



The Holy See

***LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo
President of the Pontifical Council for the Family***

To my Venerable Brother

Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo

President of the Pontifical Council for the Family

The meeting currently taking place has been promoted by this dicastery and by the heads of associations, movements and non-governmental organizations, committed to the service of the family and life on the European continent. On this occasion I wish to extend my cordial greetings to you, Your Eminence, and courteously through you, to the participants and relators of the congress, with the wish that these providential moments of reflection and dialogue may produce the desired results and offer a renewed incentive to the family apostolate in Europe.

Everyone should be aware of the importance of the historical moment through which we are passing. It is also well known how on the “old continent” as in other parts of the world, the family institution has long been subject to profound and not always positive changes, and for this reason the constant and careful concern of the Bishops and the entire ecclesial community is required. The defence of the family and of human life is also a pastoral priority in the next millennium, which we are rapidly approaching.

In fact, among the truths obscured in man’s heart due to the growing secularization and widespread hedonistic atmosphere, it is those truths regarding the family that are most seriously affected. On the occasion of the Second World Meeting of Families in Rio de Janeiro, I had the opportunity to stress that “the basic struggle for human dignity is centred on the family and life” (*Speech to the Pastoral Theology Congress at Rio de Janeiro, 3 October 1997: L’Osservatore Romano* English Edition, 15 October 1997, p. 4). The entire Christian community is called to defend and promote these fundamental human and evangelical values.

An increasingly important role is played in pastoral service to the family and to life by associations, movements and non-

governmental organizations in the broader context of lay participation in the apostolate and of guidance in temporal situations, as the Second Vatican Council recommended. The Church relies on their contribution, on their constant and courageous commitment. "People who work to protect and foster marriages and families will accomplish much for the future of Europe" (*Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Europe, Final Declaration*, n. 10: *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition, 23/30 December 1991, p. 14).

As I sincerely hope that this meeting will effectively contribute to keeping alive in the faithful and in all people of goodwill an increasingly determined desire to work for the authentic promotion of human life and of its natural habitat, I would like to stress once again the truth that the family is founded on marriage.

These, Your Eminence, are the thoughts with which I accompany the work of this convention, while invoking on you and on the participants an abundance of gifts of the Holy Spirit and the protection of the Virgin Mary, Mother of life, I sincerely impart a special Apostolic Blessing to everyone.

From the Vatican, 11 June 1998.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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