



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT COMMITTEE
ON NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL**

Thursday, 19 January 1984

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome today the members of the United States House of Representatives Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control. As public officials you are charged with promoting and safeguarding the common good of your fellow citizens, and thus it is your task to protect the good of the whole of your society, while at the same time preserving the rights and liberties of the individuals who make up that society.

Hence it is by no means extraneous to your work as public servants to foster social conditions in which individuals may grow and develop in a way commensurate with their human dignity, unencumbered by threats to their authentic realization as persons. Among those factors which menace the individual and impede the growth of a healthy social climate is the problem which brings you together in this assembly: namely, *the scourge of narcotics trafficking and drug abuse*. Obviously this problem is not unique to the United States. The flow of narcotics has reached immense proportions, so that no nation is immune from its debilitating effects.

The *Church's* interest and *pastoral concern*, both for the individuals whose lives are marked by devastating personal tragedies and for the societies which must come to grips with an increasingly dangerous phenomenon, is focused on the crucial role that *the family* must play in the solution to the problem.

Faced with a world and a society that runs the risk of becoming more and more depersonalized and therefore dehumanizing, with the negative results of many forms of escapism – a principal one

being the abuses associated with drugs – the family possesses "formidable energies capable of taking the individual out of his anonymity, keeping him conscious of his personal dignity, enriching him with deep humanity and actively placing him, in his uniqueness and unrepeatability, within the fabric of society" (IOANNIS PAULI PP.II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 43).

The family stands at the very foundation of society, and through its role of service to life is vitally linked to society's advancement. It provides the primary forum for the fostering of authentic and mature communion between persons, and is the place of origin and the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society. With the conviction therefore that the good of the family is an indispensable value for the civic community, the Church encourages the public authorities to do everything possible to ensure that families have all the help that they need in order to fulfill their responsibilities.

I would invite you this morning to favour unhesitatingly all initiatives which aim at strengthening the family in American society (*Ibid.*). As you try to make your fellow citizens more and more conscious of the dangers of drug abuse; as you promote legislation, on the national and international level, which seeks to draw up a comprehensive plan of deterrence against trafficking in narcotics, may you ever strive to meet the needs of the family, for it is a key element in establishing stable, loving relationships and in offering to every person the support needed for a fulfilling life.

May Almighty God bless you in your efforts.

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