



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENTS OF THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSIONS
ON THE FAMILY FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF ASIA**

*Hall of Popes
Friday, 26 May 1995*

*Your Eminence,
Your Excellencies,*

1. I am pleased to welcome *the Presidents of the Episcopal Commissions on the Family from various countries of Asia*, meeting in Rome at the invitation of the Pontifical Council for the Family. You have come together in order to reflect on the situation of the family and to respond with renewed vigour to the many challenges facing family life within the context of the Church and society.

In a meeting like the present one, I told the Bishop Presidents of the Episcopal Commissions for the Family in Africa that "the family is the heart of the new evangelization" (John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of Africa Engaged in the Pastoral Care of Families*, 2, [2 Oct. 1992]). As I look to your continent, with its rich cultural heritage, its great size and population, where the Church represents a "little flock", it seems to me that this statement is especially true. The Gospel of Christ must be proclaimed, with renewed enthusiasm and strength, *in and from the family*.

2. *Families* which, in Christ, *form a true community* based on marriage, a communion of life and of love – stable, responsible and open to life – constitute a witness which is a *living and powerful proclamation of the Good News*, and specifically of "the Gospel of the Family".

The witness of families depends in the first place on the fidelity of the spouses in their mutual self-giving, which fills life with joy and meaning. The Church proclaims that in the Christian family – through the Sacrament of Matrimony – there is present and at work the Lord, the Bridegroom,

the one mediator between God and mankind, our Saviour Jesus Christ (cf. John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 18). He, the Lord of Life, makes the family the sanctuary of life.

3. During these days you have examined the special difficulties facing families in Asia: poverty, migration, population control policies and so many others. And you have been led to conclude once more that the well-being of individuals, the well-being of peoples and nations depends directly on the well-being of families.

In fact, as I noted in the Encyclical "*Evangelium Vitae*", there is the *closest of relationships between the family and the culture of life* (cf. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 92). Whenever the family, the basic cell of society, is threatened, life itself is greatly imperiled. Families must be enabled, above all, to resist and overcome the culture of death, that pervasive array of values and attitudes which, sometimes subtly, sometimes quite blatantly, disregards human rights and denies the sanctity of life.

Moreover, especially in the Asian context, efforts to build a culture of life upon the family provide a fertile field for *ecumenical and interreligious co-operation*. "On the eve of the Third Millennium... only the concerted efforts of all those who believe in the value of life can prevent a setback of unforeseeable consequences for civilization" (John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 91).

4. I know well that everything that affects the pastoral care of the family and the defence of life has a privileged place, as it should, in the pastoral programmes of your Conferences and Dioceses, and that these days in Rome will greatly help your work.

I cordially invoke Almighty God's love and protection on the families of Asia, and I ask the Lord that Catholic families in particular may grow in love and in faith, after the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. With these sentiments, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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