



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MILAN

AND 7th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

(1-3 JUNE 2012)

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

Bresso Park

Sunday, 3 June 2012

[Video]

*Dear Brother Bishops,
Distinguished Authorities,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

It is a time of great joy and communion that we are experiencing this morning, as we celebrate the eucharistic Sacrifice: a great gathering, in union with the Successor of Peter, consisting of faithful who have come from many different nations. It is an eloquent image of the Church, one and universal, founded by Christ and fruit of the mission entrusted by Jesus to his Apostles, as we heard in today's Gospel: to go and make disciples of all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Mt 28:18-19*). With affection and gratitude I greet Cardinal Angelo Scola, Archbishop of Milan, and Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, President of the [Pontifical Council for the Family](#), the principal architects of this VII World Meeting of Families, together with their staff, the Auxiliary Bishops of Milan and all the other bishops. I am pleased to greet all the Authorities who are present today. And I extend a warm welcome especially to you, dear families! Thank you for your participation!

In today's second reading, Saint Paul reminds us that in Baptism we received the Holy Spirit, who

unites us to Christ as brothers and sisters and makes us children of the Father, so that we can cry out: “Abba, Father!” (cf. *Rom* 8:15,17). At that moment we were given a spark of new, divine life, which is destined to grow until it comes to its definitive fulfilment in the glory of heaven; we became members of the Church, God’s family, “*sacrarium Trinitatis*” as Saint Ambrose calls it, “a people made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”, as the Second Vatican Council teaches (*Lumen Gentium*, 4). The liturgical Solemnity of the Holy Trinity that we are celebrating today invites us to contemplate this mystery, but it also urges us to commit ourselves to live our communion with God and with one another according to the model of Trinitarian communion. We are called to receive and to pass on the truths of faith in a spirit of harmony, to live our love for each other and for everyone, sharing joys and sufferings, learning to seek and to grant forgiveness, valuing the different charisms under the leadership of the bishops. In a word, we have been given the task of building church communities that are more and more like families, able to reflect the beauty of the Trinity and to evangelize not only by word, but I would say by “radiation”, in the strength of living love.

It is not only the Church that is called to be the image of One God in Three Persons, but also the family, based on marriage between man and woman. In the beginning, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (*Gen* 1:27-28). God created us male and female, equal in dignity, but also with respective and complementary characteristics, so that the two might be a gift for each other, might value each other and might bring into being a community of love and life. It is love that makes the human person the authentic image of the Blessed Trinity, image of God. Dear married couples, in living out your marriage you are not giving each other any particular thing or activity, but your whole lives. And your love is fruitful first and foremost for yourselves, because you desire and accomplish one another’s good, you experience the joy of receiving and giving. It is also fruitful in your generous and responsible procreation of children, in your attentive care for them, and in their vigilant and wise education. And lastly, it is fruitful for society, because family life is the first and irreplaceable school of social virtues, such as respect for persons, gratuitousness, trust, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation. Dear married couples, watch over your children and, in a world dominated by technology, transmit to them, with serenity and trust, reasons for living, the strength of faith, pointing them towards high goals and supporting them in their fragility. And let me add a word to the children here: be sure that you always maintain a relationship of deep affection and attentive care for your parents, and see that your relationships with your brothers and sisters are opportunities to grow in love.

God’s plan for the human couple finds its fullness in Jesus Christ, who raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. Dear married couples, by means of a special gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ gives you a share in his spousal love, making you a sign of his faithful and all-embracing love for the Church. If you can receive this gift, renewing your “yes” each day by faith, with the strength that comes from the grace of the sacrament, then your family will grow in God’s love according to the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Dear families, pray often for the help of the Virgin Mary and

Saint Joseph, that they may teach you to receive God's love as they did. Your vocation is not easy to live, especially today, but the vocation to love is a wonderful thing, it is the only force that can truly transform the cosmos, the world. You have before you the witness of so many families who point out the paths for growing in love: by maintaining a constant relationship with God and participating in the life of the Church, by cultivating dialogue, respecting the other's point of view, by being ready for service and patient with the failings of others, by being able to forgive and to seek forgiveness, by overcoming with intelligence and humility any conflicts that may arise, by agreeing on principles of upbringing, and by being open to other families, attentive towards the poor, and responsible within civil society. These are all elements that build up the family. Live them with courage, and be sure that, insofar as you live your love for each other and for all with the help of God's grace, you become a living Gospel, a true domestic Church (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 49). I should also like to address a word to the faithful who, even though they agree with the Church's teachings on the family, have had painful experiences of breakdown and separation. I want you to know that the Pope and the Church support you in your struggle. I encourage you to remain united to your communities, and I earnestly hope that your dioceses are developing suitable initiatives to welcome and accompany you.

In the Book of Genesis, God entrusts his creation to the human couple for them to guard it, cultivate it, and direct it according to his plan (cf. 1:27-28; 2:15). In this indication of Sacred Scripture we may recognize the task of man and woman to collaborate with God in the process of transforming the world through work, science and technology. Man and woman are also the image of God in this important work, which they are to carry out with the Creator's own love. In modern economic theories, there is often a utilitarian concept of work, production and the market. Yet God's plan, as well as experience, show that the one-sided logic of sheer utility and maximum profit are not conducive to harmonious development, to the good of the family or to building a just society, because it brings in its wake ferocious competition, strong inequalities, degradation of the environment, the race for consumer goods, family tensions. Indeed, the utilitarian mentality tends to take its toll on personal and family relationships, reducing them to a fragile convergence of individual interests and undermining the solidity of the social fabric.

One final point: man, as the image of God, is also called to rest and to celebrate. The account of creation concludes with these words: "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (*Gen 2:2-3*). For us Christians, the feast day is Sunday, the Lord's day, the weekly Easter. It is the day of the Church, the assembly convened by the Lord around the table of the word and of the eucharistic Sacrifice, just as we are doing today, in order to feed on him, to enter into his love and to live by his love. It is the day of man and his values: conviviality, friendship, solidarity, culture, closeness to nature, play, sport. It is the day of the family, on which to experience together a sense of celebration, encounter, sharing, not least through taking part in Mass. Dear families, despite the relentless rhythms of the modern world, do not lose a sense of the Lord's Day! It is like an oasis in which to pause, so as to taste the joy of encounter and to

quench our thirst for God.

Family, work, celebration: three of God's gifts, three dimensions of our lives that must be brought into a harmonious balance. Harmonizing work schedules with family demands, professional life with fatherhood and motherhood, work with celebration, is important for building up a society with a human face. In this regard, always give priority to the logic of being over that of having: the first builds up, the second ends up destroying. We must learn to believe first of all in the family, in authentic love, the kind that comes from God and unites us to him, the kind that therefore "makes us a 'we' which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is 'all in all' (1 Cor 15:28)" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 18). Amen.

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