of the care due to children, and play an active role in the Church and in society in safeguarding their rights. (No. 47, *At The Beginning Of The New Millennium*) ◆

THE FAMILY AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

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At the beginning of *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII justified his extension of Papal teaching into the social order by calling attention to new demands placed upon the Christian family by the new social order of the 19th century.¹ In the 21st century, we are facing another new social order, and again there is a need to reflect on the implications of that new social order for the Christian family. This new social order is ambiguously described as *globalization*. To understand this term and the real world to which it points more accurately, one must look at it in four different dimensions.

(1) First, *the dimension of CARITAS*: When Jesus Christ told His apostles, “Go teach all nations,” he introduced the most profound meaning of globalization. The new people of God belongs to no one racial stock, ethnic group, tribe, or nation; it is universal; it is intended for all those men and women of good will who open their intellects and wills to it; it is global. Later, when St. Augustine defined the *City of God* as the community of all those whose minds and will are infused with *caritas* that is the inner life of God, he too was pointing to a global community – global in space and in time. Again the contemporary expression beloved of Pope John Paul II, the *civilization of love*, refers to that universal community of all men and women of which the Catholic Church is a herald, being itself one, global, and multicultural.² Thus, right here at the beginning of our discussion, we need to remind ourselves that another word of “Catholic: is “global”. Moreover, other forms of globalization are judged against the standard of God’s universal *caritas*, offered to all humans everywhere.

By contrast, the contemporary phenomenon of economic, political and cultural globalization is far more superficial, and can be destructive of God’s purposes. Just the same, some currents within it can be put to creative use for God’s purposes, insofar as they prepare the way for a deeper form of human unity: the universal community of the diverse and pluralistic people of God. In this context, “Catholic” does not mean uniform or homogenized, but united in diversity.

For every Catholic family is rooted in a particular language and culture, and simultaneously united with all other faithful families in universal solidarity. When faithful families attend the Eucharist, they attend in

the spiritual presence of the whole universal community, united with Christ crucified.

(2) *The cultural dimension*: Globalization means that we experience today an unprecedented network of contracts between peoples and cultures. Let us begin with lesser, but easily understandable indications. Television images from one part of the world now reach families in another part of the world almost simultaneously. All can be watching the same images at the same time, or at least as the waking day turns around the globe. Between 1980 and 1995, the number of television sets per 1,000 people worldwide nearly doubled, from 121 to 235; and the number keeps growing.³ Sitting in our own homes or offices, we watch weather reports on television describing temperatures and changes of climate in a long list of other cities on every continent around the world. Ideas of human rights and democracy spread rapidly around the world, as do images of suffering and injustice. So also, alas, do images of seduction, hedonism, and rebellion against the good and the true.

Again, more people than ever before are traveling today from one country to another. Traffic by airplane today has become so cheap and convenient that the crowds who come to Rome (and other great cities) are no longer merely aristocrats or the learned, as in earlier times, but from among the far more humble. On a more permanent level, many families today have members who are living in other countries in far parts of the world – even our families have become planetary.

But that is not all. Multiple lines of international commerce and trade are weaving a single circle of exchange. More and more people today spontaneously begin their thinking by trying to imagine the needs and wants of people on the far side of the planet. Thus the American writer Thomas Friedman describes a Jordanian political journalist who tells him with satisfaction that CNN has just begun to include Amman in its reports on the day’s temperatures and weather forecasts; for him Jordan now *exists* in a way it had not before; it counts for something in the eyes of others. And shortly thereafter an Israeli businessman explained to Friedman that he and his associates no

longer think first about local economic conditions, and what they will produce for those, and then about some possibilities for export. Rather, they now find themselves thinking about the whole planet and about what they might be able to export, and *then* they think about how to produce it. We have become different sorts of persons, the man explained; we think of ourselves in a new way. A planetary way.⁴

Consider a few other indicators:

- ❑ Travelers from one country to another doubled between 1980 and 1996, from 260 million to almost 600 million travelers per year. One-tenth of the world's population every year.
- ❑ Between 1990 and 1996, time spent on international telephone calls more than doubled from 33 billion minutes to 70 billion minutes.
- ❑ In constant 1990 prices, the cost of a three-minute telephone call from New York to London fell from \$245 in 1930 to almost \$50 in 1960, to \$3 in 1990, to 35 cents in 1999.

Profound changes are occurring in the ocean depths of cultures, as well. In Indonesia and Burma and Burundi and Ghana and in all corners of the world, one hears more and more people appealing to the same universal ideas: human dignity, the right to personal economic initiative, liberation from poverty. Nearly all of these universal ideals were introduced into the world,⁵ the great social economist Barbara Ward has pointed out, through the influence of Christianity. She did not mean to suggest that the world is becoming Christian, she meant to suggest that certain Christian ideals for society and the individual have universal force, and are now inspiring people everywhere. If in fact the nations of the world ever come to a universal culture of respect for human rights, it will be a world that much closer to certain elementary Christian ideals: the dignity of the person, solidarity among all peoples. In important aspects, the entire world is now living through a common cultural drama, the attempt to build societies worthy of such ideals.

(3) *Political expressions of globalization* are also multiplying. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with its condemnation of certain evils (genocide, torture, etc.) is at one and the same time a political act, and an act deeply influenced by Catholic thinkers.⁶ Outside the United Nations building in New York City, there stands a statue of Francesco de Vitoria (1486 – 1546), the great Catholic thinker from Spain who is regarded as “the father of international law.” The connection between international law, a Catholic vision of life, and the multi-cultural breadth of historical Christian civilizations is quite deep. Christianity is a religion that sees all the world's people as one, bound

under the laws of the one Creator of all, and called to a new vocation by the one Redeemer of all. All have also been given a vocation to “build up the kingdom of God” on earth, a kingdom never finished, but before the last day always partial, incomplete, and composed of members at the same time fallen as well as redeemed.

The struggle to devise systems of positive law that guide, teach, and shape peoples in ways worthy of the destiny their Creator intended for them entails a long struggle of trial and error, against human resistance and rebellion, and in the face of human ignorance, errant passion, and willful blindness. The struggle for the rule of law is a long historical adventure. The family is the first institution in which humans are taught the ways of the law, and how to appropriate the sources of the law inwardly.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin burst upon the world stage, shouting that dictatorship is the most efficient form of government in fulfilling the general will and in lifting up the poor. But the world learned bitter and unforgettable lessons from the age of dictatorship. As John Paul II points out in *Centesimus Annus*, democracy has many faults but no system yet better protects the human rights of minorities and individuals, both from single tyrants and from the tyranny of the majority. Thus, nearly everywhere dictatorship is being rejected, and peoples are striving to develop the political parties and coalitions which lead to government based on the consent of the governed and under the rule of law – a law which looks upon all as equals, and on none with special favor.

A second political expression of globalization is the simultaneous movement against the hegemony of the nation state from “above” and from “below.” In Europe, for example, individual states are yielding some of their sovereignty and prerogatives to the European Community. They are forming new realities larger than the nation-state. Simultaneously, many nation states are under pressure to grant new autonomy to internal regions within their own domain. Thus, the former United Kingdom (or Great Britain) is today ceding more and more autonomy to Scotland and Wales; Lombardia is pressuring the Italian central state for greater recognition and autonomy; and in France, Germany, and elsewhere constituent regions of nation state seek ampler room for local self-government.

This double movement towards larger units “above” and smaller units “below,” even though it arises from many mixed motives, including unworthy ones, is anticipated by the Catholic principle of subsidiarity. Some problems are best solved on smaller and more local levels, while others require larger,

cross-cultural entities. The “incarnational” tendency of Catholic thought favors the most concrete and immediate level consistent with practical wisdom; the “universal” tendency favors more extensive organizations and institutions, even on a global scale.

(4) Nowadays, the *economic dimension* of globalization, being newer, draws most attention. Before 1989, few thinkers predicted the sudden collapse of socialism as an economic system. Prior to then, many still saw socialism as the wave of the future, and others were arguing for a “third way” between socialism and existing capitalist societies. The collapse of socialism as an economic idea, however, eliminated the socialist alternatives and cast doubt on one foundation of “the third way.”⁷ Thinkers pursuing a “third way” are losing confidence in the ability of the nation state to pay its bills in the future, however. Welfare states have promised greater awards to future retirees than they have any prospect of paying, since their populations are rapidly aging, and their younger workers grow scarcer. Both because of abortion and because of a lessened willingness of young couples to have large families, many nations have been experiencing a severe “birth dearth,” the opposite of a population explosion – a severe population contraction.⁸

Thinkers around the world who once depended upon socialist ideas, or at least on the ideas of social democracy and the welfare state, are only now awakening to this portending financial crisis. One implicit assumption of the welfare state – namely, the central state will be relatively protected from the world economy, able to dictate its own course alone – is no longer secure. Like gale-force winds, the international forces of invention and discovery, global trade of unprecedented dimensions, open market exchange, free capital flows, and labor mobility across borders rush right through the internal world of individual welfare states. The tidy and self-enclosed social systems of individual nation states, locked into the forms of social welfare developed in the early 20th century, are under sudden and intense stress. Such stress might well provide a favorable new opportunity for the renewal of family life, if it leads to new ways of thinking, and new social institutions. The welfare state has not been kind to family life.⁹

Some of the major changes in the economic environment at the beginning of our promising new century are as follows: In 1965, gross world product was 1.7 billion dollars; by 1996, it had leapt to 29.5 billion dollars. In part, this tremendous increase in the wealth of the world was due to new inventions and discoveries, and to millions of new small businesses put into operation by poor peoples who had never had

a change to become entrepreneurs in the past. In part, though, this immense growth in wealth is also due to an even larger increase in world trade. Between 1965 and 1996, world trade from one country to another skyrocketed from 186 billion dollars to 6.37 trillion dollars.

It was not only the dimensions of world trade that grew with such enormous rapidity; the *kind* of goods exported by the less developed countries also changed dramatically. In 1965, 85% of the total exports of such countries were in the form of commodities, usually basic commodities. By 1997, 70% of their exports had shifted to manufactured goods, only 30% still in commodities. A great deal of the new manufacturing in the world is now taking place in countries in which, just a few decades ago, there was practically no manufacturing. This was a great boon to the poor of those countries. While still only a relatively small percentage of their populations today works in manufacturing industries, these few are now drawing income and benefits far superior to any that their families knew in the past. They were also learning new skills and aptitudes.

In the last 30 years, then, gross world product exploded; world trade exploded, and so also did foreign direct investment, which leapt to 400 billion dollars in 1997, seven times the level in real terms of three decades earlier. The daily turnover in foreign exchange markets increased from around 20 billion dollars in the 1970s to 1.5 trillion dollars in 1998. International bank lending grew from 265 billion dollars in 1975 to 4 trillion dollars in 1994.

These indicators shed light on why we find ourselves living in a very different world in the year 2000, this great year of Jubilee, than the way we lived just 30 years ago, in the youth of some of us. The world today is far richer, more interconnected, and more dynamic. Each nation is more interdependent with other nations than it was then. Many find this new global interdependence frightening. They would prefer the security of isolation. Yet the interdependence of one country with another better exemplifies the solidarity of all human beings than their relative isolation from and ignorance of each other. As certain Fathers of the Church in the Near East pointed out in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, international commerce and trade give practical expression to the need which the different nations have of one another – this one producing wine, that one wool, the other one grain, and still another olive oil – and in this way testify to the fundamental unity of the human race.

On the other hand, these relatively sudden transformations exact heavy costs. Local industries,

for many generations protected from the larger world, now face the stiff winds of competition from other peoples who can manufacture the same goods more cheaply, more efficiently, and sometimes with higher quality. Dozens of sources of strain and friction have been brought about by the emergence of the global economy from the global wars that wracked the 20th century. Not the least of these is the lack of a hospitable philosophy of globalization. Most ideologies of our time (fascism, socialism, social democracy, etc.) have been hostile to the new sources of economic dynamism: the forces of individual creativity, initiative, imagination, and markets that make possible the open entry of the poor and the marginalized into the ‘circle of development.’ Most advanced thinkers have been radically anti-capitalist, either for traditionalist or for socialist reasons. Thus, they find themselves ill-prepared for present sources of dynamism, invention and growth.

Setting ideologies to one side, here is where the Church can make – and has been making – a crucial contribution to human progress. The Church has available a universal point of view that is open to the diversity and the uniqueness of every people. Its vision of globalization is *not* homogenization, uniformity, sameness. In *Centesimus Annus*¹⁰ the Church expresses a vision of the economy, polity, and culture of a “civilization of love.” It discerns both the limits and the positive contributions to human social life of democracy, capitalism, and pluralistic cultures of life, and points out that all these three systems can be “rightly” or “wrongly” understood.

Thus, democracy without the rule of law, and without the protection of individual and minority rights, is merely the tyranny of a majority. An economy based on free economic initiative and creativity, which is not based on the rule of law and constrained by a rightly understood social morality, is disordered and destructive.¹¹ A culture that wrongly understands pluralism as a form of relativism or moral nihilism cannot produce free men and women, and only prepares the way for the triumph of brute dictatorial power.¹²

Centesimus Annus also sets before the whole world the goal of bringing all the poor people of the world into the common circle of development.¹³ It identifies the cause of the wealth of nations as human capital: knowledge, know-how, skill, aptitudes, habits of work and cooperation, and a wide variety of other virtues.¹⁴ It identifies the family as the fundamental social unit in which this capital is first transmitted, although of course in all these respects the family needs assistance from other institutions and cultural forces. The family is the fundamental cell of the civilization of love,¹⁵ and also of democratic habits,¹⁶ creative

economic initiative, and respect for human diversity and solidarity. Indeed, one fault of social welfare societies – of the Social Assistance State – is that its concentration of power in the central state gravely weakened families and other mediating institutions.¹⁷

If we use the condition of the poor nations as a guide to how well the global community is progressing, then we can use *Centesimus Annus* to form several useful practical judgments. The ultimate goal of a good global economic order ought to be this: that the real income of even the poorest members of the poorest nations should rise steadily, decade by decade, until all universally reach a decent standard of life. But real incomes can rise only if productivity rises, and inflation is held down. Productivity gains allow the same inputs of labor to be rewarded at higher and higher levels of real income. To maintain these levels, maintaining the stable value of income by controlling inflation is also indispensable. These are the two guidelines toward economic progress for all, drawing all the poor into the growing circle of development.

Further, Catholic leaders should lead the way in concentrating the world’s attention on what happens to the family. Catholics have reasons both theological and philosophical for thinking of the family as the fundamental cell of human life. Although we highly value the human individual, and believe with St. Thomas Aquinas that the human person is the most beautiful creature in the earthly universe, and the only one which God made for Himself, an end and not only a means, we also recognize that the person is *not* the fundamental cell of the human race. Persons are born in families. Moreover, it is only within families that the habits and culture proper to a civilization of love can be communicated. For each child first experiences unconditional love in the arms of its mother, and in the daily experiences of many years in the bosom of the family, under the twofold guidance of both a mother and a father, and ideally in a generous family of more than one child.¹⁸

We who are Catholics value the family. It is a mirror in many ways of presence of God among us. It is the institution within which we most learn the meaning of love, loyalty, honesty, dedication, sacrifice, and human sympathy.

“The glory of God is man fully alive” (St. Iranaeus). The hunger for that fullness in all its dimensions is first nurtured in the family. It is useful for us, then, in our practical thinking, to try to imagine social reforms that will strengthen the families of the future.

I would like in conclusion to call the attention to the brilliant proposal of a Chilean economist, Jose Pinera,¹⁹ who has introduced worldwide the most

significant social reform of the last century: the personalization of old-age-assistance accounts. This program is of immense importance to family life. It may be the most far-reaching practical innovation of Catholic social thought in the last hundred years. His program, introduced more than ten years ago in Chile, has already proved to be a significant success in more than a dozen other countries around the world.

Here is how it works. Ever since the time of Bismarck, many nations have developed retirement plans for older citizens, usually called old-age insurance. At a time when the average age of death was 45, Bismarck set the retirement age at 65, partly to guarantee that there were always enough younger workers paying into the system each year to support the smaller cohort of retirees. In most nations, there is no real "saving" fund or "insurance fund" in which the taxes paid into the system are invested and grow in income. Funds that come in today are, in effect, paid out today, and future generations receive merely an entitlement to begin collecting once they retire, in their turn. Pinera's idea is dramatically different, in three central respects.

First, instead of paying into a common state pool of funds, the individual worker opens in his own name a personal tax-free account in a government-approved investment vehicle (savings account, mutual fund, certificates of deposit, etc.). This account is owned by himself. Second, the large government bureaucracy formerly needed to collect old-age-retirement taxes or to disburse funds can be greatly reduced (or disappear), resulting in great social savings. Third, unlike existing government programs for retirement, these personal funds are inheritable by heirs designated by their owner. Should the worker die before he reaches retirement age, the investments growing by compound interest in his fund will be conveyed as an inheritance to whomever he has designated in his will. This feature of Pinera's scheme allows each succeeding generation of the family to be in a better capital fund passed down from generation to generation in the family. Each generation may add new wealth to it.

The great dream of the early 20th century, never realized, was the redistribution of *income*. Pinera's scheme envisages, instead, the universal distribution of *capital*, through the transformation of existing programs of old-age-assistance into personal, inheritable accounts.²⁰ Pinera has proved, through the success of this program in several nations, that this universal creation of a capital fund for every family (or lifetime annuity) is practical.

Family capital funds greatly raise the possibilities to open to ordinary families. They provide collateral for mortgages in the buying and developing of homes.

They pay for increasing years of education. They provide seed capital for starting new small businesses and to fulfill other dreams in the economic order. Moreover, all those nations that already have old-age-assistance programs, into which workers are already paying, have at hand a method for establishing a universal capital fund for each and every family.

Pinera's personal retirement accounts, which tax-exempt in various forms of investment vehicles, invested at say 5% or 6% a year, double in value every decade, and through compound interest grow to truly impressive amounts over a lifetime of regular investments. For example, a European who began investing the equivalent of three dollars every working day, or 15 dollars for every working week of his life from the age 25 to the age of 65, would have at his retirement a capital fund of \$126,000. This is rather remarkable growth from such modest investments. In a country of much lower average income such as Chile, lesser amounts also show sufficient growth to purchase significant lifetime annuities; they can also be used as collateral for mortgages. One can imagine how much greater it would be if each young person invested in such accounts the full amount that they presently pay in taxes for their old age assistance each year. (Most Americans and Europeans pay higher taxes into age-old-assistance than into income taxes.)

There is no reason why, by the end of the 21st century, we could not put such a capital investment fund in the possession of most families on earth. One does not have to be an economist to see the many social and personal benefits that could flow from such accounts. They give families a sense of ownership, a sense of participating in the dynamism of economic growth through their own investments, and a new sense of possibility about their own ability to invest in health care, education, and other goals. They bring them independence from the state. They help cement families together. They provide a way by which each generation can show its affection and commitment to the next generation and all its future posterity.

Even in the poorest countries, and among the poorest everywhere, ownership of capital (however small) brings a new sense of pride, responsibility, and possibility. And if we generalize Pinera's point, we may think of other ways by which to transform present distributive programs into capital-ownership programs. For instance, medical benefits might be designed in the form of medical savings accounts owned by each worker and invested thus: partly in medical insurance to cover major illnesses or accidents, partly into growth funds to be drawn upon for ordinary medical expenses. The unused portion of such accounts would be inheritable by loved ones.

More quickly than any other mechanisms, such personal investment funds could raise the poor out of poverty, generation by generation. They would give each new generation a higher starting place in life than their parents had.

I do not mean to end these remarks on an entirely positive level. We have just emerged from one of the most brutal, dark, and murderous centuries in history. It is entirely possible that the mistakes of the 20th century will be made over again in the 21st century. Yet nothing condemns us to such a fate. To live as free people means that we have a chance. No one guarantees to us that we shall succeed. But we can at least try.

The God Who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time. Our dignity is found in using that liberty responsibly. Surely, when looking into the eyes of the members of our own family, we feel that responsibility most keenly.

As Blaise Pascal taught us, the first moral obligation is to think clearly. We need to think most clearly about the public policy suggestions and possibilities given to us by our faith. If we are to build the civilization of love, we must build it in sound and practical ways. These ways are often quite humble. It is not a bad thing to work toward great ends by humble means. The founder of our faith, the source of our hope, began life as a carpenter.

Source: *Familia Et Vita*, Anno VI, No. 1-2, 2001

¹ The rights here spoken of belonging to each individual nation, are seen in a much stronger light if they are considered in relation to man's social and domestic obligations. "...No human law can abolish the natural and primitive right of marriage, or in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage, ordained by God's authority from the beginning. "Increase and multiply." Thus we have the family; the "society" of man's own household; a society limited indeed in numbers, but a true "society," anterior to every kind of State or nation, with rights and duties of its own, totally independent of the commonwealth. That right of property, therefore, which has been proved to belong naturally to individual persons must also belong to a man in his capacity of head of a family; nay, such a person must possess this right so much the more clearly in proportion as his position multiplies his duties." *Rerum Novarum*, in *Seven Great Encyclicals* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1931), 9.

² In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of *solidarity* and *freedom*, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext. The moral character of development and its necessary promotion are emphasized when the most rigorous respect is given to all the demands deriving from the order of *truth* and *good* proper to

the human person. Furthermore the Christian who is taught to see that man is the image of God, called to share in the truth and the good which is *God himself*, does not understand a commitment to development and its application which excludes regard and respect for the unique dignity of this image." In other words, true development must be based on the *love of God and neighbor*, and must help to promote the relationships between individuals and society. This is the "civilization of love" of which Paul VI often spoke. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 33.

³ All statistical data in this piece are taken from the *World Development Report*, 1998, which can be found at <<http://www.worldbank.org/wdr/wdr98/contents.htm>>.

⁴ Thomas L Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990) pp. 8-9.

⁵ Barbara Ward, *Faith and Freedom*, (New York: Image Books, 1958). Chapter one: "Foundations," pp. 13-78.

⁶ Mary Ann Glendon in *A World Made new: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001) show the influence of Catholic, Jewish and secular negotiators in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

⁷ For a four-way debate on these questions, see Michael Novak, *Is There a Third Way?* (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1998); *Existe Una Tercera Vía?* (Milano: Fondazione Nova Res Publica, 1999).

⁸ See Ben J. Wattenberg: *The Birth Dearth: What Happens When People in Free Countries Don't Have Enough Babies?* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987).

⁹ See, e.g., the evidence collected for the United States, in Michael Novak, John Cogan, et. al. *The New Consensus on Family and Welfare* (Washington: AEI Press, 1987).

¹⁰ *Centesimus Annus* (London: Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 1991), 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁸ In recent years, we note with sadness, many nations in Europe are becoming countries in which families have only one child. This means in the future not only no brothers and sisters, but also no uncles and aunts and cousins, such as we experienced in the past, but only individuals living in considerable emotional solitude.

¹⁹ See Jose Pinera: *The Future of Free Citizens Social Security: Privatization and the Fall of a Second Berlin Wall*, paper presented at the Mont Pelerin Society, General Meeting Chile, Nov. 12-17, 2000. See also Pinera's *Empowering Workers: The Privatization of Social Security in Chile*, Cato's letter no. 10 (1996). Information from the foundation he created: "The International Center for Pension Reform: can be found at <http://www.pensionreform.org>.

²⁰ Of course, those workers who so choose may invest the funds accumulated in their accounts in a lifetime annuity, thus, assuring themselves of financial support even if they live into their nineties or beyond. It is a matter of personal election whether they choose a lifetime annuity or maintain their own capital fund. ◆

POVERTY AND THE FAMILY IN THE THIRD WORLD

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I. Introduction

The family remains the basic unit of society in the world today. In its modern meaning, the family is that social unit comprising a man, his wife and their children. In most sub-Saharan African countries, the extended family, which is a more inclusive definition of the family, includes uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents and other distant relations. This paper has deliberately chosen to make the family its center-piece for a number of reasons. We have witnessed in recent years attempts at United Nations conferences to downplay the importance of the family concept as defined in this paper, and to replace with such alternative terms as “various forms of family” and “household”. Some examples are the conference on population and development in Cairo in 1994 and the Beijing World conference on Women in 1995. There are additional assaults on the family arising from recent developments in international economic and institutional arrangements: to be specific, the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in several sub-Saharan African countries since the mid 1980s, and the emerging system of globalisation that has given rise to severe economic and social problems under-running the stability and sacredness of the family. This paper examines aspects of Structural Adjustment Programmes, globalisation and their repercussions that impact adversely on the family. It then makes suggestions on how these problems can be effectively tackled with a view to restoring the family to its former pre-eminent position in the social organization of nations.

II. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP)

In the early 1980s, Western conservative economic doctrines, mirroring the economic orientation of the leading Western powers, became dominant in the major International Financial Institutions (IFIs): namely, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In response to the persistent and formidable economic problems of several sub-Saharan African countries in that period, problems which were the result of official corruption and mismanagement, these institutions masterminded the formulation of the basic SAP document. In short, SAP is a conservative and pro-business economic framework which seeks to reduce the role of government in the economy by removing subsidies on goods and services largely consumed by the vast majority of the citizens (education, petroleum products, electricity,

fertilizer), downsizing employment in government ministries and institutions, privatization, deregulation and liberalization programmes. Probably, the most important aspect of SAP is continued devaluation of exchange rates which reduces the purchasing power of citizens, and by increasing costs of imported machinery and raw materials, have destroyed a large percentage of industrial enterprises. The implementation of SAP in many countries has, as should be expected, exaggerated the problems of unemployment and poverty, which in turn have severely weakened the African family. Globalisation is the result of international institutional and technological changes in the last two decades. A most remarkable trend in the last two decades of the twentieth century is the increasing consolidation of nations into economic communities, which highlight interdependence and considerable loss of national sovereignty over economic policies to these economic communities, which are in fact supra-national organizations.

Another development in the last 50 years is the considerable reduction in barriers to international trade achieved during several Rounds of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). The last of these Rounds, generally referred to as the Uruguay Round, carried this trade-liberalising trend to its logical conclusion by including within its ambit trade in goods, services, capital flows, the protection of intellectual property rights, and the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to act as the instrument for promoting international trade liberalization and the integration of markets on a world-wide basis. It is quite clear that the integration of global markets favours the developed countries because their technological advancement enables them to capture the enlarged market at the expense of the less developed countries most of which are African. The most important aspects of globalisation are, among others:

- The WTO, championing trade liberalization
- Massive computerization of operations
- Information and communication
- Technology revolution facilitated by satellite communication systems
- Expansion of role of transnational corporations
- Corporate mergers and acquisitions
- Internationalisation of services.

It is clear from available evidence that countries that

are not technologically developed cannot compete effectively in international trade under globalisation. It is therefore expected that many of their factories and even farms will collapse in the process further compounding the social problems of unemployment, crime and poverty. The most important aspects of the negative repercussions of globalisation have been given prominence in the Holy Father's Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (pp. 35-36).

III. Pervasiveness of poverty

It is indeed most ironic that at a time when the world has more capability and resources to address global social problems, many third world nations are experiencing the most dehumanizing poverty. The problem is now so serious that the International Financial Institutions themselves and most African countries have introduced poverty alleviation programmes without first addressing in a convincing manner poverty which in Africa is inappropriate economic policy framework, corruption, and economic mismanagement. It is now generally accepted that SAP has virtually wiped out the middle class in Sub-Saharan Africa, thus relegating members of the former middle class to the bottom of the society, and helping to demote Nigeria, ranked a middle-income country in the 1970s, to the class of low-income economies.

Poverty manifests itself when citizens are unable to provide for themselves and their families such basic facilities as food, clothing, accommodation, and are deprived access to such essential social services/goods as potable water, electricity, modern sanitation facilities, health care and education for their children. As we have hinted at earlier, the causes of poverty are:

- inappropriate economic policies
- new global institutional arrangements which tend to penalize the technologically weak
- inequitable distribution of income and wealth
- poor governance practices
- external debt crisis in which debt servicing takes large proportions of annual budgets
- collapsing educational systems.

In Nigeria, poverty has created a number of problems which are becoming increasingly intractable and further compromising the stability and sanctity of the family. A listing of some of these problems is appropriate here:

- child labour
- child prostitution
- African teenage prostitution in Western countries exposing such youths to HIV/AIDS and other forms of inhuman treatment
- street trading by children who thus miss educational opportunities
- teenage marriage (for girls)
- women deprived of leisure and opportunities to look after their children as they work long hours

- to fend for their families
- destruction of the environment as people seek to make ends meet at all costs
- infant malnutrition
- relatively high maternal and infant mortality rates
- increasing high crime rates and youth militancy in marginalized regions
- commercialization of religion and emergence of cults.

How do we address these problems? Should the task be left to national governments alone, or should the international community, the Church, NGOs and local communities be involved? The major objective suggested by these questions is the restoration of the family as the basic social institution and the revival of true Christian ethical values.

IV. Restoring the family

The restoration of the family to its previous exalted position requires collaboration and co-operation among different institutions some of whose policies have contributed to the problems discussed in this paper. Specifically:

- International Financial Institutions and the WTO should pay more attention to the adverse consequences of their programmes and agreements on the common people. A people friendly re-orientation is recommended.
- National governments should consider critically the impact of policies suggested to them from external sources, particularly as they relate to the economic and social well being of their people.
- Government should effectively control corruption through good governance principles.
- Civil society (e.g. NGOs, CBOs) should seek to economically empower women, youths, especially unemployed graduates, through sensation and capacity programmes supported by appropriate UN specialized agencies.
- International Creditor Institutions should be pressurized by the Church to apply the Jubilee principle to reduce or even eliminate the external debt problem of poor countries.
- Efforts should be made by the International community and the Church to eliminate certain negative aspects of global satellite broadcasting and the Internet (e.g. pornography, violence, and foul language).
- The Church should intensify its efforts at global evangelisation as we draw near the Second Coming of the Lord. Such effort should include more effective use of the Internet to propagate the true gospel of Christ, the sanctity of the family, and to sensitise those undermining the family to repent and join the blessed family of the Lord. ♦

CONFLICT AND GROWTH IN FAMILY LIFE

Most schools of spirituality, Christian as well as non-Christian, have in the past tended to identify growth in holiness with the attainment of inner peace, harmony and integration. Struggles and conflicts, intrapersonal, interpersonal or social, were generally interpreted as the mark of one who was still very much on the way, plodding only in the preliminary stages of spiritual ascent. On the contrary, the one who has scaled the peaks of sanctity was seen as resting in peace up above and untouched by the turbulence and turmoils of everyday life and history. He was conflict-free and calm both interiorly and exteriorly.

Such a spiritual ideal might have appeared possible and desirable in the traditional society characterized by immobility and permanence. But society today is typified by convulsive social change, as well as progress which is rapid and often disorderly, induced by modern technology, massive industrialization and mass media. In such a scenario the spiritual goals of harmony and static peace, however much they might be desired, seem for all practical purposes unattainable and utopian.

Besides, with the spread of historical consciousness, we have become more aware of life and history as a continuous process. History means change and to be in history is to be permanently a pilgrim. In this historical condition, progress always implies struggles and conflict. It is never a fully finished condition or a permanently attained stasis. Rather, any progress is only provisional and we are called upon to continuously deal with ever higher levels of conflict leading towards loftier reaches or wholeness.

One of the areas in which this phenomenon has become strikingly noticeable is family life. The recent changes in our society, culture and consciousness have exercised enormous impact on couple relationships and family structure. In this essay, we shall briefly analyse the recent changes that have come about in the family and go on to see how despite the tragic potential for causing conflict in and the dissolution of family relationships they can also become, if right dealt with, a rich source of human growth and holiness.

From patriarchy to partnership

The recent changes in the family structure and style of relating can be summarily described as a move from patriarchy to partnership or, in other words, from male domination to mutuality.¹

The traditional family was father-dominated. The male was considered superior. Apart from possessing greater muscular strength, the male was also respected as the real transmitter of life. In the absence of scientific

knowledge about the process of human procreation, the semen was regarded as incipient life and the womb as the mere field in which life grows. Being thus considered stronger and superior, it was the father of the family who was the leader and made all the important decisions. The wife had only a subservient role. The patriarchal family had a hierarchical order with the husband at the top, with most rights and privileges, followed by the wife, the male and the female children.

Such a family set up had its own advantages. Of these, the most important one was that the roles were differentiated and imposed as biologically preordained. The rules were also culturally predefined and the rights and responsibilities of each were clearly separated and delimited. Thus any possible clash or competition was, for the most part, excluded by the very structure itself of the family. Even if conflicts were to arise, it was clear to all that the husband had the final say and the others had to obey. This ensured to a large extent the stability of the family.

Whatever be the advantages of the traditional patriarchal family, the fact is that, it has collapsed in most countries of the West and is starting to collapse even in the culturally conservative countries like India. There is emerging a new kind of family in which the couple relationship is based on companionship. The traditional hierarchical set up of the family is giving way to one based on intimacy, mutuality and equal partnership. The rigid rules of the patriarchal family have become more flexible and the roles which were earlier considered as predetermined are now freely chosen and at times even interchanged. In the new companionship-marriage, the separate spheres of activity and responsibility of the husband and wife have become very much merged and common. Leadership is shared and decision-making is participatory. The marital partners are co-responsible equals in all areas of family life.

This new structure and style of couple relationship, however rapidly it might be spreading, has certainly not proved to be an unmixed blessing. Its possibilities of failure have frightening consequences as it has been borne out by facts. Not only family conflicts have increased but also there is a steady rise in the incidences of wife beating, child abuse, youth delinquency, alcoholism, broken homes and above all divorce. This tragic development which is thought to be consequent to a considerable extent upon the spread of the new style-family may be read by some as an early symptom of the eventual disintegration and demise of family as a social institution unless, of course, the traditional family is reestablished.

However, a discerning observer would certainly see

that the disappearance of the traditional family is an irreversible trend and it needs not be equated with the disintegration of all family life. The new family is definitely in and it is not a mere passing fashion. It is a significant cultural change and a great opportunity. Instead of being all evil, it has enormous possibilities to lead men and women to a greater interpersonal growth and to a happier and a more fulfilling family life. Evidently to make a success of this new partnership-marriage, greater interpersonal relational skills need to be developed and particularly more mature ways of creatively coping with conflicts.

Coping with conflicts

Conflict arises when there is clash of wishes. The husband and wife are two different persons. Even though by sex they are complementary and marriage establishes a great area of commonality between them, they are still two unique individuals, each with his or her own different backgrounds, perceptions, values and wants. Differences between strangers may not matter much. But when persons have to interact daily, as do husband and wife, their differences may turn into disagreements, arguments and quarrels. The closer two individuals come to each other and the greater their involvement the potential for conflict between them also proportionately increases. Thus a conflict is a disturbing difference between two or more persons who interact or are commonly involved. Some such areas in which the husband and wife are commonly involved are sex, division of household responsibilities, financial management, relationship with in-laws and others and child rearing. These areas become conflict-generative some time or other in most families. Differences in the social, economic, educational and religious cultural backgrounds as well as the value orientations and ideological commitments of the marital partners do also cause or aggravate conflicts between them.

There are four main ways in which families deal with such conflicts: excluding, exploding, avoiding and resolving. Excluding is the way of the traditional family. The other three are mostly found in the new partnership marriages.²

Excluding

The traditional family's way of coping with conflict was to minimize its possible emergence. The disruptive power of conflict was very well recognized and family relationships were so structured as to curb its occurrence as much as possible. This was achieved by the hierarchical ordering of the family in which the husband was the deciding authority and the wife submissive, by separating their spheres of activities and by the rigid enforcement of rules. Not that the roles and rules were

never infringed and that there was no anger in traditional families. But even the ways husband and wife were to deal with anger was differently conditioned by cultural expectations. Husband could get angry as long as his anger did not become violent. Even some violence on his part was often condoned if it was not extreme. But a good wife was not supposed to get angry.

Such exclusion of conflicts, of course, brought about surface calm in the family and secured to a large extent its stability. But all was not well in the traditional family as it appeared on the outside. The price paid for the exclusion of conflicts and the safeguarding of family stability was indeed quite heavy. It was the very depersonalization of the wife and decay in the couple's mutual understanding and intimacy. Unchallenged and not confronted by the woman the man remained authoritarian and thus underdeveloped.

Exploding

With the growing awareness regarding marriage as a partnership of equals, the wives are less submissive and have become more assertive. If the husband has not adjusted himself to this and shed his patriarchal outlook and behaviour, the scene is set for explosive conflicts in the families. Anger is expressed without restraint and unmindful of the other person's feelings and such quarrels tend to be marked by raw fury and aggressive hostility. Being impulsive, these fights easily turn into slugfests resulting only in increased anger and deeper hurt feelings. Though the love of some couples may be so resilient as to effect reconciliation even after such quarrels generally they are only destructive. Couples having this pattern of impulsive fighting mostly "find that intimacy fades, love becomes more fragmented, and their marriages continue to erode."³

Avoiding

Most families today consider conflict as incompatible with genuine marital love and tend to avoid them. In the background of the growing expectation of romantic love as the core of marriage relationship when conflicts invariably occur, the marital partners feel very disappointed and guilty. Lacking in appropriate skills to deal with them constructively, they slowly drift apart emotionally. Interaction in areas which have potential for triggering fights gets slowly reduced. Intense feelings which cause quarrels are repressed. This inevitably leads to the loss of intimacy and renders their relationship superficial. As David Mace explains, "Couples who have habitually repressed their anger become incapable of tenderness. The inner core of love between them withers away; and although they may go through the motions of being affectionate, it is not genuine."⁴ As a result, disillusionment and frustration set in and one or the other

of the partners may turn elsewhere for a more satisfying relationship leading to further quarrels and divorce or take to alcohol and other addictive behaviour.

Resolving

Resolving is the way mature families deal with conflicts. They are not frightened of conflicts and do not seek to run away from them at all costs or pretend that they have no problems. They see occasional conflicts as normal and inevitable in any close relationship. Though they recognize the destructive potential of quarrels, they also know that if rightly handled, they can even become beneficial.

Anger or other negative feelings are neither repressed nor allowed to explode without restraint. They are recognized, accepted and the other is told about how one feels without letting become abusive outburst. Differing perceptions, preoccupations or expectations that lie at the root of the conflict are openly talked about, understood, valued and the necessary adjustments are made. One's own thoughtlessness, insensitivity or selfishness is acknowledged and forgiveness asked for and given. Thus a mature couple fight fair and every conflict is for them an opportunity to grow in mutual understanding, acceptance and intimacy. "Each conflict resolved marks another milestone in their progress toward relationship-in-depth."⁵

Conflict resolution, of course, is never a fully finished affair. Conflicts continue to arise even in the best of families and in the most intimate times for, as David Mace describes, the marital relationship is a recurring rhythm of "love-anger cycle."⁶ The resolution of low level conflicts becomes always a call to tackle higher level conflicts. In this process, couple realize communion and harmony only at the very depth and centre of conflicts.

Conflict resolution as a spiritual experience

Resolving marital conflicts leads to a deeper interpersonal communion and a deeper spirituality. This can be seen as happening in three most significant ways.

First, any conflict resolution requires the recognition of the other as other, as different from oneself with his or her uniqueness that is never reducible to one's own. Conflict often brings to light some hitherto unrecognized aspect of the others – his or her subtle feelings, desires or needs, values, etc. This otherness of the marital partners when recognised and respected, as one does in conflict resolution, increasingly opens out to the experience of the ultimate other. Martin Buber has articulated such an interpersonal spirituality which becomes realizable in an unparalleled manner in the encounter of the marital partner.⁷ As Samuel Rayan has recently pointed out, "Otherness is perhaps the finest representation we have of divine transcendence. The

basic experience of transcendence is the respect we have for the other and for what the other holds most dear."⁸ In explicitly Christian terms, the other in marriage partnership is the sacrament of the other who is manifest in Jesus Christ (see Ephe 5:25-32) and thus a gift and a grace.

Secondly, the resolving of marital conflict calls for compromise. One or the other of the partners or both may be required to give up his or her view or way, plan or pleasure. A certain limitation of the other may have to be accepted or one may be called upon to change oneself. This interpersonal adjustment or sacrifice is an expression of marital love in its sublime form. The resolution of conflicts thus becomes an occasion for the couple to actualize ever more their capacity to love. This opening up of new springs of love in their hearts naturally leads them to ever greater intimacy through which they have a foretaste of the Divine which is all love. As Felix Adler remarks: "The love which they found in themselves and still find there to the last, becomes to them the pledge of a vaster love that moves beyond the stars and the sun."⁹

The third component that invariably finds place in any mature resolution of marital conflicts is giving and receiving forgiveness. Often conflict arises when one of the partners feels deeply hurt. Besides even in a carefully handled conflict, an overflow of anger may easily take place. As a result, hurtful words might be exchanged and pile up grievances hurled at each other. All this might leave both the partners not only feeling pained but also guilty. Thus the resolution of a marital conflict is rarely complete until forgiveness is asked for and given. This act of mutual forgiveness becomes for them an experience of the unconditional forgiveness of God. It is in such acts of forgiving that they become more and more human and God-like sharing in the very being of the "God of forgiveness" (Ne 9:17).

Conclusion

Erik Erikson has shown at every stage of personal development growth is attained only through conflict.¹⁰ The same can also be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the various stages of the family life cycle.¹¹ However, in most so called good families, there is a taboo against quarrels. Religious instructions have only reinforced this taboo. Nothing has done more harm to marriages that this false belief. The fact is the couples who try to avoid conflicts at all costs are those who end up having very superficial and unsatisfactory relationship or sudden explosive conflicts endangering their very marriages. Instead when day to day marital conflicts are accepted as normal and constructively handled, couple relationship becomes enriched, their intimacy grows deeper and family life truly becomes an exciting adventure into the ever greater mysteries of the human as well as the Divine. For through

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THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY AND THE TEACHING OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

On the threshold of a new millennium, there are three proposals with global “reach” for ordering the society of the future.

The first of these is the pragmatic utilitarianism carried by American popular culture, by elite opinion in the developed world, by some international agencies and institutions, and by certain aspects of contemporary economic life. According to this proposal, freedom is essentially a matter of personal willfulness, or license. Put another way, freedom is a neutral faculty of choice that can attach itself legitimately to any object, so long as no one in whom the state declares a “compelling interest” is hurt. At a more popular level, this concept of freedom is neatly summarized and transmitted in Frank Sinatra’s familiar song, “I did it my way.” The family, on this understanding of freedom, is simply another contractual arrangement; it has no special moral status; it has no particular social standing, other than that which is ascribed to it by positive laws. The second of these global proposals for the future is the proposal of radical Islam. Here, freedom is a matter of adherence to the Qu’ran and to Islamic law, as these are interpreted by religious lawyers and clerics. While Islamic tradition values the family and rejects the hedonism of the sexual revolution, Islam’s current incapacity to provide a religious and moral justification for religious freedom and for legitimate social pluralism makes it a difficult partner in building the free and virtuous society, as those attending this conference would understand those terms – although coalition politics with Islamic states may be possible in meeting the threat to the family and its unique moral status that is currently being mounted in international institutions and agencies.

The third “global” proposal for the human future is the proposal of Catholic Social Doctrine, which has been richly developed by the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Here, freedom is understood, not as a matter of doing what we like, but rather of having the right to do what we ought. Freedom, in the Catholic understanding, is always ordered to moral truth and finds its fulfillment in genuine human flourishing. This concept of freedom-for-excellence permeates the social doctrine of the Church, as it has been developed by the popes since Leo XIII. And in that social doctrine, the family has a unique, privileged position. The family is an institution that is of the will of God, and it is the fundamental building-block of society. Because of that, the family is to be protected in law, respected in society, and nurtured by a vibrant public moral culture. The family, on this understanding,

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is the first school of freedom: in our families, we learn the habits of the heart and mind that allow us to be tolerant, civil, democratic citizens, respectful of the rights of others and committed to the method of persuasion in public life. The family, on the Catholic understanding of things, is one of those privileged free associations which stand between the individual and the state; and, as such, the family is essential to democracy, for democracy, as Alexis de Tocqueville taught us, requires a rich soil of free associations on which to grow.

The future of the family thus has a lot to do with the future of the quest for authentic human freedom, which, as the Holy Father said at the United Nations in 1995, is one of the great dynamics of contemporary history.

As we survey the situation of the family crossing the threshold of the new millennium, there is good news and bad news. The good news is that tens of millions of human beings still find, in committed, faithful family life, the deepest source of their human happiness and fulfillment. Whether they use the biblical language or not, hundreds of millions of human beings, throughout the world, intuitively understand that the family has a covenantal character: the family is not simply a contractual arrangement for the pursuit of self-interest; the family is about promise-making and promise-keeping, about self-giving love and receptivity, and thus has a richer, nobler moral texture. There are even signs, in the developed world, that social scientists are beginning to recognize, again, the crucial role the family plays in human development. Recent research in the United States on the long-term, distorting effects of divorce on the growth and education of children are causing a reconsideration of divorce law and a new willingness to consider the possibility that what was once contemptuously dismissed as the “traditional family” has a great deal to be said for it.

The bad news is that this new awakening of moral common sense in the matter of the family – and related issues of sexual ethics – has yet to penetrate public life in the kind of sustained way that would lead to desirable legal change. The agitations in the United States and other Western societies over the legal definition of “family” illustrate just how difficult it is to displace that notion of

freedom-as-willfulness that underwrites the diminished notion of the family as just one contractual arrangement among a multitude of such arrangements in society. In making our case for the family as a covenantal community, we cannot count on statistics to win the day; a great effort at cultural reformation is going to be required if a true understanding of freedom is to be re-established in the 21st century, and if the special, unique place of the family as a covenant community of marital fidelity and fruitfulness is to be recognized, once again, in both national and international law. This task is made even more pressing by the “reach” of the pragmatic/utilitarian concept of freedom that is made possible by the globalization of culture and the world economy.

What does this mean for us?

The family of the 21st century is not only threatened by distorted ideas of freedom and by badly-conceived laws; it is also threatened by poverty, disease, ignorance, and the chaos that ensues when the rule of law breaks down. If we are committed to the flourishing of family life in the new century and millennium, we must be, at the same time, committed to the strengthening of the free and virtuous society in its three component parts: a democratic political community, a free economy, and a vibrant public moral culture.

With John Paul II and the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, Catholic social doctrine has read the signs of the times and concluded that the free economy is the most efficient instrument yet devised for “utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs” (CA,34). This would seem to hold true for the global economy as well as for national economies. The free economy has lifted millions out of poverty and into the circle of productivity and exchange in the nations of the developed world; it seems reasonable to expect that the free economy, operating globally, can also lift families out of poverty and unleash the human creativity of millions on a worldwide scale.

But this will not happen by itself, for the free economy is not a machine that will run by itself. Certain habits of the heart and mind – certain virtues – are essential to operating the free economy and to bending the enormous energies it sets loose towards the ends of true freedom and genuine human flourishing. The “globalization” of the world economy, therefore, must also mean the “globalization” of efforts to bring to the world’s poor the education, health care, and stable governments that have been the conditions for the possibility of creating and broadly distributing wealth in the developed world. As the Holy Father suggested in *Centesimus Annus*, this means thinking of the poor, not as a problem to be managed (as too many welfare states do), but as people with potential: potential that can be unleashed for their betterment and the betterment of all humanity if basic human rights are respected and protected; if education is available to all; if minimal

public health standards are enforced; if these people with potential are given the opportunity to live out their economic creativity, freed from the choking embrace of excessive governmental regulation or statism.

In *Ecclesia in America*, the Holy Father wrote of the “globalization of solidarity.” I take it from this that, in a Catholic view of things, “globalization” means far more than extending the free economy into every corner of the world. What is necessary is the creation of an “ethic of global solidarity” in which Christians in the developed world understand that the concerns of the developing world are their concerns, too: not in some abstract sense, but in the now very concrete sense that how I buy and sell, how I invest, how I consume, and how I do the works of philanthropy and charity has, in this globalized world, a direct impact on tens of millions of men and women I will never meet. This suggests, among many other things, a revitalization of Christian mission and a new commitment of philanthropy and charity aimed at the empowerment of the poor.

The Holy Father is also concerned that the globalization of international economic life will bring with it a globalization of the toxic effects of the pragmatic/utilitarian ethos I mentioned previously. The Holy Father is right to be concerned; we should all be concerned. The experience of the 1994 Cairo World Conference on Population and Development is, or ought to be, fresh in our minds. Here, unmistakably, was a new totalitarianism at work, the totalitarianism of lifestyle libertinism and its insistence that freedom-as-willfulness be enshrined as a fundamental human right – even to the point of declaring abortion-on-demand, the willful killing of the innocent for reasons of convenience, a basic human right on a par with religious freedom and freedom of speech and association. That effort was defeated at Cairo, in no small part because of the personal witness of John Paul II and the effective diplomacy of the Holy See. But, as we have seen in the years since Cairo, the proponents of freedom-as-willfulness are not retreating. And frequently, what they cannot achieve at the local or national level they are trying to impose on local and national communities through international law or various schemes of aid.

Meeting their challenge requires that the developed world put its own house in order. This will require the reform of abortion law at the national level and serious efforts to prevent the imposition of the notion of marriage as mere contract through national, transnational, and international legal instruments. This, in turn, means that conscientious Christians must see the defense of the family in explicitly global terms, and that national governments must stop thinking of transnational and international institutions as a kind of not-so-serious sideshow.

Doing this requires replacing the culture of death with a vibrant culture of life. And that, in turn, means

evangelization as well as legal and diplomatic action. There is a seamless web here: absent cultural renewal, legal remedies are, at best, delaying tactics. As the Holy Father has suggested, rebuilding the culture of life – building a civilization of love – does not mean retreating into national or local bunkers. It means infusing what would seem to be the irreversible trend toward a globalization of technology, finance, and trade with genuinely human values. And that, in turn, means taking a new evangelization seriously. For, as the Holy Father has urged on numerous occasions, the new evangelization is a matter of evangelizing cultures as well as individuals. Both are indispensable.

It is easy to be pessimistic when we consider the threats to the family that are all around us. But the response to these threats should not be a hollow optimism. Optimism and pessimism are matters of optics, of how we look at things, and that can change from one minute to the next. Rather, what is required of us, as we seek to evangelize the new global culture and to infuse the new globalized economy with Christian values, is something sturdier: and that “something” is hope, a theological virtue, a virtue rooted in faith.

Catholic social doctrine is, in this sense, an expression of the Church’s hope for the human future, which is ultimately grounded in the Church’s faith that Jesus Christ is Lord. And, as John Paul II has never ceased to remind us, Jesus Christ reveals both the face of the Father and the true meaning of our humanity. In bringing the men and women of the globalized 21st century to God and Christ, we are bringing our brothers and sisters to a truer, fuller, nobler understanding of their humanity. That is what it means to be the Church in the modern world. That is what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ in a world now being changed as dramatically as the world was changed by the industrial revolution. Evangelization and the building of free and virtuous society must not be set against each other. Evangelization and the building of the free and virtuous society are two moments in the same process of living our conviction that, in Jesus Christ, God has spoken his definitive word about the human world and its destiny.

Source: *Familia Et Vita*, Anno VI, No. 1-2 2001

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divorce, de facto unions and other attempts to weaken the family, such as the legalization of homosexual unions. In Britain the situation is even worse. Family breakdown is leading to child homelessness, drug abuse, neglect of babies and children and violent crime. This is the conclusion of a study published by the Center for Policy Studies last month. “Broken Hearts: Family Decline and the Consequences for Society” presents a number of dramatic statistics. The number of marriages has fallen by nearly 40% in the last 30 years. And Britain is the divorce capital of Europe, with a rate of 2.7 divorces per thousand marriages (1998 data) compared with a European average of 1.8. A quarter of all children in the United Kingdom are now living in one-parent families.

The number of children born outside marriage reached 39% in 1999, up from 6.3% in 1961. In fact, by 2000, more children were conceived outside marriage than within, but a third of these conceptions were terminated by abortion. The breakdown in marriage has led to 23% of children being in families receiving social assistance in 1999, compared with 7% in 1979, and an increase in the proportion of children living in poverty, 35% in 1999, up from 10% two decades earlier.

At the same time that the family and marriage has been disintegrating, many social indicators show

negative trends. Jill Kirby, author of the “Broken Hearts” study, notes that it is not easy to prove a direct cause-effect relationship, but many studies have demonstrated the problems suffered by children growing up outside a stable two-parent family. Negative data start with the death rate of babies, 5.8 per thousand in the United Kingdom, the second highest in Europe, surpassed only by Greece at 5.9. Among those aged 15 to 24, the suicide rate has doubled in the last 30 years. Violent youth crime is also on an upward curve.

Kirby accuses both the present Labor government and the Conservative Party, in power from 1979 to 1997, of failing to support the family. Articles published in the Telegraph support this view. On Monday the London paper, citing leaked documents, affirmed, “Government ministers will not speak publicly in favor of marriage because of Cabinet splits over family policy.”

The next day, the Telegraph reported that funding of pro-marriage groups for the celebration of National Marriage Week has been cut off by the government, while support is being extended to organizations that promote non-marital relationships, including homosexual ones.

Far from being an exclusively “Catholic” concern, healthy families are vital for the well-being of all societies. Which some governments are a lot slower at recognizing than others are. ♦

How Governments Are Dealing with Families Some Positive Trends, and Some Foot-Dragging

NEW YORK, MARCH 16, 2002 (Zenit.org).- Recent news on the family shows a mixed bag of trends. Last month the Bush administration announced plans to promote marriage as part of its welfare program.

Wade F. Horn, assistant secretary for children and families at the Department of Health and Human Services, said that the federal government would promote marriage more among low-income people. The plan is backed by an extra \$300 million in funding. President George W. Bush's proposal will be debated by Congress as part of the review of the 1996 legislation that introduced far-reaching changes in the funding of federal welfare programs, the New York Times reported Feb. 19.

The additional funds will go to programs such as education on the importance of marriage and premarital counseling for people planning to wed. One aim of the 1996 reforms was the promotion of families and marriage. Since then, positive results have arisen, such as a drop in births to young single mothers.

Horn said his main concern in promoting marriage is to ensure the well-being of children. "The empirical literature is quite clear that, on average, kids who grow up in stable, healthy, married, two-parent households do better than kids who grow up in some other kind of arrangement," he stated.

Not all welcome the proposal. Some critics question the idea of government being in the business of promoting marriage. But as Amitai Etzioni observed, the idea of premarital counseling is hardly new. The George Washington University professor and promoter of communitarianism, in the March 1 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*, stated: "The Catholic Church long has encouraged couples who are planning to marry to attend a set of sessions in which they talk with a priest about major issues they will face after they tie the knot."

Etzioni pointed out that in some cities, clergy have signed a "Community Marriage Policy," pledging to require marital preparation for couples. As a result, divorce rates had fallen substantially — in one city by 22% — between 1991 and 1997.

That governments have a legitimate interest in promoting marriage was supported by the findings of research report published in the United States to coincide with Valentine's Day. The report, "Why Marriage Matters: 21 Conclusions from the Social Sciences," found that communities where successful marriages are common have better outcomes for

children, men and women than those where the divorce rates are high, the Washington Times reported Feb. 14.

The study was compiled by 13 scholars from three organizations: the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education; the Institute for American Values; and the Center of the American Experiment.

Among their findings: Cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage; marriage is associated with reduced rates of alcohol and drug abuse; married mothers have lower rates of depression than single or cohabiting mothers; married women have a lower risk of domestic violence than single women.

Problems in Spain and Britain

The idea that governments would do well to promote marriage doesn't seem to have penetrated in two countries where families could do with some help, Spain and Britain. The newspaper *El País* on March 10 reported that data for 1999, just published by Spanish authorities, show that 16.3% of babies are born out of wedlock.

While that figure is lower than the European Union average of 27.2%, the situation is worsening rapidly. In 1990, unmarried mothers counted for 9.6% of births. In the next five years, this number rose only slightly, to 11.1%. But by 1999 the rate jumped to 16.3%. While Spain is still far from reaching the levels of illegitimacy in countries such as Sweden (55.3%) or Denmark (44.9%), it is now well ahead of Italy (9.2%) or Greece (3.9%).

A recent study by the European Union statistical authority, Eurostat, showed that Spain is the EU country that least helps the family. Not only is spending on social protection lower in Spain than in most other EU countries, but the part dedicated to families is particularly below average. According to a Jan. 25 Eurostat press release, the 1999 data show that EU nations dedicate to families and children an average of 8.5% of their social spending. Spain dedicates 2.1%. Last December Spain's bishops appealed to the government to defend the family. In a statement published by the episcopal conference to commemorate the Day of the Family, celebrated Dec. 30, the prelates noted the serious problems facing the family. According to the Madrid daily ABC on Dec. 29, the document deplors the spread of

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CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON: GLOBALIZATION, ECONOMY AND THE FAMILY

Vatican City, 27 – 29 November 2000

At the joint initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty (Grand Rapids, USA), a large group of professionals – university professors, jurists, economists, politicians, legislators, theologians and those responsible for the pastoral care of the family – coming from all continents, met in the Aula Vecchia del Sinodo, Vatican City, from November 27 – 29, 2000, to reflect on the different aspects of the so called “globalization”, and its impact on the family and family life.¹

I. What is globalization?

“Globalization” corresponds to a current phenomenon that everyone perceives through experience, although from many different and somehow puzzling aspects. We can describe it as a process whereby interconnectedness and unity among people are increased throughout the world. Due to the changes that have taken place during the past 10-20 years (on different levels: economic, political, social, cultural, etc.), worlds which were until now, if not in open conflict, at least in economic and mutual competition, now find themselves *together*, and the significance of this “together” raises many questions.

Globalization, in a certain sense, is indeed as old as humanity itself. However, if cross-frontier trade has always existed, globalization of business in today’s connotation is of more recent origin. It has its roots in the recent development of technology – telecommunications, television, computers. Even international travel is easier, cheaper and faster. All this makes the world “smaller”. This has led to a more integrated world at the economic level of commercial exchange, movement of finance and technological innovation. But globalization also includes political, social and cultural aspects.

II. Evaluation of globalization

It is generally recognized that globalization offers great possibilities for development and the production of wealth. Admittedly, however, this does not guarantee an equal distribution of riches among the people living

in the various countries. In fact, “the wealth generated often remains concentrated in a few hands”.² These words underline the ambivalence of globalization. If this reality of our times has some troubling implications, it also offers some attractive opportunities.

A – Adverse aspects of globalization

As far as multinational corporations are concerned, it is not surprising to see that if they are indeed the motors of globalization, they may also be the origin of some observed malfunctions. Paradoxically, they can generate new forms of exclusion. For a great number of human beings, the possibility of having access to the goods of the earth, to which Pope Paul VI referred, is still remote.³

The power of multinational corporations has also made evident the increasing weakness of the political institutions that exist today. Some states are subject to the dictates of these corporations, in particular with regard to price fixing. In such instances, trade unions and citizens are unable to negotiate on equal terms. Even the notion of sovereignty is in question.

International organizations, which initially aimed at bringing together sovereign States, are becoming ever more dictatorial, as if anointed by a supranational power, and undermining independence, autonomy and sovereignty. This trend is further increased by the interference of a network of ideologically-driven and well-funded NGOs that exert an inordinate influence within these international institutions.

However, the most negative impact of globalization may not be on economics, but on culture. The various cultures which, in their diversity, stand out like flowers in the field of the human family, are exposed to the dulling effect of sub-cultural products imposed on unprepared people lacking criteria and defense mechanisms. As a result, there is a great danger of cultural relativism and skepticism regarding the truth and natural law. All propositions circulate without any criteria for separating the good from the bad, right from wrong.

One of the most striking effects of this globalization of culture can be seen in the promotion of a new anti-life mentality, foreign to local traditions, in many poor countries through the action of all sorts of agents. To this grave cultural aggression the blackmail must be

added which is imposed on poor countries through development aid loans in which assistance, both financial and technological, is conditioned by the acceptance of birth control programs. There is enough factual evidence to state that this plot to reduce the populations of poor nations constitutes a real “conspiracy against the poor”.

B – Opportunities offered by globalization

Fortunately, globalization also has positive, hopeful aspects. The question is to discern them in order to take advantage of the new possibilities which thus open up.

First, economic globalization can be positive if it fulfills the goal set before us by the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* of bringing all the poor peoples of the world into the common circle of development.⁴ *Centesimus annus* also presents a vision of the economy, politics and culture as a “civilization of love”. This is not an impossible goal of solidarity prevails over the automatism of the market, thanks to corresponding international agreements.

Globalization may bring larger investments in poor countries. This is certainly a good on the condition that the investors act in the interest of the local workers and the country in question, and do not limit themselves to a temporary drain of resources. However, the problem of international debt, with the questions it raises about its origin, development, and the way it can be solved, undermines the development possibilities that globalization could offer in the poor countries. If debt has to be paid back, it should not be at the expense of human beings.

We can only rejoice at the ease with which goods circulate today on an international scale. We must also recognize that the mobility of financial investments can constitute a new and decisive opportunity for developing countries.

It is also obvious that the facility in moving today from place to place, and the speed and multiplicity of cultural exchanges represent an opportunity for people to open themselves to cultures which, in other eras, would have been unknown. This may improve creativity and, as a result, help free the world from poverty.

These cultural exchanges could create closer links between people and thus increase the solidarity within the human community.

The increased exchange of knowledge which results from globalization is not only an obvious good in itself; it is also the most important factor in the recent acceleration of scientific and technical advances. Globalization brings together brains from all parts of the world in real time.

Lastly, the positive impact of globalization on populations is manifested in a general increase in world life expectancy.

For the Church, globalization presents an

exceptional opportunity for the New Evangelization: by her nature, being “catholic”, she is open to worldwide dimensions. God’s love knows no limits and should be reflected and expressed in the Church as a divine place of diversity and communion.

III. Globalization and the family

The phenomenon of globalization is not without important consequences on the family, which is the union of a man and a woman for life, founded on marriage. Globalization may interfere with the family at all levels. A distinction can be made between the aspects of globalization – economic, political, social, cultural – which have consequences on the life of families, and the other aspects which concern the family’s educational role.

A – Effects of globalization on the life of families

The family fulfills complex *economic functions*. It is a center of production, income, consumption, and savings. Above all, it is the originator of human capital. Bringing up children and educating them so as to enable them to meet the very high standards of knowledge and the skills required by present-day competitive conditions has a cost, which generally is not reflected adequately in tax breaks. The housewives’ work in the home is not fully recognized.

Second, the family can be affected by the indirect consequences of the internationalization of trade and investment. Members of the family are under pressure to *follow the transfer of their company*, and thus have to commute, travel or even emigrate.

Third, families can also be affected by the *demands of performance and productivity*. The stress introduced by the imperative of productivity often puts family concerns in competition with employment. Woman’s work outside the home affects the quality of the relationship between spouse and the equilibrium of families as a whole. But the problem may be even more serious regarding fathers as they let themselves be absorbed by their profession, thereby giving less and less time to family life. As a consequence, in the absence of a convincing paternal figure at home and early moral guidance by the father, homosexuality and criminality can result in children.

Globalization is, however, more than economics: it involves the lives of people, the lives of families. There is a *heartless, soulless globalization* in which the poor find themselves stricken by a kind of ideology which imposes a vision on the world in which the meaning of life and a sense of values are lacking. Such globalization, despite its positive aspects, brings with it a definite “*life-style*”, an individualistic vision in which the family disintegrates and has no more place.

Lastly, globalization is in danger of bringing on a world scale the so-called “*new human rights*”, which exalt the interest of the individual at the expense of the rights of the family. This may also affect solidarity within the family in the near future. As a result, solidarity within society itself may be endangered, as the family is the primary school of mutual respect and community living.

B – Factors influencing the educational role of the family

Through the phenomenon of globalization, as it is presently developing, the family’s primary role as a moral training ground is adversely affected. A new worldview is gaining ground with *economics seen as the primary element of life*: everything is geared towards having rather than being. The fundamental questions of: Who am I? Where am I going? are secondary or even forgotten.

Furthermore, globalization allows the spread on a world scale different ideological trends brought by triumphalistic liberalism. In the first place we have to mention the exaltation of *freedom unrelated to truth*, with no duties or responsibility, an empty freedom that seeks to be filled with all kinds of experiences.

In addition, we know the often negative impact that, for example, television and now the Internet can play on *the way families are represented*, e.g., by presenting adultery or abortion as a normal way of life, thereby degrading the transmission of life. The traditional model of the family, founded on a permanent monogamous, heterosexual union is challenged by the so-called alternative models of “families”, such as couples simply living together, homosexual relations, etc.

Recent studies from the United States show that the development of *criminal behavior* in children or young adults is often caused by parents’ failure to give the necessary moral training to their children during the formative years. Globalization is creating a unified way of living and behaving that is contrary at times to family traditions, and in which morals are not always given their due place. If the natural institution of the family is not protected against the current cultural onslaught, crime will continue to plague our societies.

Lastly, the family’s role as the primary place for the education of children⁵ is *often usurped by the State*. Educational programs are mostly geared towards helping children to fit into a fiercely competitive world where winning is all that really matters. And we cannot ignore the fact that the pragmatic criteria in sexual education in schools contribute to a moral breakdown in the area of sexuality.

C – The family can be an actor and a beneficiary of globalization

Nonetheless, in a world where the forces within

globalization tend toward depersonalization, the family exists as a privileged haven where people can affirm their personal identity, and where this identity can be recognized in a context of mutual love and understanding. While radical individualism is too often pervasive, *the family is being rediscovered more and more* as an essential good.

Looking on the risks of globalization in terms of individualism and a lack of mutual interest and solidarity, we see that *the family has the power to counteract these negative trends* if it is faithful to itself and to its vocation. It is indeed within the family that human rights are first affirmed and respected. The family is the primary place for socialization and for learning solidarity.

On the other hand, the family is the first natural institution where human beings are taught the *ways of law* and how to appreciate the sources of the law inwardly. Therefore, if through globalization the just rule of the law is spread, starting in the family, we can undoubtedly hope for a better world.

The family is therefore *an actor* and a *potential beneficiary* of globalization in which it can intervene in three ways: first, as a specific reality that politicians and economists must take into serious consideration; second, as a school of community life where today’s or tomorrow’s citizens learn to exercise their responsibility; third, as a pool for businesses, both small and large, to whom families can bring the human capital they need for their dynamism and creativity.

D – Synthesis

Globalization should be at the service of man and not man at the service of globalization. It should safeguard human dignity and the common good.

In this perspective, the *Social Doctrine of the Church* offers the most fruitful source of inspiration for all public authorities, both national and international. The Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, the synthesis and ultimate exposition of this Social Doctrine, placed it firmly on the two pillars of *solidarity* and *subsidiarity* (CA 15). As long as these two basic principles are not only respected but actively promoted by the different States, society has a chance to remain just and humane. Globalization offers an opportunity to realize such a program on a larger scale, hopefully with the involvement of international organizations. In this context, the creation of a new social contract could be envisaged on an international scale, marked by a spirit of solidarity, which will result in greater cooperation at various levels and will not exclude any of the poorer countries, contrary to what happens today.⁶

The family has a special place in this context because it is in the family that citizens of tomorrow can

best learn how to live concretely both solidarity and subsidiarity, under the active guidance of their parents. This is why the family, the fundamental unit of society, school of socialization and responsibility, actor and beneficiary of globalization, should be at the center of all concerns, on the part of governments and international bodies.

IV. Recommendations

We, participants in this Congress on Globalization, Economy and the Family, present the following recommendations:

A – Evangelization

We see in globalization a challenge as well a propitious moment for the Church. The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* called Christians to face a new social order created by generalized industrialization.⁷ Today, we Christians have to discern what globalization means as a sign of the times. In this spirit, we recommend:

- 1) that the Church take advantage of all the modern means of communication that are available today. The range of their application is limitless: ecumenical dialogue, daily information regarding the Church, sensitivity to the problems encountered by distant ecclesial communities, spreading knowledge of Sacred Scripture, documents of the Magisterium, and so on;
- 2) vigilance, regarding the negative consequences of globalization to the extent that they oppose catechesis and relativize the contents of the faith and natural law, thus leading to immorality.

B – Economic activity

Recalling the teaching of John Paul II,⁸ we affirm the priority of workers and their family over the means of production.

We invite the economic profession to analyze more deeply the many aspects of the role played by the family in economics, as a producer of human capital, and as a center of income production and consumption. In this way they will be able to guide public opinion, institutions and governments towards policies consistent with the positive role played by the healthy, united and educative families in the economy.

We call upon those Christians who have expertise in economics and finance to put their knowledge, skills, and experience at the service of those who are at risk of exploitation.

We invite businesses not only to defend, but also to value the human capital in society, by intervening with political bodies in favor of families and family education.

We also invite them to prevent the emergence of new forms of exclusion in the places where they operate. Such exclusion is the result of ignorance, the withholding of knowledge, or a deficient cultural environment. In this perspective, we urgently call upon businessmen to take the necessary steps to motivate and prepare young people to enter and become fully integrated into the world of professional activity. We also invite businesses, whenever it may be needed locally, to supplement the deficiencies of public education through the promotion of private alternative schools.

We find it necessary to go beyond the artificial division made between the family and work. In this perspective, we invite families to discover the positive aspect of becoming a protagonist in the economic process, through the creation of small enterprises, with a family character. In such family enterprises, the creativity of individuals can be expressed more fully, and productivity, solidarity and ethics can be associated in the best way. We therefore call upon governments to remove any obstacles that may prevent people from using their creativity and labor in a positive way.

C – Culture of political commitment

We recommend that Christian communities encourage their members to engage in political activity, inspired by justice and solidarity.

We invite at the same time all politicians linked to the Catholic Church to coordinate their efforts. They should make known on the national scene their concern for civil society, their respect for intermediate bodies (associations, groups, etc.), a sense of the common good, and openness to the international community.

We invite them to be particularly committed to the defense of their people before the unreasonable demands of large companies, the domineering tendencies of certain nations, or the pressure exerted in terms of population control by international organizations.

We urge them to promote within parliaments, as well as in international bodies those policies which would favor the family, founded on marriage.

We ask them to keep a constant concern for subsidiarity, thus allowing families to organize themselves for the best education of their children, particularly in regards to sexual education programs.

D – Culture of human rights

We recommend that all Christian communities reinforce their commitment in favor of the rights of the human person, from the moment of conception until natural death. Today, the expression of “human being” is sometimes opposed to the word “person”. It is important for Christians to keep their language free from any ambiguities. They have to be careful not to fall prey to relativism and any redefinition of terms.

We ask all pastors to proclaim both in favorable and in unfavorable times, the incomparable value of each human being, independent of all discriminatory criteria linked to age, sex, race, physical or mental health, social conditions, etc...

We also appeal to the numerous Catholic educational institutions to be attentive not only to the spread of a culture that respects natural law and human rights based on Christian anthropology, but also to dedicate themselves, without any considerations of profit, to sharing knowledge, which is the prelude to any authentic democracy.

E – Culture of family and life

As we face the ideologies against the family and life brought by some currents in the globalization process, and the vulnerabilities inherent in economic globalization, we urge Christian families to be ever more open to the graces from the sacrament of marriage which continually vivify them.

We invite people to reflect more deeply on the truth of mutual, self-giving, faithful and fruitful human love as the basis of family life. The concept of marriage has to be very clear to all, and any possible confusion with the different kinds of so-called “unions” spoken about today must be avoided.

We ask parents to keep or to regain full confidence in themselves and in their unique vocation. In this way they will be able to carry out the fully human and fully Christian formation of the most precious capital: the human person.

We invite parents, the family and educators not to present freedom to children as an absolute value which can only be realized when there are many possible choices. Such a conception of freedom ends up impeding the emergence of a higher good for which it would be worthwhile renouncing other choices.

We invite parents to exchange information, in a spirit of solidarity, in which economic advice and support, education, and spiritual life will all find their place together, with the subsidiarity assistance of the state, when appropriate and without burdensome conditions.

We also urge them to organize themselves in order to bring pressure upon political authorities to restore, when necessary, the prerogatives inherent in the natural institution of the family. The family, as a fundamental community of persons, must be an actor, a positive and demanding protagonist, especially when globalization tends to take on an individualistic undertone, with a lifestyle that is hostile to family traditions and values. This “resistance” to heartless globalization becomes particularly important in the poor nations which find themselves as a target for the international cry against population growth.

Conclusion

Globalization is neither an angel nor a monster. At the dawn of the third millennium, it is up to families to give an adequate answer to the challenge and opportunities offered by this new emerging social order. We pray that the grace of the Lord of Life, passing through the testimony of Christian families, may come to enlighten our troubled world. Our firm hope is that the globalization which is shaping the culture of tomorrow will not deliver a system without a soul, with sterile tensions, but will blossom into a civilization of love.

¹ This Congress was preceded by an International Congress on “The Family, the Economy and the Future of Society” (Vatican, March 6-9, 1996): cf. *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 16, 1996, p. 4.

² Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Cardinal President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, on the occasion of the Congress, “Globalization, Economy and the Family” (Vatican, November 25, 2000).

³ Cf. Paul VI, Discourse to the FAO, November 16, 1970: “Certes, la tentation est grande, devant les difficultés à surmonter, de s’employer avec autorité à diminuer le nombre des convives plutôt qu’à multiplier le pain partagé”.

⁴ “But there are many human needs which find no place on the market. It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish. It is also necessary to help these needy people to acquire expertise, to enter the circle of exchange, and to develop their skills in order to make the best use of their capacities and resources. Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists *something which is due to man because he is man*, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required ‘something’ is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity”. John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, May 1, 1991, No. 34.

⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, No. 71.

⁶ Cf. Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Cardinal President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, on the occasion of the Congress “Globalization, Economy and the Family” (Vatican, November 25, 2000).

⁷ Leo XIII, Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891.

⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, 1981. ◆

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their creative struggles with each other, the marital partners are wrestling, as Jacob did, with the God of life himself and getting his blessing (see Gen. 32:24-29)

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Source: Jeevadhara, A Journal of Christian Interpretation, **Vol. XXIII, No. 133.**

¹ See David Mace, *Close Companions: The Marriage Enrichment Handbook*, New York: Continuum, 1982, pp. 9ff.

² See E.G. Nelson, *Keeping Love Alive*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1978, pp. 64ff; David Mace, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 85ff.

³ E.G. Nelson *Op.Cit.*, p. 71

⁴ David Mace, *Op. Cit.*, p. 95

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷ See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Edinburgh: T & T. Clark. 1959 (2nd edn.), pp. 75ff. "He who loves a woman, and brings her life to present realization in his, is able to look in the *Thou* of her eyes into a beam of the eternal *Thou*". – *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁸ Samuel Rayan, "The Other and the Theologian: in S. Arockiasama (ed.) *Responding to Communalism: The Task of Religions and Theology*. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Parakash, 1991, 107-137, p. 127.

⁹ Felix Adler as cited in David Mace, *Op. Cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁰ See Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980, pp. 51ff.

¹¹ See Jack Dominian, *Make or Break: An Introduction to Marriage Counselling*, London: SPCK, 1984, pp. 91ff. ◆