



Women for Faith & Family P.O. Box 8326 St. Louis, Mo. 63132

Volume 1, Number 1

WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY NEWSLETTER

August 1985

"Women of the entire universe, -- you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, it is for YOU to save the peace of the world."

-Exhortation to Women

Pope Paul VI - Second Vatican Council

AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Friend in Christ,

When a group of women met, last September, to discuss the possibility of providing an opportunity for Catholic women to express unity with the Church, her teachings, and with the Holy Father, we felt certain that there were many women who would wish to join us in this effort. The unanimous decision of this group of friends sitting around a dining-room table, was to circulate, as best we could, a statement of faith called the AFFIRMATION FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN. With the help of an anonymous donor, we had several hundred copies of this document (which was written by one of us) printed and began mailing them to people we knew.

We did not anticipate, then, the flagrant challenge to the Church in the form of an advertisement in the *New York Times* sponsored by "Catholics For a Free Choice", nor the unprecedented media attention which would be given to "dissident Catholics" (especially women) in the ensuing weeks and months. And, although it is really not surprising, we did not anticipate the response our efforts would bring. We knew, however, that there surely were many more women who, like us, would welcome the opportunity to make an explicit statement of their Faith. The fact that the Bishops' Committee on the Pastoral Letter on Women had particularly asked for testimony from American Catholic women made this kind of effort seem especially timely.

Within a few weeks, our mailbox was overflowing. Not only with signatures to the AFFIRMATION and requests for more copies, but with letters -- some offering encouragement and prayers, but many, also, expressing particular concerns about elements within our society which undermine and weaken both the Faith and our families.

By March we had a list of 4,000 signatures to send to the Bishops' Committee for their hearings on the Pastoral held in Washington. A few weeks ago we were able to present a list of 10,000 names of women who had signed the AFFIRMATION to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. As this is being written, we have over 17,000 signatures from women to present to the Bishops' Committee at the hearings to be held late in August in Chicago.

Your response, your signatures, your letters, your prayers, and your efforts to collect signatures to the AFFIRMATION has already given much encouragement to many people -- to other women, who sometimes feel isolated and discouraged in the face of so much confusion in the Church and in the society -- and to Bishops and priests, who need to know that the majority

of Catholic women do not feel "oppressed" by the Church, and that, far from being "beaten down" by the "patriarchy", we draw our strength and spiritual energy to meet the daily challenges of our lives (whether we are married or single, young or old; whether or not we have jobs outside our homes; whether we are Religious or lay women) from the Catholic Faith and the perennial Truths which that faith teaches.

Your letters and telephone calls also indicate that there is a great desire for continually deepening our understanding of the Catholic faith, and to communicate with others who share that faith and commitment. One response to this expression is to bring women together at a conference which might both enhance our faith and provide opportunities for Christian fellowship. After much prayerful consideration, we decided to sponsor such a conference. Information about this meeting will be contained in this NEWSLETTER.

The NEWSLETTER itself is an effort to help to provide a channel of communication and information to those women who have participated with us in this effort. You have done the work, and you should also know how things are going.

We still do not know what the future holds for the organization, WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY. We have been asked by Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, Pro-prefect for the Pontifical Council on the Family, to continue the collection of signatures to the AFFIRMATION at least until late in 1986, when a synod on the family will be held. There may be other ways in which such an organization can be of use to the Church. We have neither the funds nor the personnel, at this point, to launch yet another Catholic organization which has officers and regular meetings. We will do what we can, praying continually for guidance from the Holy Spirit, and are willing to work in a way which is consistent with the example of love and devotion set for us by Our Lady.

WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY is yours, and those of us in St. Louis who are taking care of the clerical work connected with the distribution of the AFFIRMATION and collection of signatures have been encouraged -- often inspired -- by your active witness to the Faith.

Please pray with us, dear friend in Christ, that His will be done in all our efforts.

Sincerely in Our Lord,

Helen Hull Hitchcock

Helen Hull Hitchcock
for WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY

A NOTE ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

It is with some trepidation that we write "Volume 1, Number 1" at the head of this Newsletter, because it implies that there will be other issues. We are uncertain, now, about whether there will be a need for another. Our purpose in undertaking this project is primarily to communicate with you. Many of you have asked for information of various kinds, and this merely seems the most expedient means of getting information to you.

We are, however, severely limited by the funds we have available. Your donations have kept the AFFIRMATION in print and pays for postage and other routine expenses. Because WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY has been asked to send representatives to the Pastoral Letter Committee's hearing in Chicago, we will use some of our financial resources to send our representatives there.

Another difficulty with the Newsletter effort is that a few women who signed the AFFIRMATION specifically requested that they not receive any mailings. Because we did not foresee using the list of names for any purpose other than to present it to the Bishops' Committee and to the Holy Father, we did not keep a record of those who made this request. We are, therefore, for both economic reasons and to respect the wishes of those few women, sending this issue of the Newsletter to a limited list of those of you who have written to us, sent us signatures or money, or have otherwise indicated that you want more information from us. PLEASE SHARE YOUR COPY WITH OTHERS IN YOUR AREA. We would also appreciate a response from you about this effort. Any further issues of the Newsletter will be sent to those who have indicated that they want to receive it. Whether or not we continue to produce such a publication will largely depend on your response.

If you, or your organization, would like additional copies, write to NEWSLETTER - PO Box 8326, St. Louis, MO 63132. A donation would be helpful.

WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY TO SPONSOR NATIONAL CONFERENCE

On October 4,5,6, 1985, a national conference sponsored by Women for Faith and Family will be held at the Airport Marriott Hotel in St. Louis. The purpose of this conference is to make it possible for women to strengthen their faith by association with others who share their commitment, and to provide a forum for the commentary of speakers who will address the group on topics which are often the focus of much confusion in the Church from a point of view consistent with Catholic teaching.

The keynote address will be given by Bishop Thomas Welsh, of Allentown, Pennsylvania. Bishop Welsh is president of the Pontifical Council on the Family in the United States. His address will be October 4, at 8 p.m.

Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, in a letter to WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY, offered to secure a message and Apostolic Blessing for this conference from His Holiness, Pope John Paul II.

Among other speakers at this conference will be Mother Angelica, of the EWTN television (cable) network, Dr. Susan Muto, of the Institute on Spirituality at Duquesne University. A tentative schedule and Reservation Form appear in this issue of the Newsletter.

CONFERENCE (cont.)

There is a need for increased knowledge of the history and rationale behind the Church's teaching concerning all matters dealing with the faith and family life. The role of women in society and in the Church is expanding. It is necessary, now more than ever, to develop confident and articulate Catholic women, who are grounded in the "ever ancient - ever new" teachings of the Catholic Church which has suffered from the misinterpretations of Vatican Council II. A balance to these errors must be provided in order to help direct the Church and her members in America to reconciliation with the truth and wisdom of Church teachings.

In order to further the accomplishment of these tasks, begun by the circulation of the AFFIRMATION FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN, this conference has been planned. We are currently seeking additional funds to meet the expenses of this conference, and for publishing the addresses given by the conference speakers.

We would like to share with you a portion of a letter recently received from Cardinal Oddi:

"I have read with care the 'Affirmation for Catholic Women' prepared by your organization and have found it excellent. It is clear, forthright, faithful and timely. It is a great consolation to me to learn that in the vicinity of fifteen thousand women have already signed the Affirmation because, with so many publically adhering to such high principles as these and with the justifiable anticipation that many more will add their names as the document becomes known to them, there is strong reason to hope that present widespread, sometimes affected, ignorance about the true role of women in Church and Society may have reached its darkest moment and will begin to fade as shadows flee before the sun. May God bless and strengthen your efforts, and those of all your collaborators."

To this we can only add our prayers that Catholic women will be equal to accepting the tasks which our Holy Mother, the Church, now requires of us. May all our actions be consistent with the example of love and devotion set for us by Our Lady.

TEN-THOUSAND NAMES PRESENTED TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

At a Papal Audience in St. Peter's piazza on June 12, the AFFIRMATION FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN with a list of names of ten-thousand Catholic women signators was presented to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. This list is a preliminary and partial list, and additional names will be forwarded to the Vatican later.

On receiving the packet, which was presented by Helen Hull Hitchcock, the Holy Father said, "God bless the women of the United States".

In addition to names of American women, WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY has received signatures from several other countries, including India, Canada and Mexico. The AFFIRMATION has also been translated into Spanish for use among Spanish-speaking American women.

In the short time since the list given to the Pope was prepared, nearly 7,000 additional signatures have been received. It is reasonable to expect that we may be able to sent 50,000 names to the Holy Father as a Christmas gift. Pray and work!

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAILROOM

About half-a-dozen of us gather each Thursday morning at the home of Sherry Tyree, who has devoted a room of her house to processing the mail we receive. Affirmations with signatures are given to Sister Anne Marie Skinner, RSM, who transfers the signatures to computer discs (in her "spare" time -- Sister is a nurse at St. John's hospital).

Occasionally a signature is illegible, or difficult to read. Sometimes addresses and zip codes are missing. This means that your name may be spelled incorrectly on the print-out given, or that Sister has to look up your zip-code (the computer lists are organized by zip-code). When gathering signatures, could you be sure that the names are written clearly and that the addresses are complete? It is getting difficult for Sister Anne Marie to keep up with the names that pour in, and this would make her job easier.

It is important that each individual sign her own name. A few forms have come in with typewritten lists, or something like "all 27 members of..." We keep all the original signatures in our files.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Some of you may have seen ANN O'DONNELL and HELEN HULL HITCHCOCK on the Donahue Show in February. They, with MOTHER ASSUMPTA LONG and SISTER PHILIP JOSEPH, of St. Cecelia's Dominican Convent in Nashville, were invited to appear in response to an earlier show on which dissident nuns who had signed the CFFC "Plurality on Abortion" ad in the NY TIMES. ANN had written to DONAHUE suggesting another point of view from Catholic women be given air-time. About twenty Sisters from the New York area were in the studio audience.

The four women were invited to lunch with CARDINAL O'CONNOR after their "performance", along with Helen's husband, DR. JAMES HITCHCOCK.

RONDA CHERVIN, who is a member of the Bishop's Commission on the Pastoral Letter for Women, a philosophy professor from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, addressed an audience of Women for Faith and Family in St. Louis on April 25. Dr. CHERVIN'S talk, "Feminine and Free" noted the special gifts with which women have been endowed by God and gave valuable insights on true Christian liberty.

Women for Faith and Family is currently working on a list of women who may be available as speakers in various parts of the country. (There are many, Thanks be to God.) This list could be made available to groups of women around the country on request. We invite suggestions for this list.

Two very encouraging events were sponsored by the NATIONAL CATHOLIC CO-ALITION of Chicago, one in May, the other in June. MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA, who was in the United States in June, appeared at the conference called "Women: Hope of the World" held in New York. Both meetings had an impressive list of participants, and we congratulate the NCC and its allied organization, CATHOLICS FOR RESPONSIBLE ACTION, for these significant events. (CRA and NCC have sent hundreds of signatures to the Affirmation from the Chicago area, which also testifies to the vigor and energy of these Catholic women!)

ITEMS OF INTEREST (cont.)

SR. CATHERINE BERNARD, M.D., who has developed a Natural Family Program in her native India, arranged to meet with some members of Women for Faith and Family while she was in the United States in June. She told the St. Louis women that 60,000 Indian families are involved in the Tamil-Nabu Family Program, and that Natural Family Planning has great appeal for the people of India whose culture includes high regard for the natural dignity of families. She was in the United States to give talks, and had earlier sent a list of signatures to the AFFIRMATION from women involved in her program.

The publishers of ST. PAUL'S CHILDREN'S MAGAZINE have launched an innovative project for distributing this magazine to children's wards of hospitals. The "CHEER" (Children in Hospitals Enjoying Enrichment Reading) system involves contacting hospitals who would like to receive the magazine, and seeking donors of subscriptions for these hospitals. ST. PAULS will send a "packet" to anyone interested in becoming a "Cheerleader". Contact SANDRA LEEK, CHEER Director, St. Paul's Publishing Co. PO Box 772, Fort Scott, KS 66701.

ST. PAUL'S CHILDREN'S MAGAZINE is a fine publication dedicated to Christian culture. It aims to "foster wonder, reflection, quiet and love of God." If you have children (or know some) of elementary school age, this would be an excellent gift. It is published quarterly and costs \$7.00 per year.

Other good news in the children's publications category is the FAITH AND LIFE SERIES of catechetical textbooks published by IGNATIUS PRESS. Designed for use in schools, these attractive graded books clearly present authentic Catholic doctrine. These books would be excellent, also, for use at home. (WFF member, Daria Sockey is one of the writers for this series.) Write to IGNATIUS PRESS, PO Box 18990, San Francisco, CA 94118 for their Booklist.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION
FORMS

Room Reservations

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Costs: single - \$49. 1 night
 98. 2 nights
 double - \$29.50 1 night
 59. 2 nights

Preferred Roommate: _____
 smoker non-smoker

Rooms cannot be guaranteed after Sept. 18.

Enclosed check for

\$ _____

 single double 1 night 2 nightsConference Registration

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Reg. Fee: \$25.00 (advance) \$30. (at the door)

Sat. Lunch 11.50

Sat Banq. 21.50

Continental Breakfast Sat. and Sun. included
 in Registration Fee.

Total enclosed, Fee & Meals: \$ _____

DISPLAY TABLE: if you would like a display
 table for books &c., please check this box
 and add \$15.00 to your fee.

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS TO WOMEN FOR FAITH AND FAMILY and return to "CONFERENCE"

PO Box 8326, St. Louis MO
 63132

Total Enclosed, ROOM and REGISTRATION \$ _____

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

October 4,5,6, 1985

Airport Marriott, St.Louis

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

3-8 p.m.

Registration

8 p.m.

Keynote Address: The Most Rev. Thomas Welsh
Pontifical Council on the Family

9 p.m.

Reception

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

8 a.m.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Celebrant: His Eminence John Joseph, Cardinal Carberry
Choir: Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George
Reading of message and Apostolic Blessing from
Pope John Paul II

9 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

9:30 a.m.

Challenges to the Faith: Christian Women's Response
Helen Hull Hitchcock, St. Louis

11:00 a.m.

HUMANAE VITAE and Pope John Paul II

12:00 Noon

Janet Smith, Notre Dame University
Lunch

1:15 p.m.

Women and the Priesthood

Joyce Little, University of St. Thomas, Houston

2:45 p.m.

The Catholic Woman in the World

Ann O'Donnell, St. Louis

4:00 p.m.

FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO: Its Meaning for the Future

James Hitchcock, St. Louis University

5:00 p.m.

Social Hour

6:00 p.m.

Dinner

Address: Mother Angelica, EWTN, Birmingham AL

7:30 p.m.

"Open Mike" Session - Conference Participants

8:45 p.m.

Vespers The Rev. Brian van Hove, SJ, Officiant

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

9:00 a.m.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Celebrant: The Most Rev. John L. May
Archbishop of St. Louis

Choir: Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George

10:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

10:30 a.m.

Creative Suffering in Everyday Life: A Woman's Call
to Faith

Susan Muto, Institute on Formative Spirituality
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh

11:30 a.m.

Panel: Women for Faith and Family

12:30 p.m.

Closing Prayers; Blessing

FIRST CLASS

Women for Faith & Family
P. O. Box 8326
St. Louis, Mo. 63132



THE CHURCH recognizes and praises the specific contribution, a necessary and irreplaceable one, that woman, particularly today, can and does make to the promotion of the common good in public order and in the area of work.

ENDOWED BY THE CREATOR with an innate gift of her own, made up of deep sensitivity and a fine sense of practical matters and moderation, she is called, together with man, to contribute to the growth of a more just and more human society.

THEREFORE I wish, today also, to invite every woman, with words of deep encouragement, to extend the exercise of her precious qualities from the sphere of private life to that of public and social life, and to do so with wise responsibility.

- from the ANGELUS message of
POPE JOHN PAUL II
December 6, 1981