



The Holy See

VIDEOCONFERENCE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MASS
CLOSING THE SIXTH WORLD DAY OF FAMILIES HELD IN MEXICO CITY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Sunday, 18 January 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I warmly greet you all at the end of this solemn Eucharistic celebration with which the *Sixth World Meeting of Families* in Mexico City is ending. I thank God for the many families who, sparing no effort, have gathered together around the altar of the Lord.

I particularly greet Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State, who has presided at this celebration as my Legate. I would like to express my affection and gratitude to Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, and likewise to the members of the [Pontifical Council for the Family](#) of which he is President, to Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop and Primate of Mexico, and the Central Commission that has overseen the organization of this Sixth World Meeting. I extend my gratitude to all who with their self-sacrificing dedication and devotion made the Meeting possible. I also greet the Cardinals and Bishops present at the celebration, especially the members of the Mexican Bishop's Conference, and to the Authorities of this beloved nation, who have generously hosted this important event and made it possible.

You Mexicans know well that you are very close to the Pope's heart. I think of you and offer to God the Father your joys and your hopes, your plans and your anxieties. In Mexico the Gospel has put down deep roots, forging its traditions, its culture and the identity of its noble people. It is necessary to guard this rich patrimony so that it may continue to be a source of the moral and spiritual energy needed to face today's challenges with courage and creativity, and may be handed on as a precious gift to the new generations.

With joy and interest I have participated in this World Meeting, above all with my prayers, giving specific guidance and attentively following its preparation and development. Today, through the means of communication, I have come on a spiritual pilgrimage to this Marian Shrine, the heart of Mexico and of all America, to entrust all the world's families to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

This World Meeting of Families has aimed to encourage Christian homes so that their members may be people who are free and rich in human and Gospel values, on their way towards holiness; that is the best service that we Christians can offer contemporary society. The Christian response to the challenges that confront the family and human life in general must face consists in reinforcing trust in the Lord and the vigour that derives from faith itself, which is nourished in attentive listening to the Word of God.

How beautiful it is to gather as a family to let God speak to the hearts of its members through his living and effective Word. In prayer, especially in the recitation of the Rosary, as it was recited yesterday, the family contemplates the mysteries of the life of Jesus, interiorizes the values on which it meditates and feels called to embody them in its life.

The family is an indispensable foundation for society and for peoples, just as it is an irreplaceable good for children, whose coming into the world as the fruit of love, of the total and generous gift of their parents, deserve to be born. As Jesus demonstrated by honouring the Virgin Mary and St Joseph, the family occupies a fundamental role in a person's upbringing. It is a true school of humanity and perennial values. No one has given life to himself.

From others we received life, which develops and matures with the truths and values that we learn in our relationship and communion with others. In this regard, the family founded on the indissoluble matrimony of a man and a woman is the expression of the relational, filial and communal dimensions. It is the setting in which men and women can be born with dignity, and can grow and develop in an integral manner (cf. *Homily at Holy Mass for the Fifth World Meeting of Families*, Valencia, 9 July 2006).

However, this educational task is complicated by a deceptive concept of freedom, in which caprice and the subjective impulses of the individual are exalted to the point of leaving each person locked within the prison of his own self. The true freedom of the human being derives from his creation in the image and likeness of God. For this reason freedom must be exercised responsibly, always opting for the authentic good so that it may become love, a gift of self. For this reason, more than theories, the intimacy and love that are characteristic of the family community are needed. It is at home that people truly learn to live, to value life and health, freedom and peace, justice and truth, work, harmony and respect.

Today more than ever the witness and public commitment of all the baptized is necessary to reaffirm the dignity and the unique, irreplaceable value of the family founded on the marriage of a

man and a woman open to life, and also of human life in all of its stages.

Legal and administrative measures must be promoted that support families with their inalienable rights, necessary if they are to continue to carry out their extraordinary mission. The witnesses given at yesterday's celebration show that today too the family can stand firm in the love of God and renew humanity in the new millennium.

I wish to express my closeness and to assure my prayers for all the families that bear witness to fidelity in especially difficult circumstances. I encourage the many families who, at times living in the midst of setbacks and misunderstandings, set an example of generosity and trust in God, in the hope that they will not lack the assistance they need. I am also thinking of the families who are suffering because of poverty, sickness, marginalization or emigration and, most especially, of Christian families that are being persecuted for their faith. The Pope is very close to all of you and accompanies you in your daily efforts.

Before concluding this meeting, I am pleased to announce that the *Seventh World Meeting of Families* will take place, God willing, in Italy, in the city of Milan in the year 2012, on the theme: "The family, work and celebration". I am deeply grateful to Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Milan, for his kindness in accepting this important commitment.

I entrust all the families of the world to the protection of the Most Holy Virgin, so widely venerated in the noble land of Mexico under the title of Guadalupe. To her, the one who always reminds us that our happiness lies in doing Christ's will (cf. Jn 2: 5), I now say:

Most Holy Mother of Guadalupe,
 who have shown your love
 and your tenderness to the peoples of the American continent,
 fill with joy and hope all the peoples and families of the world.

We entrust to you,
 who go before us and guide us on our journey of faith
 towards the eternal Homeland,
 the joys, the plans, the anxieties and
 the desires of all families.

O Mary,
 to you we turn, trusting in your tenderness as Mother.
 Do not ignore the prayers we address to you
 for the whole world's families
 in this crucial period in history;
 instead, welcome us all in your heart as Mother

and guide us on our way towards the heavenly Homeland.

Amen.

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