



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING ON THE FAMILY APOSTOLATE**

*Saturday, 5 May 1979* And now I am really happy to address a special greeting to participants in the Meeting on the Family Apostolate, which is taking place here in Rome these days, and especially to my dear Brothers in the Episcopate who are taking part in it. I thank you for this visit, beloved, which, if it offers you the possibility of tightening your ties of faithfulness and communion with the Successor of Peter, gives me the opportunity of talking briefly on a subject of vital importance for the society and the Church of our time. The Meeting of these days on the Family Apostolate certainly concerns a focal aspect of the lives and responsibility of the baptized. Its topical interest is confirmed doubly, both from a positive and from a negative point of view. On the one hand, in fact, you anticipate, at least partly, the subject of a specialized ecclesial event such as the future Fifth Synod of Bishops, which will deal precisely with "The functions of the Christian family in the modern world". On the other hand, serious reflection on the subject is required by the mere fact that the psychological, social and ideological climate of today has often considerable disturbing effects on marriage and family life. My duty, therefore, is to praise and stimulate every initiative aimed at safeguarding, educating and promoting first the awareness and then the practical fulfilment of the commitments belonging to the reciprocal relations between Christian families and the ecclesial community. I am glad to repeat to you, because it is universally valid, what I already said at [Pueblo to the Bishops of Latin America](#): "Make every effort to ensure that there is pastoral care for the family. Attend to this field of such primary importance in the certainty that evangelization in the future depends largely on the 'domestic church' ". Likewise the recent document of the Italian Episcopal Conference on "Evangelization and the Sacrament of Marriage" expresses itself well when it affirms that "the family must be not only the object of the responsible action of the various structures of civil society, but it must become a responsible collaborator" (n. 117). For this to happen, an efficacious education to complete maturity, human and Christian, of married couples, of the children, and of both together, is necessary. In a world in which the supporting function of many institutions seems to be failing and especially the quality of town life is deteriorating in a dreadful way, the family can and must become a place of real serenity and harmonious growth; not, indeed, in order to isolate itself in forms of proud self-sufficiency, but to offer the world a luminous testimony that the recuperation and complete advancement of man is possible if the latter has as its starting point and frame of reference the healthy vitality of the primary cell of the civil and ecclesial fabric. The Christian family, therefore, must change more and more into a community of love, such as to make it possible to overcome, in faithfulness and harmony, the inevitable difficulties of everyday life; into a community of life, in order to give rise to, and cultivate joyfully, precious new existences in the image of God; into a community of grace, which will constantly make the Lord Jesus Christ its own centre of gravity and focal point, in such a way as to make the commitment of each one fruitful

and to draw ever-new vigour in the daily progress. My most cordial approval and encouragement go to you, who dedicate yourselves in such a specialized way to such fundamental problems, with the hope that your labour will really be advantageous, in view of a real impact of families renewed in Christ for a new dynamism of the Church and for the general well-being of human society. The fatherly Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly impart to you all and to those who support your precious work, is a sincere token of these wishes. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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