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**“What God Has Joined Together, No Human being Must Separate” (Mt 19, 6):
Remaining in the Truth of Christ on Holy Matrimony**

Introduction

It pleases me greatly to speak on marriage and its incomparable fruit: the family. I express my deepest gratitude to Christopher Smoczynski, President of the Queen of the Americas Guild, for the invitation to speak and to all who, with him, have made possible today’s important conference. I thank especially Rebecca Nichols, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Guild. It is my hope that my presence and my words will offer inspiration and strength in fulfilling our common mission of safeguarding and fostering the integrity of marriage and the family as the cradle of human life and the first school of its growth and development.

This morning, I wish to address the current discussion regarding the fundamental truth of marriage in the Church, indicating the importance of the studies provided in the book, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, written to assist the Synod of Bishops in addressing the situation of marriage and the family in our time. I will address several related questions which are the cause of serious confusion in the matter.

Current Discussion regarding the Fundamental Truth of Marriage

At the present moment in the Church, there is perhaps no more critical issue for us to address than the truth about marriage. In a world in which the integrity of marriage has been under attack for decades, the Church has remained a faithful herald of the truth about God’s plan for man and woman in the faithful, indissoluble and procreative union of marriage. In the present time, certainly under pressure from a totally secularized culture, a growing confusion and even error has entered into the Church, which would weaken seriously, if not totally compromise, the Church’s witness and that to the detriment of the whole of society.

The confusion and error became evident for the world during the recent session of the Third Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The Assembly, dedicated to the discussion of

the subject, "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," found itself addressing, in a confused and sometimes erroneous manner, practices which contradict the Church's constant teaching and practice regarding Holy Matrimony. I refer to practices which would give access to the Sacraments to those who are living in a public state of adultery, and which would condone, in some manner, conjugal cohabitation outside of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and genital relations between persons of the same sex. The report given at the midpoint of the Synod made strikingly clear the gravity of the situation. The report itself, which lacked practically any consistent reference to the constant magisterium of the Church, was a manifesto, a kind of incitement to a new approach to fundamental issues of human sexuality in the Church which is revolutionary, that is, which is detached from what the Church has always taught and practiced.

The confusion and error was first expressed in a presentation by Cardinal Walter Kasper during the Extraordinary Consistory of February 20th and 21st of 2014. The heart of the Extraordinary Consistory was a lengthy presentation on marriage and the family by Cardinal Kasper which was followed by an intense discussion by the Cardinals present. Cardinal Kasper's presentation was quickly published in various languages and became a focus of a wide discussion, especially in the secular media.¹ His presentation raised a number of serious questions about what the Church has always taught and practiced regarding the indissolubility of marriage. It was based upon an interpretation of the Fathers of the Church and on the practice developed in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Clearly, his presentation called for a discussion which began in earnest already during the Extraordinary Consistory.

After the Extraordinary Consistory, a number of Cardinals, including myself, decided to respond as fully and as profoundly as possible to the positions taken by Cardinal Kasper. Five Cardinals contributed to the study. We Cardinals also called upon the help of Archbishop Cyril Vasil', S.J., an expert in the practice of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, Father Paul Mankowski, S.J., an expert in the Sacred Scriptures, and Professor John M. Rist, an expert in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. We also sought the help of Father Robert Dodaro, O.S.A., President of the Patristic Institute *Augustinianum* in Rome, for the editing of the book. Apart from his tireless

¹ Cf. Cardinal Walter Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, tr. William Madges (New York: Paulist Press, 2014); Cardinal Walter Kasper, *L'Évangile de la famille*, tr. Joseph Hoffmann (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2014); Walter Kardinal Kasper, *Das Evangelium von der Familie. Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder GmbH, 2014); Walter Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia*, tr. Gianni Francesconi (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 2014); Walter Kasper, *El evangelio de la familia*, tr. José Pérez Escobar (Maliaño, Cantabria: Editorial Sal Terrae, 2014).

and highly qualified work of editing so important a volume in various languages, Father Dodaro made two treasured additions to the book, a summary of the argument of the entire book and an appendix, “Excerpts from Select Documents of the Magisterium.”

The fruits of our efforts are found in the book, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, published in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish editions in time for the study of the Synod Fathers.² As I have already mentioned, Father Dodaro, the editor, at the very beginning of the book, gives a summary of the material presented in each of the nine essays which comprise the volume. The essays in turn present, in a thorough manner, the truth of Christ regarding the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony as contained in the Holy Scriptures and as taught and practiced in the early Church. They then address the particular practice of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and its coherence with doctrine, and the historical challenges to the Lord’s teaching recorded in the Gospels. The beauty of the truth of Christ on Holy Matrimony is then illustrated by presentations of the Church’s theological doctrine and her moral teaching. The last two essays take up the safeguarding and fostering of the truth of Christ regarding Holy Matrimony in the Church’s discipline, her canon law.

I commend the book to your reading. While it is scientifically solid, every effort was made to edit the contributions in such a way that they would be accessible to the reading and understanding of serious Catholics and all persons of good will. The book has enjoyed a wide readership in the different language editions already published. Since the October 2014 Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, translations into the Polish and Slovak languages have been published. At present, translations into Croatian, Hungarian and Portuguese are being prepared. The book is truly a point of reference for the most serious matter presently under discussion by the Synod of Bishops.

² Robert Dodaro, ed., *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014); Robert Dodaro, ed., *Demeurer dans la vérité du Christ. Mariage et communion dans l’Église catholique* (Paris: Artège Éditions, 2014); Robert Dodaro, Hg., *›In der Wahrheit Christi bleiben‹: Ehe und Kommunion in der katholischen Kirche* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag GmbH, 2014); Robert Dodaro, ed., *Permanere nella verità di Cristo. Matrimonio e comunione nella Chiesa cattolica* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli S.r.l., 2014); Robert Dodaro, ed., *Permanecer en la Verdad de Cristo. Matrimonio y Comunión en la Iglesia Católica* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad S.A., 2014).

Some General Considerations

In the context of the sound teaching contained in the book, I comment on a few important points.

Relationship between faith and culture

Above all, as a presupposition of the discussion of Holy Matrimony in the current situation, it is important to have a correct understanding of the rapport between faith and culture. Many times, during the discussions before the first Assembly of the Synod, during the sessions of the Assembly, and in this time of the preparation for the second Assembly, it has been declared that the Church must update its practice and above all its language in order to address herself effectively to a totally secularized culture. Some have gone so far as to assert that the Church can no longer speak of the natural law, intrinsically evil acts, irregular unions and so forth. Their point is that the language itself already makes the culture hostile.

However, doing so, the Church gives the impression of wanting to draw near to the culture but without a clear identity of her own self and of what she has to say to the culture. According to divine wisdom, the Church must always speak the truth with love.³ Yes, the Church should go to the peripheries of today's culture but always secure in her identity, manifesting the greatest compassion which necessarily involves respect for the truth of the cultural situation which many times is marked by confusion and error regarding the most fundamental truths of human life and its cradle which is the family. The Church has to call things by their proper name, in order not to risk contributing to the confusion and error, instead of bringing it to light and order.⁴

Honest people who live in such a culture have a thirst for the truth and for its proclamation with charity. To encounter the protagonists of such a culture without manifesting the truth of Christ with clear words would be a serious lack of charity. For instance, we think of what the Gospel tells us about Christ's meeting with the people, that He found them to be like sheep without a shepherd and that He, therefore, instructed them.⁵ We think also of the meeting of Our Lord with the Samaritan Woman at the Well of Jacob⁶ or with the woman discovered in open adultery.⁷ The

³ Cf. Eph 4, 15.

⁴ Cf. Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Litterae encyclicae *Evangelium vitae*, "De vitae humanae inviolabili bono", 25 Martii 1995, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995), 466-467, n. 58.

⁵ Cf. Mk 6, 34.

⁶ Cf. Jn 4, 1-42.

⁷ Cf. Jn 8, 3-11.

Lord is full of understanding for their situation, He pardons them, but, at the same time, he is attentive to indicate to them the necessity of leaving a life of sin, the necessity of sinning no more.⁸

Confusion regarding the nature of the Synod of Bishops

Oftentimes, in popular presentations of the work of the Synod of Bishops, the impression is given that the Church's teaching and practice will be altered by a majority vote of the Synod Fathers. But the Synod of Bishops has no authority to change doctrine and discipline. The nature and purpose of the Synod of Bishops is described in canon 342 of the Code of Canon Law, which I now read:

Can. 342 - The synod of bishops is a group of bishops who have been chosen from different regions of the world and meet together at fixed times to foster closer unity between the Roman Pontiff and bishops, to assist the Roman Pontiff with their counsel in the preservation and growth of faith and morals and in the observance and strengthening of ecclesiastical discipline, and to consider questions pertaining to the activity of the Church in the world.⁹

The Synod of Bishops is not convened by the Roman Pontiff to suggest changes in the doctrine and discipline of the Church but rather to assist the Roman Pontiff in safeguarding and promoting sound doctrine regarding faith and morals, and in strengthening the discipline by which the truths of the faith are lived in practice.

The risk of sentimentalism

Reflecting upon the situations of profound suffering in families which find themselves outside of the context of the truth of Christ, there is the risk of falling into a sentimentalism which, while it seems compassionate, is deeply harmful because of its lack of respect for the objective situation of the persons involved. Such sentimentalism blocks the encounter with Christ on the part of the person who is in sin. Sentimentalism sees the truth of Christ as something hurtful to the

⁸ Cf. Jn 4, 17-18; 8, 11.

⁹ "Can. 342 - Synodus Episcoporum coetus est Episcoporum qui, ex diversis orbis regionibus selecti, statutis temporibus una conveniunt ut arctam coniunctionem inter Romanum Pontificem et Episcopos foveant, utque eidem Romano Pontifici ad incolumitatem incrementumque fidei et morum, ad disciplinam ecclesiasticam servandam et firmandam consiliis adiutricem operam praestant, necnon quaestiones ad actionem Ecclesiae in mundo spectantes perpendant." English translation: *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*, New English Translation, ed. Canon Law Society of America, Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998.

person and thus does not speak the truth which is the only way for the person, in his time, to abandon the sin in question. Sentimentalism also fails to respect the profound effect of the irregular situation of the person on so many other persons bound to him by relationships of family or friendship. Concentrating ourselves exclusively on the painful situation of the individual, we do not see reality in its integrity and thus bring about injustice not only to the individual but to the others bound to him.

The radical modification of the process for the declaration of nullity of marriage

Speaking of the temptation of sentimentalism or false compassion, I would like to say a word about the quite widely publicized proposal to modify radically the process for the declaration of nullity of marriage, so that the parties in a cause of nullity could receive more easily and quickly such a declaration. In my presentation to last year's Queen of the Americas Guild Conference, I addressed the nature and substance of the canonical process for the declaration of nullity of marriage.

In his presentation to the Extraordinary Consistory and in his other declarations, Cardinal Kasper has asserted that the process for the declaration of nullity of marriage is not of divine law and therefore could be radically altered.¹⁰ He has suggested an administrative process, for example, a meeting of the Bishop or of a priest delegated by the Bishop with the party who accuses his marriage of nullity, on the basis of which the Bishop would declare the nullity of the marriage.¹¹

While it is true that the process in its individual elements is not of divine law, a process apt for the discovery of the truth about the marriage accused of nullity is absolutely of divine law. The present process is the fruit of centuries of experience of the Church in the just treatment of an accusation of marriage nullity, and, as the Venerable Pope Pius XII brilliantly illustrated in his Address to the Roman Rota in 1944, it is composed of various elements all adapted to discovering the truth about situations of the breakup of marriage, which situations are normally quite complex.

For the more simple causes, for example, a case of a person who attempted a marriage when he was already bound to a preexisting marriage, there is the documentary process, with its appropriate speed.¹² As I explain in my contribution to *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage*

¹⁰ Cf. Walter Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia* (Brescia: Edizioni Queriniana, 2014), p. 45.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹² Cf. cann. 1686-1688.

and Communion in the Catholic Church, to alter the actual process without respect for its historical development risks taking away from the process the possibility of arriving at a just conclusion: a judgment given with moral certitude, according to the truth discovered by means of the process.

The “fullness of power” and absolute power

In a similar way, some have suggested that the fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*) of the Roman Pontiff means that he is able to dissolve any marriage. Such a suggestion does not respect the necessary distinction between the fullness of power and absolute power. The fullness of power of the Roman Pontiff is at the service of the truth of the doctrine and the discipline of the Church. The Holy Father exercises his power with total obedience to Christ and cannot make decisions contrary to the truth of Christ, appealing to an absolute and, therefore, arbitrary power. The discipline contained in can. 1141 of the Code of Canon Law remains true also for the Roman Pontiff: “A marriage that is *ratum et consummatum* can be dissolved by no human power and by no cause, except death.”¹³ The same discipline, of divine law, is contained in can. 853 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.¹⁴

The relationship between doctrine and discipline

In what regards the canonical process for the declaration of nullity of marriage, it is frequently said that changes in the process can be introduced without touching in any manner the doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage. But it is evident that an inadequate process for arriving at the truth regarding a marriage accused of nullity would bring with it a lack of due respect for the indissolubility of Holy Matrimony. In fact, in the United States, from 1971 to 1983, a very modified process, with the diminution of the figure of the defender of the bond and the effective elimination of the double agreeing sentence, was permitted by the Holy See. With time and not without reason, the process for the declaration of nullity of marriage became popularly known as “Catholic divorce.” In other words, in the common perception, while the Church was declaring the indissolubility of marriage in its teaching, in its practice it was permitting parties held to a marriage

¹³ “Matrimonium ratum et consummatum nulla humana potestate nullaue causa, praeterquam morte, dissolvi potest”. “Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus”, 25 Ianuarii 1983, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 75, Pars II (1983), can. 1141. English translation: *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*, New English Translation, ed. Canon Law Society of America, Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998.

¹⁴ Cf. “Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus”, 18 Octobris 1990, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 82 (1990), can. 853.

bond to marry another person without having first demonstrated the nullity of the earlier marriage bond.

I served for many years at the Apostolic Signatura, first as Defender of the Bond from 1989 to 1995 and then as Prefect from 2008 until November of last year. In a consistent manner, the experience of the Apostolic Signatura shows that, when a matrimonial tribunal has well-prepared staff, the causes proceed without unjustified delays. At the same time, a process to reach a decision in so important and delicate a matter has, of necessity, its proper times for gathering the proofs, for examining them, and, at the end, for giving a judgment with moral certitude. With sadness, many times I have seen that the Diocesan Bishop has not sufficiently taken care to prepare well the necessary personnel for his tribunal. In other words, it is not the process that has need of modifications, but the practice of some Bishops who do not provide well-prepared and just workers for their tribunals.

A new evangelization and the family

The discussion of Holy Matrimony and of the family during the Synod was presented in terms of evangelization. The frequent appeal of Pope Francis to the Church to go to the peripheries has, as its scope, the evangelization of the people who live at the peripheries. Such evangelization, according to the teaching of Pope Saint John Paul II, leads us to attain the “*high standard of ordinary Christian living*”¹⁵ which is “found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition” of the Church.¹⁶ As observed before, the Synod, therefore, has the task of suggesting the ways for the Church to be more faithful to the truth of marriage and of the family, taught to us by the Gospel and by the living Tradition. Regarding Christian marriage and the family, and the call to evangelization, already in his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope Saint John Paul II declared that “the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive

¹⁵ “... «*superiorem modum*» *ordinariae vitae christianae*.” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “Magni Iubilaei anni MM sub exitum,” 6 Ianuarii 2001, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 93 (2001), 288, n. 31. [Hereafter, NMI]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000,” 6 January 2001 (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2001), p. 43, no. 31. [Hereafter, NMIEng].

¹⁶ “... quod de Evangelio derivatur semper vivaque Traditione.” NMI, 285, n. 29. English version: NMIEng, p. 41, no. 29.

education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity.”¹⁷

Noting the multiple and grievous attacks on marriage and the family in our time, Pope John Paul II stressed the importance of witnessing to the truth about marriage and the family, so that the family may evangelize the whole of society. He declared:

At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God.”¹⁸

In the present moment when the attacks on matrimony and on the family seem the most ferocious, it is the Church which must show to the whole of society the truth in all its richness, and therefore the beauty and the goodness of marriage and of the family. The Church accomplishes its mission of evangelization of the family with its teaching, with the celebration of the Sacraments and with the life of prayer and devotion, and with its discipline.

The Church and therefore the Synod must give special attention to the holiness of marriage, to the fidelity, to the indissolubility and to the fecundity of the matrimonial union. Christian family life is necessarily a sign of contradiction in today’s culture. The Synod ought to be the occasion for the universal Church to give inspiration and strength to Catholic couples for the witness to the truth of Christ, of which our culture has such great need. The Synod ought to be a help to Christian families in being, according to the ancient description, the Church at home (*Ecclesia domestica*), the first place in which the Catholic faith is taught, celebrated and lived. The faithful living in a marriage in difficulty must certainly enjoy the particular attention of the Church who, in imitation

¹⁷ “... christiana enim familia est prima communitas, cuius est Evangelium personae humanae crescent annuntiare eamque progrediente education et catechesis ad plenam maturitatem humanam et christianam perducere.” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica *Familiaris Consortio*, “De Familiae Christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis,” 22 Novembris 1981, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 74 (1982), 823, n. 2. [Hereafter, FC]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, “Regarding the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World,” 22 November 1981 (Vatican City State: Vatican Polyglot Press, nd), p. 4, no. 2. [Hereafter, FCEng].

¹⁸ “Hoc tempore historiae, quo familia multis impetitur viribus, eam delere aut saltem deformare nitentibus, Ecclesia, probe conscia salutem societatis suamque ipsius arcte cum fausta condicione familiae conecit, modo vehementiore et urgentiore munus suum percipit omnibus consilium Dei de matrimonio ac familia declarandi, cuius plenum vigorem et promotionem humanam et christianam in tuto collocet, ac sic conferat ad renovationem societatis ipsiusque Populi Dei.” FC, 84, n. 3. English translation: FCEng, pp. 6-7, no. 3.

of the Savior, announces to them the truth of Christ and brings to them the grace of Christ to live faithfully and generously the marriage vocation to the end.

In the same *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope Saint John Paul II underlined the irreplaceable service of the family in the evangelization of the world. Citing the teaching of Pope Paul VI, he declared:

To the extent in which the Christian family accepts the Gospel and matures in faith, it becomes an evangelizing community. Let us listen again to Paul VI: “The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighbourhood of which it forms part.”¹⁹

It is clear that, if evangelization is not found in marriages, in Christian homes, in families, it will not be found in the Church and in society. At the same time, marriages transformed by the Gospel are the first and most powerful force for the transformation of society through the Gospel and the living Tradition of the Church.

Confidence in the natural law and in the grace of Matrimony

Confronting the sufferings of individual persons and of families, the Church should not lose its confidence in the natural law inscribed in every human heart and in its full expression in the saving work of Our Lord. In our culture, there is a confusion about the meaning of human sexuality which is bearing the fruit of profound personal unhappiness which often leads to the breakup of marriage, to the corruption of children and young people, and ultimately to self-destruction. Disordered sexual activity, sexual activity outside of marriage, and the media’s constant, powerful and false messages regarding our identity as man and woman are all signs of the urgent need of a

¹⁹ “Christiana familia, quatenus Evangelium amplectitur et ad maturitatem in fide progreditur, eatenus fit evangelizans communitas. Exaudiamus denuo Paulum VI: «Familia, haud secus atque Ecclesia, habenda est campus, quo affertur et unde diffunditur Evangelium. Quamobrem, apud familiam huius muneris consciam, omnia eiusdem familiae membra evangelizant atque evangelizantur. Parentes non tantum communicant cum filiis Evangelium, sed ab ipsis possunt recipere idem Evangelium penitus vita expressum. Eadem familia Evangelii nuntia fit apud alias multas familias, atque circumstantem, cui inseritur, convictum».” FC, 144, n. 52. English translation: FCEng, p. 97, no. 52.

new evangelization which begins in marriages, in families, and, through marriages, reaches the entire culture. There is need of the witness to the distinct gifts of man and of woman who both dispose themselves to the service of Christ and of His mystical Body by means of a chaste life. Christian marriage is the first place of such necessary witness in our culture. By means of a sound family life our culture will be transformed. Without sound family life, the culture will not ever be reformed.

In the life of holy couples we see reflected all of the splendor of the truth about the union of a man and a woman in faithful, enduring and procreative love. In their life we see above all the truth of the teaching of Christ in response to the Pharisees who were putting him to the test, posing the question of the possibility of divorce. The Lord responded to the Pharisees, teaching the observance of the eternal law according to which God the Father created man and woman:

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one”? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.²⁰

When the disciples asked about the great exigency of the divine law for spouses, the Lord responded that, with the vocation to the married life, God grants, in abundance, the grace to live such faithful, enduring and procreative love: “Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given.”²¹ Father Paul Mankowski, at the conclusion of his essay on the Holy Scriptures in the book, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, affirms:

Yet it is mistaken, or if not wholly mistaken seriously incomplete, to view Jesus as a disputant who championed the rigorist side of legal-moral controversy, and whose appeal was and is solely to the tough-minded. For he also promised a new and superabundant afflatus of grace, of divine help, so that no person however fragile should find it impossible to do God’s will.²²

It is this objective reality which Saint Paul celebrates in the Letter to the Ephesians with these

²⁰ Mt 19, 4-5.

²¹ Mt 19, 11.

²² Robert Dodaro, ed., *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), p. 63.

inspired words:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.²³

Natural Law and the Formation of the Conscience in the Family

So often, today, a notion of tolerance of ways of thinking and acting contrary to the moral law seems to be the interpretative key for many Christians. Today’s popular notion of tolerance is not securely grounded in the moral tradition, yet it tends to dominate our approach to the extent that we end up claiming to be Christian while tolerating ways of thinking and acting which are diametrically opposed to the moral law revealed to us in nature and in the Sacred Scriptures. The approach, at times, becomes so relativistic and subjective that we do not even observe the fundamental logical principle of non-contradiction, that is, that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time. In other words, certain actions cannot at the same time be both true to the moral law and not true to it.

In fact, charity alone must be the interpretative key of our thoughts and actions. In the context of charity, tolerance means unconditional love of the person who is involved in evil but complete abhorrence of the evil into which the person has fallen.

Fundamental to the Catholic life of virtue is the understanding of human nature and conscience. Critical to the deplorable cultural situation in which we find ourselves is the loss of a sense of nature and of conscience. Pope Benedict XVI addressed the question of the loss of a sense

²³ Cf. Eph 5, 31-33.

of nature and conscience, with respect of the foundations of law, in his address to the *Bundestag* during his Pastoral Visit to Germany in September of 2011. Taking leave from the story of the young King Solomon on his accession to the throne, he recalled to political leaders the teaching of the Holy Scriptures regarding the work of politics. God asked King Solomon what request he wished to make as he began to rule God's holy people. The Holy Father commented:

What will the young ruler ask for at this important moment? Success – wealth – long life – destruction of his enemies? He chooses none of these things. Instead, he asks for a listening heart so that he may govern God's people, and discern between good and evil (cf. 1 Kg 3:9).²⁴

The story of King Solomon, as Pope Benedict XVI observed, teaches what must be the end of political activity and, therefore, of government. He declared: "Politics must be a striving for justice, and hence it has to establish the fundamental preconditions for peace.... To serve right and to fight against the dominion of wrong is and remains the fundamental task of the politician."²⁵

Pope Benedict XVI then asked how we know the good and right which the political order and specifically the law are to safeguard and promote. While he acknowledged that in many matters "the support of the majority can serve as a sufficient criterion,"²⁶ he observed that such a principle is not sufficient "for the fundamental issues of law, in which the dignity of man and of humanity is at stake."²⁷ Regarding the very foundations of the life of society, positive civil law must respect "nature and reason as the true sources of law."²⁸ In other words, one must have recourse to the natural moral law which God has inscribed upon every human heart.

What Pope Benedict XVI observed regarding the foundations of law in the concepts of nature and conscience points to the fundamental work of education, namely, the work of developing in students "the listening heart" which strives to know the law of God and to respect it

²⁴ "Was wird sich der junge Herrscher in diesem Augenblick erbitten? Erfolg – Reichtum – langes Leben – Vernichtung der Feinde? Nicht um diese Dinge bittet er. Er bittet: „Verleih deinem Knecht ein hörendes Herz, damit er dein Volk zu regieren und das Gute vom Bösen zu unterscheiden versteht“ (1 Kön 3,9)." Benedictus PP. XVI, Allocutio "Iter apostolicum in Germaniam: ad Berolinensem foederatum coetum oratorum," 22 Septembris 2011, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 103 (2011), p. 663. [Hereafter, *Bundestag*]. English translation: *L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 28 September 2011, p. 6. [Hereafter, *BundestagEng*].

²⁵ "Politik muss Mühen um Gerechtigkeit sein und so die Grundvoraussetzung für Frieden schaffen.... Dem Recht zu dienen und der Herrschaft des Unrechts zu wehren ist und bleibt die grundlegend Aufgabe des Politikers." *Bundestag*, p. 664. English translation: *BundestagEng*, p. 6.

²⁶ "...kann die Mehrheit ein genügendes Kriterium sein." *Bundestag*, p. 664. English translation: *BundestagEng*, p. 6.

²⁷ "...in den Grundfragen des Rechts, in denen es um die Würde des Menschen und der Menschheit geht." *Bundestag*, p. 664. English translation: *BundestagEng*, p. 6.

²⁸ "...Natur und Vernunft als die wahren Rechtsquellen." *Bundestag*, p. 665. English translation: *BundestagEng*, p. 6.

by development in the life of the virtues. Time does not permit me to address the place of education in bringing the human person “to full human and Christian maturity.”²⁹ Suffice it to say that parents must be vigilant that the education given to their children be coherent with the Christian education and upbringing in the home. Even as the family is essential to a new evangelization, so also is education because of its intrinsic connection with the growth and development of the child in Christ.

The thoroughly galvanized anti-life and anti-family agenda of our time advances, in large part, because of a lack of attention and information among the general public. The pervasive mass media, the powerful promoter of the agenda, confuse and corrupt minds and hearts, and dull consciences to the law written by God upon every human heart. In his Encyclical Letter on the Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II declared:

What is urgently called for is a *general mobilization of consciences* and a *united ethical effort* to activate a *great campaign in support of life*. *All together, we must build a new culture of life*: new, because it will be able to confront and solve today’s unprecedented problems affecting human life; new, because it will be adopted with deeper and more dynamic conviction by all Christians; new, because it will be capable of bringing about a serious and courageous cultural dialogue among all parties. While the urgent need for such a cultural transformation is linked to the present historical situation, it is also rooted in the Church’s mission of evangelization. The purpose of the Gospel, in fact, is “to transform humanity from within and to make it new.” Like the yeast which leavens the whole measure of dough (cf. *Mt* 13:33), the Gospel is meant to permeate all cultures and give them life from within, so that they may express the full truth about the human person and about human life.³⁰

²⁹ “... ad plenam maturitatem humanam et christianam ...” FC, 823, n. 2. English translation: FCEng, p. 4, no. 2.

³⁰ “Quam primum inducantur necesse est *generalis conscientiarum motus moralisque communis nisus*, qui excitare valeant *validum sane opus ad vitam tuendam: omnibus nobis simul coniunctis nova exstuenta est vitae cultura*: nova, quae scilicet possit hodiernas de vita hominis ineditas quaestiones suscipere atque solvere; nova, utpote quae acriore et alacriore ratione omnium christianorum conscientiam permoveat; nova demum, quae accommodata sit ad gravem animosamque culturalem suscitandam comparationem cum omnibus. Huius culturalis conversionis necessitas coniungitur cum aetatis nostrae historica rerum condicione, at praesertim inhaeret in ipso evangelizandi munere quod proprium est Ecclesiae. Evangelium enim eo spectat «ut perficiat interiorem mutationem» et «humanitatem novam efficiat»; est velut fermentum quo pasta tota fermentatur (cfr *Mt* 13, 33), atque, qua tale, perfundere debet omnes

What Pope John Paul II affirmed about the mobilization of consciences regarding the inviolability of innocent human life surely applies as well and as strongly to the mobilization of consciences regarding the integrity of marriage and family life.

Pope John Paul II did not fail to note that such efforts must begin with “*the renewal of a culture of life within Christian communities themselves.*”³¹ The Church herself must address the situation of so many of her members who, even though they may be active in Church activities, “end up by separating their Christian faith from its ethical requirements regarding life, and thus fall into moral subjectivism and certain objectionable ways of acting.”³²

Conclusion

We live in a time when the fundamental truth of marriage is under a ferocious, indeed, I would not hesitate to say, a diabolical attack which seeks to obscure and sully the sublime beauty of the married state as God intended it from the Creation. Divorce is a common place in society, as is the pretension to remove from the conjugal union, by mechanical or chemical means, its procreative essence. And now, society has gone even further in its affront to God and His law by claiming the name of marriage for liaisons between persons of the same sex.

Even within the Church, there are those who would obscure the truth of the indissolubility of marriage in the name of mercy, who would condone the violation of the conjugal union by means of contraception in the name of pastoral understanding, and who, in the name of tolerance, would remain silent about the attack on the very integrity of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. There are even those, too, who deny that the married receive a particular grace to live heroically in faithful, enduring and life-giving love, while Our Lord Himself has assured us that God gives to the married the grace to live daily in accord with the truth of their state in life.

In our day, our witness to the splendor of the truth about marriage must be limpid and heroic. We must be ready to suffer, as Christians have suffered down the ages, to honor and foster Holy Matrimony. Let us take as our examples Saint John the Baptist, Saint John Fisher and Saint

culturas easque intus pervadere, ut integram declarent de homine deque eius vita veritatem.” EV, 509, n. 95. English translation: EEng, pp. 168-169, no. 95.

³¹ “... *vitae cultura renovanda intra ipsas christianas communitates.*” EV, 509, n. 95. English translation: EEng, p. 169, no. 95.

³² “... *seiunctionem quandam inferunt inter christianam fidem eiusque moralia circa vitam postulata, progredientes hac ratione ad moralem quandam subiectivismum adque vivendi mores qui probari non possunt.*” EV, 509-510, n. 95. English translation: EEng, p. 169, no. 95.

Thomas More, who were martyrs in defending the integrity of the fidelity and indissolubility of marriage. Before the confusion and error about Holy Matrimony, which Satan is sowing so widely in our society today, let us follow their example and let us invoke their intercession, so that the great gift of married life and love will be ever more revered in the Church and in society.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE