



The Holy See

***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS
FOR THE FAMILY IN ECUADOR (9-12 NOVEMBER 2011)***

To my Venerable Brother

Metropolitan Archbishop Antonio Arregui Yarza of Guayaquil

President of the Bishops' Conference of Ecuador

On the occasion of the Second National Congress for the Family I greet with affection the pastors and faithful of the Church in Ecuador, which — in the context of the Continental Mission, proposed by the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences at Aparecida, and in preparation for the Seventh World Meeting for Families that will take place in Milan — will seek to begin a process of reflection on the Gospel that will enable married Christians and their homes to respond to their identity, vocation and mission.

The theme of the Congress, "The Ecuadorian Family on Mission: Work and Rest at the Service of the Individual and of the Common Good", recognizes that the family, born from the covenant of love and of the total and sincere reciprocal gift of a man and a woman in marriage, is not a private affair, closed in on itself. By its vocation it carries out a marvellous service, crucial to the good of society and to the Church's mission. In fact, society is not the mere sum of individuals but rather the fruit of relationships between people: between husband and wife, parents and children, and between siblings, relationships which are founded on family life and the bonds of love that stem from it. Through children each family gives society the human riches it has experienced. It can rightly be said that the health and quality of social relations depend on the health and quality of family relationships.

In this regard, work and rest especially concern and are deeply bound to family life: they condition its decisions, influence relationships between the spouses and between parents and children and affect the family's ties with society and with the Church.

Through work, human beings experience themselves as subjects who share in God's plan of

creation. Hence the lack of work and its precariousness threaten human dignity. Not only do they create situations of injustice and poverty that degenerate all too often into despair, crime and violence but they even cause people to have an identity crisis. It is, therefore, urgent to find effective measures, serious and appropriate projects, as well as the necessary determination to find ways to enable all to have access to a dignified, permanent and well paid job. This will enable them to be sanctified and to play an active role in the development of society, combining hard and responsible work with sufficient time for a rich, fruitful and harmonious family life. A serene and constructive home atmosphere, with its domestic duties and affections, is the first school of work and the best place for people to discover their potential, increase their eagerness to improve themselves and to achieve their noblest aspirations. Furthermore, family life teaches people to overcome selfishness, to foster solidarity, not to scorn sacrifice for the happiness of others, to value what is good and upright and to apply themselves with conviction and generosity for the benefit of the commonweal and for each other's good, inasmuch as they are responsible for themselves, for others and for the surrounding context.

Rest, for its part, humanizes time by opening it to the encounter with God, with others and with nature. It follows that families need to recover the genuine feeling of rest, especially on Sunday, the Day of the Lord and of man. In the celebration of Sunday Mass the family experiences here and now the Real Presence of the Risen Lord, receives new life, welcomes the gift of the Spirit, increases its love for the Church, listens to God's word, shares the Eucharistic Bread and opens to brotherly love.

With these sentiments, while I renew the expression of my closeness and cordiality to the most beloved sons and daughters of this nation, I entrust the results of this Congress to the powerful intercession of Nuestra Señora de la Presentación del Quinché, the heavenly Patroness of Ecuador. As a pledge of abundant divine favours, I gladly impart to everyone present the implored Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 1 November 2011

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