



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE THIRTY-FIRST
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT OF ALCOHOLISM**

Friday, 7 June 1985

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure for me to greet all of you participating in the thirty-first International Institute for the Prevention and Treatment of Alcoholism, co-sponsored by the International Council on Alcohol and Addictions of Lausanne and the Centro Italiano di Solidarietà di Roma. A marvellous opportunity has been presented to you in your deliberations during these days to exchange information and to meet specialists in the medical profession from other countries who are concerned about the problem of alcohol abuse. The problem has indeed assumed grave proportions and involves peoples of all ages and all walks of life.

Particularly worrisome is the effect that the abuse of alcohol has had on the *young people* of modern society. Many factors come into play in this social evil, not the least of which are peer pressures and group involvement in surroundings which are unwholesome and which prevent young people from maturing and becoming happy and healthy human beings. The ready availability of alcohol as compared to other drugs makes the percentage of users very high among the young, and this too is cause for serious concern. Likewise, the economic conditions existing in society, such as high rates of poverty and unemployment, can contribute to a young person's sense of restlessness, insecurity, frustration and social alienation, and can draw that person to the fantasy world of alcohol as an escape from the problems of life.

However significant these factors may be, it is *the family* which most powerfully influences young people in the area of alcohol. The example given by parents, in all things including the abuse of alcohol, is foremost in the formation of the young. The child is watchful and alert in observing how

the father and mother cope with the pressures of life. The child can be easily led to imitate behaviour patterns which have been learned at home. Parents must take special care to provide positive example in this regard, lest the temptation to resort to unhealthy ways of psychological escape be communicated to their children.

At the same time, parents should perceive as important the *fostering of family values*, that is, forming the family into a true community of persons, where husband and wife, parents and children, live in relationships of genuine love for each other. Love is the point of departure and the final goal of the family. Love is the inner dynamism which leads the family to ever deeper and more intense communion (Cfr. IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Familiaris Consortio*, 18). The example which parents offer to their children in showing that love, which implies mutual respect, forgiveness and moderation in their own behaviour, will mark the path for their children to follow.

I wish to offer my *encouragement to all who work towards a solution* to the problem of alcohol abuse. In particular, I would like to thank all those who, in the name of fundamental human solidarity, strive to assist people who suffer from alcoholism. I am thinking of those experts, doctors, nurses and other individuals, as well as the institutions especially established for this purpose, that perform an incalculable service to their suffering neighbours. The compassion which motivates this activity, reminiscent of the spirit of the Good Samaritan, is a beautiful testimony to the concern of people today to pay closer attention to the sufferings of their neighbours and to seek to deal with them with ever greater skill.

May your meeting in Rome lead you to discover ever more effective methods and procedures for achieving your goals. Be assured of my prayers and my support for all that you do on behalf of those who suffer.

God bless you and your families.

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