



The Holy See

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE PARTICIPANTS

IN THE FIFTH WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES To Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo

President of the Pontifical Council for the Family

On 22 February this year, the venerable Holy Father John Paul II convoked the *Fifth World Meeting of Families* to take place in Valencia, Spain, selecting as its theme: "The transmission of faith in the family", and fixing the date for the first week in July 2006. I am pleased to confirm the convocation of this important World Meeting of Families. In this regard, I am determined, as was John Paul II, to encourage the "marvellous news" (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 51), the "Gospel of the Family", whose value is central to the Church and to society. I myself had the opportunity to be the General Relator at the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family, celebrated in Rome in 1980. The Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* that resulted from this Assembly makes a deep analysis of the identity and mission of the family, which it describes as the "domestic Church" and sanctuary of life. Today, if they are to give a truly human face to society, no people can ignore the precious good of the family, founded on marriage. "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a *partnership* of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring" (can. 1055): this is the foundation of the family and the patrimony and common good of humanity. Thus, the Church cannot cease to proclaim that in accordance with God's plans (cf. Mt 19: 3-9), marriage and the family are irreplaceable and permit no other alternatives. Today more than ever, the Christian family has a very noble mission that it cannot shirk: the transmission of the faith, which involves the gift of self to Jesus Christ who died and rose, and insertion into the Ecclesial Community. Parents are the first evangelizers of children, a precious gift from the Creator (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 50), and begin by teaching them to say their first prayers. In this way a moral universe is built up, rooted in the will of God, where the child grows in the human and Christian values that give life its full meaning. On this occasion, I would like to send my cordial greeting to Archbishop Agustín García-Gasco Vicente, Archbishop of Valencia, the particular Church which is preparing for this Ecclesial Meeting and will welcome families from the rest of Spain and from other countries. Already from this moment, I commend to the Lord and bless the families who will be taking part in this Meeting or joining it in spirit. May the Virgin Mary, our Mother, who was with her Son at the Wedding of Cana, intercede for all the families of the world.

From the Vatican, 17 May 2005

BENEDICT XVI

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