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POPE JOHN PAUL II declared that November 30, 1996 marks the beginning of preparation for the **Jubilee of the Year 2000**.
*In Tertio Millenio Adveniente, the Holy Father entrusts the whole Church to the "Maternal intercession of Mary, mother of the Redeemer. She, the mother of fairest love, will be for Christians on the way to the Great Jubilee of the third millennium, the star which safely guides their steps to the Lord.
 May the unassuming young woman of Nazareth, who 2,000 years ago offered to the world the Incarnate Word, lead the men and women of the new millennium toward the One who is 'the true light that enlightens every man.'*"

1996 WFF Conference Report

Family in Crisis—Catholic Response

“WHEN WE USED TO STUDY CIVICS in our schools, one of the very first principles we learned concerned the family as the basic cell or group on which our larger society is built... Since it was so fundamental to the success of the society...it had to be fostered and protected by laws which enhanced its position,” stated **Bishop Thomas Doran** of Rockford, Illinois, in his keynote address, “The Family at the Crossroads”, at the opening session of the 12th Annual Women for Faith & Family Conference in St. Louis November 8—10.

The weekend conference, “The Family in Crisis—A Catholic Response” was attended by women from eleven states.

Bishop Doran, who was introduced to the conference participants by **Archbishop Justin Rigali** of St. Louis, explained that “both the peril and the challenge of our century and our millennium”—a “new religion”, the deification of the self influenced by rabid secularism and moral relativism. (Excerpts from his talk appear on page 6 inside.) **Monsignor David Kagan**, Bishop Doran’s vicar general and moderator of Women for Faith and Family—Rockford, led the group in Vespers before the bishop’s address.

Father James Viall, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church, Cleveland and moderator of the Women for Faith and Family chapter there, was the 1996 recipient of the Faith and Family Award, in particular recognition of his outstanding support of Catholic women, both religious and lay. Father Viall was a founder of the *Consortium Perfectae Caritatis*, an organization of women religious, and served as its moderator during the twenty years of its existence. The award was presented at the conference banquet on Saturday evening.

Allan Carlson, director of The Rockford Institute and noted historian of the family, focused his Saturday banquet talk, “The Family—What Went Wrong?” on the decline of the American family which he traces to 1840, when the vast majority of Americans “lived on farms or in small villages where the altruistic household economy, based on sharing, was supreme. Kinship ties were strong and the bonds between generations tightly held together by an economic interdependence that reinforced bonds of affection.”

Carlson gave several reasons for the deterioration of the family, including industrialization, state-controlled education, and the retreat of fathers from their

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religious duties. In the early 19th century American Protestantism still looked to the father to be responsible for frequent prayer, Bible reading and religious training of children. American Catholicism gave a similar emphasis to fathers in the home. The mounting separation of men from the home cut the father away from his religious duties with the resulting "feminization" of American religion. Reversing the trend could come about through family-friendly public policies and the re-Christianizing of the functional vitality of the family, Carlson said.

Speakers Address Challenges to Faith and Family Today

A full day of sessions on Saturday featured speakers addressing a variety of challenges to women, faith and families in our society, including feminism and the "anthropology of the human person", the erosion of the meaning of fatherhood, and the increasingly complex medical-ethical issues which families must face.

Helen Hull Hitchcock opened Saturday sessions with her talk, "Faith of Our Fathers". She explained how the hymn expresses the Christian concepts of fatherhood, which includes human fathers, of God Our Father, the Fathers of the Church and priestly fathers. She noted that the "fathers" in the hymn referred to the English martyrs of the Reformation (among them St. Thomas More, St. John Fisher, and many Jesuit martyrs) who were willing to die to protect and defend the "faith of our fathers" for others. All true fatherhood entails this sense of heroic self-sacrifice and commitment to others, forgetting one's self.

Today fathers are often absent—missing from the family and missing from churches. Their absence has caused great harm to the faith and the family. People have become progressively self-indulgent, perhaps because of post-war prosperity, she said, and this breeds irresponsibility. Radical individualism and cultural infantilism have led to a loss of the idea of virtue as a goal of maturity, and a loss of the meaning and value of sacrifice, of suffering for others. These qualities are intrinsic to the concept of fatherhood, both for fathers of families and for priestly fathers.

In his address, "The Family and Medical Morality: The Value of Human Life, **Father Peter Ryan, SJ**, a moral theologian from Loyola College in Baltimore, stressed the intrinsic value of all human life, whatever its condition. He summarized Catholic teaching on current issues of great concern to families—the morality/immorality of such medical-moral issues as physician-assisted suicide, the controversy over cessation of nutrition and hydration to patients who seem unresponsive (so-called "persistent vegetative state"), and "early induction of non-viable fetuses" (abortion) when the life of the mother is not threatened.

Father Ryan commented critically on the opinions of ethicists, Catholic or non-Catholic, whose attitudes towards human life leads them to advocate withdrawal or non-administration of treatment to people whose "quality of life" is regarded as insufficient to merit medical care.

In "False Notions of Freedom and Contemporary Feminism", **Germaine Murray**, who teaches English at Maryville University in St. Louis, effectively used the figure of Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, as a prototype of a contemporary feminist. Quoting from the novel, she showed how Hester's

character embodied the idea of radical individualism and self-gratification so familiar in our contemporary culture.

These attitudes, Dr. Murray explained, deeply affect our view of the nature of the human person and the meaning of sexuality, as well as the roles of men and women in society, their relationship to each other and to their Creator.

Mary Meaney's luncheon address, "A Tale of Two Conferences: Feminism and the Holy See", gave an in-depth look at both the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing and the UN Conference on Habitats in Istanbul. Miss Meaney, a press representative at both, spoke of the great difference in both spirit and outcome of the two events. In Beijing, Planned Parenthood and other feminist organizations tightly controlled the agenda and successfully manipulated the process, so that the documents which emerged had a radical anti-family, pro-abortion bias. The experience was dispiriting to the Vatican delegation, she said. At the Istanbul conference a few months later, however, developing countries were able to make their voices heard, and this strongly influenced the effect of the final documents. She called the dramatic reversal in the outcomes of the two conferences—a reversal Miss Meaney and her friends helped to accomplish—and the Holy See's strengthened stand at the Habitat event "The Miracle in Istanbul."

Mary Shivanandan of the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and the Family, Washington, DC, reflected on the topic, "Sentiment and Sentimentality: Woman's Choice". Drawing on the thought of Pope John Paul II, she observed that woman's responsive and receptive nature as wife and mother is expressed by empathy, sensitivity and openness to others. This exposes her to the temptation to place affection (sentiment) above reason and objective truth. Only when she acknowledges the fullness of the image of God in herself and places her own integrity, and obedience to God's law above sentiment, does she avoid the destructive path of excessive focus on feelings, or sentimentality.

A World Entrusted to Women

At a symposium on Sunday, "A 'World Entrusted to Women': How Must We Respond?", each of the speakers gave a brief reflection on how women must respond to the challenges confronting the faith and the family. In an open-mike forum, conference participants directed questions to the speakers. Defective catechetical education and what can be done about it was a concern frequently expressed. Other issues included the continued problem of feminism, and matters of personal and family spirituality.

Conference Liturgies

Archbishop Rigali was principal celebrant and homilist at a Saturday morning Mass at the Cathedral of St. Louis ("New Cathedral"). Concelebrants were Frs. James Viall, Peter Ryan and Peter Gadiant.

Father James Viall was principal celebrant and homilist at the concluding Sunday Mass was at the Old Cathedral. **Father Peter Ryan**, and **Father Peter Gadiant**, of Lincoln, were concelebrants. Altar boys were from St. Rose, Cleveland. Music was provided by the **Chorale of St. Peter**, Jefferson City, Missouri, under the direction of **Stephen Becker**.

All sessions and Fr. Viall's Sunday homily were audiotaped by St. Joseph Communications (tape order form p 14.)

Liturgy, Catholic Identity, Young Adults, Restructure, Occupy US Bishops at Fall 1996 Meeting

A VERY HEAVY AGENDA confronted the National Conference of Catholic Bishops [NCCB] as they gathered for their semi-annual meeting at the Omni-Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC November 11-13.

Items on the agenda ranged from the last two segments of the proposed revision of the Roman Missal, to the "Implementation" of a Vatican document mandating the religious integrity of Catholic colleges and universities, to a new pastoral statement on ministry to young adults, and included continued discussion of a proposal for sweeping restructure of the NCCB and the USCC (United States Catholic Conference). The reorganized structure, if the proposal is accepted, would be called the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB).

Although other agenda items received the bishops' attention—especially the restructuring proposal—important liturgical items once again were a primary concern, although debate over the proposed liturgical revisions was relatively subdued, in contrast to the past several meetings.

Ex Corde Ecclesiae

The proposed Implementation of the Vatican statement on Catholic higher education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* ("From the Heart of the Church"), watered down the original document's strong directives and contained no mechanism whatever to insure that even its mild suggestions be observed by the Catholic colleges and universities. Although *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* provoked instant expressions of outrage from many Catholic university presidents (it would interfere with "academic freedom"), the NCCB Implementation pleased them. This is not surprising, since several heads of major Catholic universities were members of the committee, headed by **Bishop John Leibold**, of Springfield, Missouri, which produced the Implementation. However, the bishops' weak document will not lessen the concern of Catholic faculty members who rarely encounter strong support for Catholic teaching in Catholic universities; nor the serious concern of Catholic parents who have often made considerable sacrifices to send their children to Catholic institutions of higher learning in the expectation that there would be at least a "preferential option" for teaching consistent with the Catholic faith.

Final Segments of ICEL Sacramentary

The final portions of the revision of the Roman Missal, the Sacramentary (prayers used at Mass), contained three sets of texts: 1) The texts for Masses, feasts of US saints and civil holidays; 2) Segment VII of the revision proposed by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy [ICEL], the Common of Saints, Ritual Masses (i.e., Masses offered in connection with the conferral of a Sacrament such as Baptism), Votive Masses, and Masses for the Dead; and 3) Segment VIII, Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, Antiphonal for Volume Two, Other Texts.

As with earlier revisions, hundreds of amendments were

offered by the bishops to these texts, few of which were accepted by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy [BCL]. There was very little debate on the floor over the rejected amendments, in contrast to the past several bishops' meetings. Most of the problems had already been debated—for example, ICEL's substitution of the Greek word 'presbyter' (leader) for 'priest', inadequate translation of words expressing dependence on God and the theology of grace, and general desacralization of the language used in the Mass texts.

In the past most amendments were rejected on the grounds that the ICEL translation was in accord with the 1969 Instruction on the Translation of Liturgical texts, known as *Comme le prévoit* (CLP). The text of CLP had been included in copies of the revised texts given to the bishops, and the BCL's rationale for rejecting amendments frequently referred to it. The Liturgy Committee still relied heavily on CLP in the latest segments. Printed copies of rejected amendments began with several pages of "Introductory Notes" which gave general explanations of issues raised by the bishops. Rationales for rejecting individual amendments generally referred to these notes. One passage in the Introductory Notes reads:

The Committee carefully considered all motions based on stylistic concerns. However, due to the length of the process and the complexity of remanding texts to ICEL for further consideration of eleven episcopal conferences, motions based on objections which are basically stylistic in nature (even if the points are well taken) were not accepted.

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Holy See Sponsors Meeting on Women

THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY sponsored an International Meeting on Women, "A Renewed Commitment of All for the Good of the World's Women", on December 6, 7, and 8 in Rome.

Participants included leaders of Catholic women's organizations and movements throughout the world. **Helen Hull Hitchcock** represented Women for Faith & Family.

The purpose of the conference, following the recent UN conferences on feminist issues, is to analyze "the challenges and questions raised by contemporary culture especially regarding women, but which concern all the active forces of society and of the ecclesial community", to study the "anthropological, biblical and theological foundations of the dignity and mission of women", and to "define the future proposals and commitments" as we approach the year 2000.

Harvard law professor, **Mary Ann Glendon**, who led the Holy See's delegation at the UN conference on women at Beijing, was one of the speakers.

Former Denver **Archbishop J. Francis Stafford** is the new Prefect of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and presided at the meeting on women.

Voices will report on the meeting in a future issue.

The Introductory Notes do not acknowledge the fact that bishops often offer amendments precisely because they see theological problems with the language of ICEL translation.

The Antiphons in Segment VIII caused particular problems. Because these texts are meant to be sung, *Comme le prévoit* permits "flexibility" in their translation. A few examples:

St. Louis **Archbishop Justin Rigali** suggested that in the opening antiphon for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, "It would seem advantageous to retain the traditional form of the citation from the Hail Mary. There would be less confusion for the people." He advocated the restoration of traditional words like "thee" in the Hail Mary. The BCL in rejecting his amendment, argued that the updated translation of the "Hail Mary" appears in *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, approved by the Administrative Committee of the NCCB several years ago.

Bishop Roberto Gonzalez of Corpus Christi objected that "dance for joy" is not an accurate translation of "exsultet." The BCL stated that the corresponding Hebrew word "is translated *dance*. The root *gil* implies something to do with a circle. ... It is likely...that it connotes a dance for joy, such as a ring dance."

Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia objected to the translation of the opening prayer for the feast of St. Andrew based on the Lord's call to Peter and Andrew beside the lake of Galilee. The Latin, *Venite post me, faciam vos fieri pisces hominum* ("Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men") is rendered by ICEL, "Follow me, and fish for people."

"Fish for people" just does not swim!", Cardinal Bevilacqua commented. Yet the BCL insisted, imprecisely, that "This is a precise translation of the Latin."

These typical examples of the bishops' attempt to amend the ICEL texts illustrate some of the principal problems with the revisions, and the reason for the debate and controversy surrounding them. The ICEL translations and revisions seem to reveal a theology of the Mass and an ecclesiology—a view of the meaning of the Church—that many bishops find problematic or inadequate.

Even considering only the style of the translations, the new ICEL effort further diminishes the sacred character of the texts; and many changes (like "fish for people") intended to be sensitive to certain interest groups (in this case, feminists) have the flat affect of most products of committees. The result is prosaic at best.

The sense of the Mass as a sacrifice is virtually eliminated in the ICEL approach to translation. What *is* sacrificed, in these new texts, is beauty, tradition, sacral language, a sense of timelessness and transcendence — and too often even basic accuracy of translation.

Where Do We Stand?

All the texts presented at this meeting passed with more than the required two-thirds majority. So all segments of the ICEL Sacramentary have now been approved by the NCCB. This does not mean that the process is over, however. In dozens of instances, texts from these segments were sent back to ICEL. These "remanded" texts must all be reconsidered by ICEL, who will decide whether to incorporate the amendments from all the English-speaking bishops' conferences into the final version. Then the final revised texts will be presented to all eleven English-speaking episcopal conferences for their final approval.

Assuming it is approved by all these national conferences (ithe United States is by far the largest and most influential), the entire ICEL Sacramentary will be sent to the Congregation for Divine Worship. Vatican approval is required before any new text can be used in the liturgy.

Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, outgoing chairman of the BCL who has overseen the entire Sacramentary approval process,

does not expect immediate confirmation. Responding to a reporter, he said, "I would suggest it probably would be a long time on the part of the Apostolic See to revise the texts. I say that based on the experience we're having with the Lectionary."

Since the process of debate and vote within the conference failed to produce significant improvements to the ICEL revision of the Roman Missal, many bishops (including those whose amendments were repeatedly rejected) now depend upon Rome to accomplish what they could not. During the past several years of controversy surrounding revisions of texts used for Mass — both the Lectionary (Scripture) and the Sacramentary — the US bishops have become markedly polarized, as the many energetic debates revealed.

Debates were minimal on the final segments of the ICEL Sacramentary, in part because it had become clear that "dialogue" could not resolve the differences—differences which include, but go far beyond, mere matters of style. Bishops who had raised serious concerns about the texts in the past, only to have their amendments rejected or voted down, seemed weary, dispirited, resigned. The vast majority of these amendments, numbering in the hundreds, involved substantial issues involving both theology and doctrine, as well as style. Prolonging the dialogue seemed futile.

The election at this meeting of the new chairman of the Doctrine Committee is revealing. Cincinnati **Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk**, appointed to the committee by retired San Francisco **Archbishop John Quinn**, defeated **Archbishop Francis George**, of Portland, Oregon, in a close vote. Archbishop Pilarczyk is the president of ICEL's episcopal board. The Doctrine Committee examines the ICEL texts to pronounce them free of any doctrinal error before the bishops vote on them.

Cremation, Televised Masses

In June the NCCB voted to ask the Holy See for an indult for the entire US to celebrate a funeral Mass with cremated remains present. A few individual dioceses had already received such an indult. The modifications in the funeral rite to adapt to this circumstance, "Adaptations of the *Order of Christian Funerals* for Funeral Liturgies Celebrated in the Presence of the Cremated Remains of a Body", was approved by the bishops at the November meeting.

Another liturgical item on the agenda was Guidelines for Televising the Liturgy, developed by a Task Group appointed by the BCL. The proposal took a strongly negative view of pre-recording and editing liturgies for telecast. Some bishops argued that pre-recording was often the only available option, and that editing of, e.g., part of the Communion procession, was sometimes necessary because of TV time slots. Both **Cardinals James Hickey** (DC) and **John O'Connor** (New York) asked for a more sympathetic wording. In response to a unanimous voice vote the BCL agreed to amend the Guidelines.

New Communion Rules Debated

The shortest of the liturgical items, a five-paragraph set of Guidelines for the reception of Communion to be printed in missalettes, provoked by far the most energetic debate of any liturgy item.

The controversy surrounded the proposed change stating that members of the Orthodox churches, the Polish National Church and the Assyrian Church of the East may be admitted to Communion in the Catholic Church. Many bishops—representing a broad spectrum of points of view—believed this statement would be interpreted as an implicit invitation to Communion which might violate the discipline of other churches. The effect on Catholics was also a concern.

Bishop Charles Chaput of Rapid City, for example, noted the passage saying Catholics should not go to Communion when conscious

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Letters from Our Bishops

Following are messages from bishops to Women for Faith & Family. They were read at the recent national conference. Both St. Louis Archbishop Justin Rigali and Bishop Thomas Doran of Rockford participated in the conference. The letter from Archbishop Cacciavillan, Pro Nuncio to the United States, including the Apostolic Blessing from Pope John Paul II is reproduced on page 16. We hope our readers will find our bishops' comments as helpful and encouraging as we did.

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock,

I take this opportunity to extend to you and to all the members of Women for Faith & Family my sincere greetings and best wishes on the occasion of your annual conference.

Although the traditional family is clearly the foundation upon which a moral, stable society is built, families today are facing evermore daunting struggles in an increasingly secular world. In light of this, it is particularly heartening that you would choose as your theme, "The Family in Crisis: A Catholic Response." As followers of Christ, each of us is called to protect and promote traditional family life.

I thank Women for Faith & Family for its dedication to promoting the authentic teachings of the Catholic faith and to protecting and strengthening the traditional family. Please be assured my prayers are with all those gathered for this conference. I ask that the Lord grant you his blessings as you continue in your endeavors.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain,
Sincerely yours in Christ,
Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua
Archbishop of Philadelphia

Dear Friends:

It is a great pleasure to greet all who gather for the twelfth annual Women for Faith and Family conference.

The handing on of the priceless treasure of our faith is the most essential work of the Church. In a special way, Women for Faith and Family assists the Church in this noble task.

It is my prayer that during your time in St. Louis, all who participate will experience a deepening of faith through prayer and through their understanding of the unique service that Women for Faith and Family render to the Church.

With an assurance of my prayers that God will abundantly bless all who participate in this conference and that this time spent will be fruitful, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Bernard Cardinal Law
Archbishop of Boston

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock,

It pleases me greatly to learn that the theme of the twelfth annual Women for Faith & Family conference is *The Family in Crisis: A Catholic Response*. Healthy and happy families are central to a good and flourishing society. Through their expressions of unconditional love, parents and children are able

to positively celebrate the gift of human life. Unfortunately, many challenges face the family of today.

In his address following the recitation of the Rosary in St. Patrick's Cathedral on October 7, 1995, Pope John Paul II recognized the difficulties faced by parents in modern times. He declared; "From many points of view, these are difficult times for parents, who wish to pass on to their children the treasure of the Catholic faith. Sometimes you yourselves are not sure what the Church stands for. There are false teachers and dissenting voices. Bad examples cause great harm. Furthermore, a self-indulgent culture undermines any of the values which are at the basis of sound family life." The response to the challenges outlined above must not be indifference. Instead, persons are called to pray and learn more about their faith. The conference being held this year is undoubtedly destined to do both.

Please be assured of my prayers for you, the speakers and participants as you seek to respond to the crisis of the modern family. In the words of His Holiness, "Every strengthening of family bonds is a victory for society. I appeal to all of you to promote respect for the mystery of life and love which God has entrusted in a special way to families." May God bless you in your efforts to proclaim the gospel of life.

Faithfully in Christ,
John Cardinal O'Connor
Archbishop of New York

Dear Ms. Hitchcock and friends participating in the Women for Faith & Family Conference:

I am delighted to offer words of prayerful best wishes and encouragement as you gather together for your special assembly in St. Louis.

The role of women in the Church and the world has been receiving great attention both at the Cairo Conference and at the Beijing Conference. Our Holy Father has obviously spoken to this theme a number of times, most recently in his Letter to Women of June 29, 1995.

In that very beautiful letter, our Holy Father offered a special word of thanks to all the women of the world, and especially the women of America. He thanked them for their fidelity in Christian marriage and their generosity as Christian mothers. He noted with pride the accomplishment and contribution of women in every area of human life—social, economic, cultural, artistic and political.

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Keynote Address—

The Family at the Crossroads

by Bishop Thomas Doran

Bishop Thomas Doran, of Rockford, Illinois, presented the keynote address at the recent Women for Faith & Family Conference. We are pleased to include excerpts from his address here. (An audio-tape of Bishop Doran's complete address is available. See Tape Order form, page 14.)

I CHOSE THIS TITLE FOR MY REMARKS this evening not because it is so original or sensational. I chose this title because for me, it represents accurately both the peril and the challenge of our century and our millennium.

The family as we know it from first-hand experience, the family as our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have known it, is being consumed and extinguished by what I can only term a ravenous secularism. The forces of this “new religion” bombard the family with its new virtues—individualism, positivism, agnosticism, ethical utilitarianism and moral relativism. The purpose of this “new religion” is the exaltation of the self over all others and, in effect, it is just one more form of idolatry except that it is no longer the desire to deify an inanimate object, but the will of self-deification...[which] is nothing more than a rejection of God as the Supreme Being who made all things in favor of the individual who can do all things! All those new virtues I just mentioned take their shape and form, their motivation, from this and become visible and operative in the evident and rampant materialism which infects virtually every aspect of our culture.

In the face of what our Holy Father has so rightly termed this “culture of death” stands the family which ought to be the foundation of a “civilization of love”, but which is being transformed into a forum for everything but genuine love. The Crossroads at which the family finds itself refer to that point where the horizontal path of secularism and the vertical path of true personalism collide. True personalism finds its origin and end in the Divine Personhood of the Triune God. No living being on earth except man was created “in the image and likeness of God.” Human fatherhood and motherhood contain in an essential and unique way a likeness to God which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love. From the very beginning man is created as male and female and here, too, we find the first statement of the equal dignity of man and woman—both in equal measure are persons.

In his *Letter to Families for the International Year of the Family* (2-2-94), our Holy Father underscores the absolutely

essential and basic premise for the Church’s constant teaching regarding the inviolable dignity of each person and persons in the sacred state of marriage...

When we used to study civics in our grade and high schools, one of the very first principles we learned concerned the family as the basic cell or group on which our larger society is built and from our political government drew its *raison d’etre* since it was so fundamental to the success of the society that it had to be fostered and protected by laws which enhanced its position. In this age of rabid secularism with its most constant manifestation as moral relativism, our political government and its many agencies and allies, are seeking to trivialize the family by trying to convince us that equally important alternatives to it must have an equal place in our society and have equal value. The more that single-parent “families”, homosexual “marriages” and what have been termed “blended” or “second” families the result of civil divorce, are not only proposed but exalted as equal with and to the family, as taught by the Church, the more our own government subverts the very unit we have been taught from little on is the foundation of a just and compassionate and law-abiding society.

This moral relativism as evidenced in and outside of our government has turned many into skeptics since it is meant to rid us of any objective moral values and reference points. When individualism and relativism become the major and minor premises in ethical thought and decision-making as we now witness it, is it any wonder that the family as the Church teaches us becomes an obstacle to self-fulfillment rather than the place where each person is able to fulfill his or her God-given destiny to know, love and serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in heaven?

Is it any wonder that when we, and especially our families, are constantly beset with certain types of behavior considered normal and morally acceptable simply because they are practiced by vast numbers of people, confusion reigns in the moral consciousness and practices of people? Persons are being deceived into believing that whatever is legal is of its nature moral. I need only point to the fundamental lie which has been enshrined legally to make my point—the legalization of abortion as an inalienable right. I neither blush nor hesitate to state that all other societal evils have their roots in this singular lie forced on us by a judiciary that does not serve the common good but which promotes special and relative interests. This is the not so subtle effort by the forces of secularism and moral

How can we
foster strong
families in an age
of moral
relativism?

relativism to isolate the person from God his Creator and from others like him created "in the image and likeness of God", so that the very ground of his being, the Absolute, will be irrelevant and therefore, no other moral absolutes will be relevant, and thus, the devolution to self-deification will be complete. Then the person may kill the unborn child or abuse the born child or ignore the sick, the elderly or the needy or abandon the spouse or kill the terminally ill because it is deemed to be in the person's best self-interest. ...

Secularism and moral relativism create a culture of production and use, a society of things and not persons, in a word, pernicious materialism. Because of this we see daily that one's worth as a person is judged by what a person has accumulated and nothing else. In essence, this reduces a person's life to a type of contest in which the one with the most is the best or at least the better...While men, women and children are all affected by this social and moral evil, the consequences fall hardest on women and children.

Women are told in varied ways that their self-esteem is dependent on what they achieve outside the family. Higher social worth is accorded almost any job or pursuit outside the home than the value placed on nurturing children and managing a household. From an early age, children are immersed in the wanton materialism of the culture through endless hours of commercials promoting things that will make them happy and will make their parents happy with them. Sadly, the real

message communicated to our children is that "things" give them their worth in their own eyes and in the eyes of their parents. As with all things material, they grow old fast and our children soon look to other "things" for fulfillment—whether they be drugs, guns, sex, or alcohol. ...

When our existence is focused exclusively on the self—on pleasing ourselves, on finding ourselves, on fully realizing ourselves—quite apart from the others who are, in fact, a part of our existence, all sorts of things can and do go very wrong, and for the most part, our efforts to satisfy the human need for genuine intimacy with others go sour. Statistics confirm this...

The first defense our families have at this Crossroads is prayer. Prayer strengthens the common good of the family. Moreover, it creates this good ever anew. In prayer, the family discovers itself as the first "us"; each member is for the others...Each person in the community of the family is a part of that common good without which human communities break down and risk extinction. ...

As difficult as our times may seem, we must remember that our Dear Lord suffered, died and rose for us and for our world. We have been redeemed and therefore, we have our faith and hope in Him. With that confidence may we, the family of God and His Church, faithfully and fearlessly stand at the Crossroads of this age and renew it by word and example in the love and honor we have for one another.

AFFIRMATION GAINS NEW SUPPORT

Response Encouraging—Join Us!

Last summer WFF renewed the effort to gather signatures to the *Affirmation for Catholic Women* in order to reach those who had not yet had the opportunity to express their fidelity to the Church in this simple, straightforward way.

We are happy to report that several hundred signatures have come in since July—sometimes singly, other times in big bunches. Some friendly publications have featured the *Affirmation*, and it was also put on the Internet.

The Internet copy reached an energetic young Irish woman, Ann Heneghan, who wrote to us:

I have reformatted the *Affirmation* document which I had downloaded from the World Wide Web. I found that many women agreed with the contents of the *Affirmation*...I now have 50 (signed) forms, including my own and my mother's. I will send them to you this week. ...We need Women for Faith and Family in Ireland...

Several parishes, parish councils, and women's groups have promoted signing the *Affirmation*. One Virginia woman encountered an unusual problem gathering signatures after Masses in her very sympathetic parish. She wrote:

I am enclosing 149 signatures to the *Affirmation for Catholic Women*. ...We obtained the approval of our pastor, published a notice in the parish bulletin and held our sign-up after all Masses one Sunday in September....Saturday evening, I left a lidded box in one of the back rooms where volunteers for this effort could

find forms and pens the next morning. Between 6:20 p.m. Saturday evening...and 7:30 a.m. Sunday morning when I arrived to attend Mass and set up the table, the whole box had been stolen!

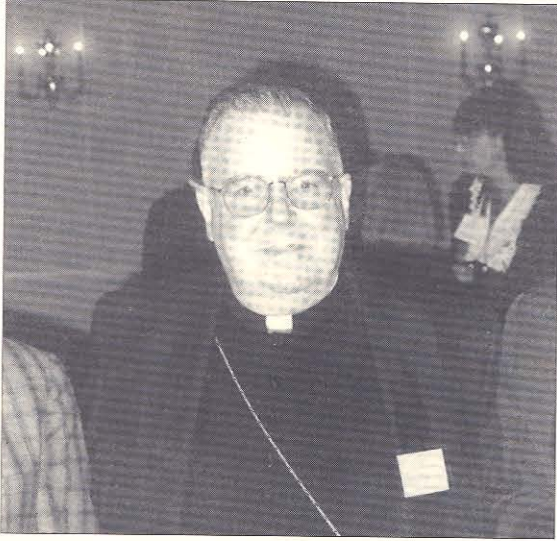
Fortunately, I had taken home with me the signed forms from the Saturday Mass, as well as a blank form. When I discovered the problem, I quickly copied enough forms for the day on the rectory copier.

This theft seemed to energize the helpers and the parishioners once they heard about it! Even though we did not set out to collect money for you, \$70. came in without our even asking!

See how Mary takes care of us!

A new list containing all the added names will be given to the Pope John Paul II during the coming year. The last updated list of signers, about 50,000, was presented to the Holy Father in 1994. Particularly in the context of continued challenges to such Church teachings as priestly ordination, abortion, divorce and contraception, and in light of the controversy over feminist influence on theology and liturgy, we believe the Holy Father will be encouraged to know of the many thousands of Catholic women who remain loyal to the authentic teachings of the Church.

We still need your help with this effort. A copy of the *Affirmation for Catholic Women* is on page 15 of this issue. You are free to reproduce it as often as you like.



Upper left: Bishop Thomas Doran

Lower left: Mary Shivanandan, JP II Institute, DC

Above: Recessional at "The Old Cathedral"
Father James Viall, Cleveland, principal celebrant and homilist (rear); Father Peter Ryan and Father John Gadiant, Lincoln, concelebrants; David Sponseller, Detroit, reader; Acolytes from St. Rose Church, Cleveland.

Family Conference Album



Top: Speakers respond to questions at symposium (left-right) Germaine Murray, St. Louis; Father Peter Ryan, SJ, Baltimore, Allan Carlson (at mike), Helen Hull Hitchcock, Mary Meaney, Mary Shivanandan

Above: Mary Meaney, Corpus Christi, Texas

Right: Allan Carlson, Rockford Institute

Below: Bridget Chrissey, Corpus Christi and Dot Walker, Longwood, Florida, listen to luncheon speaker.

Letters from Our Bishops

I trust that your Conference will continue to reflect on the countless possibilities for women to participate in the life and mission of the Church, especially as we prepare for the Synod for America and the coming of the Third Millennium of Christianity.

Finally, may I add a personal note; my own mother is now 88 years old and has always been for me "an icon" of the role of a loving mother, supporting and sustaining the work of her two sons who are priests and her married son and his family. I cannot thank God enough for the blessing of such a mother!

Praying that the Blessed Virgin Mary will shower graces upon you, I remain

Sincerely yours in the Lord,
Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

Dear Helen,

Cardinal Hickey asked me to reply to your letter of October 20, 1996, concerning the forthcoming conference sponsored by Women for Faith & Family.

Unfortunately, His Eminence is unable to be present. He will be in Rome celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Holy Father's priestly ordination during those days. His Eminence asked me to assure you that he shall remember the Conference in his prayers.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely in Christ,
Most Reverend William E. Lori
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Dear Friends,

I wish I could be with you for the 1996 gathering of Women for Faith & Family in Clayton but the press of diocesan business keeps me from doing that. I am sure Bishop Doran will give a wonderful talk on the issue of the family in crisis and our Church's response.

Never tire of your service to the Gospel, even if the struggle seems uphill. As Mother Teresa reminds us, God is not so much interested in our success as our commitment.

May the Lord give you peace and every blessing.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput
Bishop of Rapid City

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock:

Thank you very much for your letter of October 20, 1996. I hope that the conference for Women for Faith & Family will be fruitful. Please find a brief message for the participants:

To the Participants of the Twelfth Annual Women for Faith & Family Conference: I rejoice that women of faith and conviction are coming together to address the difficulties that face families today. There are distinctively Catholic views and responses that we can bring to the challenges that face us in

family life. I hope that your own deliberations will help us all to realize what God wants for our families. May God bless the special efforts in which you will be engaged.

Hoping that this will be helpful to you and the participants, I am

Sincerely in the Lord,
Most Reverend Alfred C. Hughes
Bishop of Baton Rouge

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock,

Please accept my heartfelt best wishes for you on the occasion of the 1996 Women for Faith & Family Conference.

The speakers are unsurpassed; the topic is right on target; and the organization is a blessing from God.

May his grace open all to the light and strength your conference will bestow on our beloved Church.

Assuring you of my prayers as I ask for yours, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Rev. John M. Dougherty
Auxiliary Bishop of Scranton

My dear Women for Faith & Family,

Greetings and best wishes from the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. It is so good to be able to address a group of women who think with the Church and promote her teachings with such vigor.

Recently I was asked by a lady in a reception setting how she might become more pro-active in supporting Catholic issues. I told her that one of the most critical needs in political life today is to single out for support women who are pro-life and pro-family.

In fact, I said there would be few things more important than to encourage Catholic women with strong pro-life and pro-family thinking to enter the political realm. It strikes me that the vast majority of women in politics today are proponents of the pro-choice movement and promote a confused vision of what constitutes solid family life. The weakening of the family unit is a reality that needs little proof. The diminishing number of hours that parents can be present to their children is all too clear. The invasion of the electronic media with its consumerism and liberal attitudes now occupies more time of the average American child than is given to the classroom. Too often our children are exposed in school and on the street to a kind of morality that can only be described as "of the lowest common denominator".

If I had the opportunity to do anything it would be to strengthen the Domestic Church. I would hope that parents would be able to spend more time together with their children. Sharing faith and prayer with them on a daily basis, reinforcing the truths of our faith and the high moral road we are called to walk as well as spending more time simply enjoying each others company and coming to know each other more intimately.

Letters from Our Bishops

May you Women for Faith & Family who are gathered for your Twelfth Annual Conference continue to be leaders in showing the way in which our families can emerge from crisis and into a more hopeful future.

Sincerely yours,
The Most Reverend James P. Keleher
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock,

I am writing to you and all the Women for Faith & Family who have gathered in St. Louis for your national conference. Although I am unable to attend, be assured that I have been praying for all of you as you prepared for this event. Your theme "The Family in Crisis - a Catholic Response" is well chosen. I hope that everyone who participates in these days will work even harder to build up the family. May your efforts assist the Church with Her mission to build up the Kingdom of God here on earth.

With kindest personal regards, I am
Sincerely in the Lord,
Most Reverend John J. Myers
Bishop of Peoria

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock,

I am very grateful for the opportunity of extending to you and to all the members of Women for Faith & Family my greetings and best wishes as you gather in St. Louis for your annual conference.

I note the theme of your conference, "The Family in Crisis—a Catholic Response," and I applaud your choice of that topic. The breakdown of family life in America is certainly one of the principal causes of many other problems we encounter.

At the same time, however, the renewal of family life, according to Catholic principles and practices, will surely serve as the leaven which will raise up our Church and the society in which we live.

As we respond to the Holy Father's call to spiritual renewal in preparation for the next millennium, organizations such as Women for Faith and Family will certainly help to lead the way. May God bless your fidelity and your wholehearted commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church.

Sincerely yours,
Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Youngstown

Dear Helen,

Thank you for your kind letter. I am happy to hear that Bishop Doran will give the keynote address and be launched into it by Archbishop Rigali. I am happy to have the opportunity to send the conference participants the following greeting.

Dear Friends,
May I take the opportunity offered by your Convention to extend my prayers and best wishes to all the "Women for Faith & Family."

Your program looks very interesting. The friendly setting, the prayers and the Eucharist guarantee success.

One reason families are in crisis is their size. How about a resolution to encourage all eligible couples to have a baby (or two) for the Millennium.

God bless you all,
Thomas J. Welsh
Bishop of Allentown

NCCB Report—Conclusion (continued from page 4)

of grave sin "unless a grave reason is present and there is no opportunity of confessing." He said:

By introducing the exceptional case in this guideline we invite the faithful to calculate against the principle which prohibits sacrilegious Communions. That those calculations would be accurate is doubtful when majorities of those polled are unaware of or deny significant Church teachings in issues of faith or morals. It is hard enough for the conscientious to stay in the pews now. The erosion of law (which in this case can lead to an erosion of love and awe for the Eucharist) can be just as 'heavy a burden' to bind up as is an overly rigorous law."

Bishop Chaput's proposal was defeated on a voice vote.

The vigorous debate over these few paragraphs in the missalette, revealed that the conflicts and disagreements within the bishops' conference over the Mass are far from resolved.

Vatican Must Intervene—Again

In the past, Vatican approval has been mostly *pro forma* confirmation of anything the national conferences have approved. But the role of the Holy See will be much more important—and more difficult—now. Controversy has characterized the entire discussion of

the liturgical revisions and the re-translations of Scripture at the NCCB for nearly a decade. This surfaced in the nine-year-long debate over the "Women's Pastoral", and again with the Catechism for the Catholic Church, when the English translation was delayed because the first translation made use of the same principles of translation (including feminist, "inclusive", language) that have been used for the Lectionary and Sacramentary revisions.

Vatican intervention was necessary in the case of the *Catechism*; and again in the revised Scripture translations used for the Lectionary. It will apparently be necessary again.

The entire project of revision of the English-language scriptural and liturgical texts has apparently been governed by an overwhelming determination to avoid taboos imposed by an increasingly secular, even relentlessly anti-Christian culture. One example of these taboos is imposed by feminist ideology, and is reflected in the militant excision of generic English nouns and pronouns, such as "man", "mankind", "he", etc.

Many bishops now believe that the method of considering these crucial matters at the conference level—the process of debate and vote—is grievously inadequate, or even counterproductive. Far from producing unity, it has revealed in very sharp relief the differences within the conference over very fundamental matters—matters which cannot be resolved by dialogue or good will.

Family Celebrations for the Christmas Season

CHRISTMAS does not end on December 25. Catholic families who want to increase their children's understanding of the Church's feasts and seasons may find suggestions for celebrating this holy season in the home, the "Domestic Church" helpful. The following is adapted from *Celebrating Advent and Christmas, A Family Sourcebook*, available from the WFF office (suggested donation \$5.). We invite readers to submit other ideas for celebration of holidays (Holy days) throughout the Church year, which might be included in a future edition of the *Family Sourcebooks*.

St. Stephen's Day — December 26

St Stephen was the first to be martyred for the Christian faith. (The word "martyr" means "witness".) His death by stoning is recorded in the book of Acts, chapter 7. This account may be read to children today as a reminder of the Christian's obligation to speak out for (or give witness to) the faith.

The Feast of Stephen is also called Boxing Day in England, where there is a tradition of emptying "poor boxes" and distributing their contents among the poor of the parish. This would be a good day to encourage young children to open their "boxes"—their piggy-banks—to remember the poor during this season of plenty, and to give gifts of their own. A visit to a soup kitchen, or perhaps volunteering to help as a family to distribute gifts to poor people would be one way to observe this feast of Christian witness.

The familiar carol, "Good King Wenceslas" might be sung today as part of family devotions. This ancient song tells the story of an act of charity that took place on the Feast of St. Stephen.

Prayer for St. Stephen's Day

Grant us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that we may imitate the life of Stephen, your witness, that we may learn to love even our enemies; for we celebrate the birth into eternal life of one who knew how to pray for his persecutors. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. John the Evangelist — December 27

John, the "beloved disciple", stood with Mary at the foot of the cross when Our Lord died; it was to John that Jesus said, "Behold, thy Mother"—and John cared for her in his own home. John, known as the Evangelist, wrote the Gospel and the Apocalypse (or Revelations). He was the only apostle who was not martyred—although attempts were made.

According to tradition, he was boiled in oil, but did not

die; and the Roman emperor tried to poison him by ordering him to drink a cup of poisoned wine. St. John blessed the wine, and the poison slithered away in the form of a snake. From this grew the tradition of blessing wine in the name of St. John on his feast. A sweetened, spiced red wine is served hot (alcohol is evaporated after boiling). The father blesses a cup of wine, and each member of the family takes a drink and passes the cup, saying, "I drink to you in the love of St. John."

Blessing of St. John's Wine

Blessed art Thou, Lord God, who fillest the hungry and satisfiest the thirsty, And givest us wine to gladden our hearts. Grant that all who drink this wine in remembrance of St. John may rejoice in Thee and be invited to sit at Thy heavenly banquet for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for the Feast of St. John

Father in Heaven, shed light upon thy Holy Church, that, being enlightened by the teachings of blessed John, apostle and evangelist, she may attain to thine everlasting gifts. Through Christ Our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

January 1 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

As early as the fifth century, feasts devoted to the maternity of Mary were celebrated. By the seventh century, this feast was kept in Rome on Jan. 1, the Octave of the Feast of the Nativity. Over the course of many centuries, this feast was renamed the Circumcision of Jesus. The original commemoration was restored in 1969 in the new Roman calendar.

This important feast should not be lost in the events surrounding the celebration of the New Year. Perhaps one of your family's New Year's resolutions might be to grow closer to Mary throughout the coming year. The traditional visit to Nativity scenes in several churches on New Year's Day is still observed in many families.

A family Rosary would be appropriate today, and the Angelus at mealtimes. The prayer below is the opening prayer from Mass.

Father,
Source of light in every age,
The Virgin conceived and bore your Son
Who is called Wonderful God, Prince of Peace.
May her prayer, the gift of a mother's love, Be your
people's joy through all ages.
May her response, born of a humble heart,
Draw your Spirit to rest on your people.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

The Feast of the Holy Innocents — December 28

The baby boys murdered by Herod in his attempt to kill the infant Messiah are honored by the Church as martyrs. In America, where our own innocents are daily being slaughtered by abortion, this feast day is a time to remember the unborn victims of abortion. Families might begin a Novena for the Protection of the Unborn (copies of this are available from WFF office), which includes this prayer:

O Heavenly Father, Creator and Giver of all life, author of justice, source of love and mercy: Although it is deserving of thine anger and punishment, look with mercy on our nation, which has offended thee by condoning the killing of millions of innocent children, thy precious sons and daughters, who, like all of us, were created in thine own image and likeness, but whose only offence was their very existence. Amen.

Sunday after Christmas

The Feast of the Holy Family

Family prayers today could include special blessings for children and for marriage. Each child might be blessed with the sign of the cross marked with holy water on his forehead.

Parents might read (or re-read) Pope John Paul II's 1980 apostolic exhortation to families; *Familiaris Consortio*. (It may be obtained at a Catholic book store, or the Daughters of St. Paul, 50 St. Paul Ave., Boston MA 02138.) The following prayer is adapted from the Holy Father's concluding prayer for families.

May Christ the Lord, the Universal King, the King of Families, be present in every Christian home as He was at Cana, bestowing light, joy, serenity and strength. Each family is entrusted to Him, to Mary and to Joseph, To their hands and their hearts ...

May it be they who open our hearts to the light that the Gospel sheds on every family. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Feast of the Epiphany

(traditionally **January 6**, now the Sunday nearest)

The culmination of the celebration of Christmas is the Feast of the Epiphany. Epiphany is the Greek word for "manifestation" (or showing forth); and the adoration of the Magi, or "wise men from the East" reminds us that Christ Jesus came not only to "his own" people, the Jews, but to the gentiles also. Celebration of the Epiphany, the "Twelfthnight" of Christmas, originated in Egypt sometime during the third century, thus this feast predates even celebration of Christmas itself.

On Epiphany the Christmas tree is lighted, and the *crèche* is completed, as the figures of the three wise men at last arrive at the crib. In many families, the wise men are moved a bit closer to the crib every day from Christmas Day until the Epiphany. Also, recalling the gifts to the Infant Jesus, many families exchange gifts—from the Three Kings. In some parts

of the Christian world, all Christmas gift-giving is done on the Epiphany.

Several families may want to get together for a potluck party on Twelfthnight—closing the Christmas season with prayers, singing carols and hymns (like "We Three Kings", "Star of the East"). Children costumed as "wise men" might process to the manger, and each child may offer a good deed and simple prayer as a gift to Jesus.

Because the Magi came from the Orient, many of the traditional foods served on the Epiphany are spicy—spice cake or dishes flavored with curry powder, for example.

The Kings' cake with a bean or trinket baked inside is a favorite custom which apparently originated in France. The



person whose cake contains the bean is crowned king or queen of the feast, and may have the honor of inscribing the doorway with the blessing.

On the Epiphany, the lintel over the entrance door of the home is marked (usually with chalk) with the year and the letters CMB, which stands for *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, (Christ, bless this home). These are also the initials of Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, the names of the three wise men, according to legend. The inscription, which remains above the doorway until Pentecost, is written thus: 19+C+M+B+96. The following blessing may be used as the inscription is chalked on the lintel.

House Blessing

Lord God of Heaven and Earth, who hast revealed thine only-begotten Son to every nation by the guidance of a star: Bless this house and all who inhabit it. Fill them with the light of Christ, that their love for others may truly reflect thy love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Continued on page 14

1996 WFF Conference Cassette Tapes *The Family in Crisis — A Catholic Response*

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- _____ 6. Woman's Choice—Sentiment or Sentimentality — Mary Shivanandan
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Christmas Season — continued from page 13

Sunday after the Epiphany The Baptism of Our Lord

The Sunday on which we commemorate our Lord's baptism provides an excellent opportunity for the entire family to talk about the meaning of this Sacrament. Although we may also want to commemorate our children's baptisms on their feast days or on their baptismal anniversaries, this day, celebrating Jesus' baptism by John, gives particular emphasis to the

example of Our Lord for all Christians. John preached repentance. Parents can talk about the need for all people to convert — to turn away from sin—and to put on the garment of faith in Christ Jesus.

Children who were baptized as infants cannot remember their own baptisms, of course. They will love to be shown photographs of this event, and told of how this special day was celebrated. You may want to get out the baptismal gown or baptismal candle to give the children a visual reminder of their initiation into the Christian faith.

AFFIRMATION FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN

By signing this affirmation women pledge their loyalty to the teaching of the Catholic Church. The names will be forwarded to the Pope.

Because of the assaults against the Christian Faith and the family by elements within contemporary society which have led to pervasive moral confusion, to damage and destruction of families and to the men, women and children which comprise them;

Because we adhere to the Catholic Christian faith as expressed in Holy Scripture, the Nicene, Apostolic and Athanasian Creeds, in the early ecumenical Councils of the Church, and in the continued deepening of the understanding of the revelations of Sacred Truth to the Church by the Holy Spirit through the teaching authority of the Church and of the Successors of Peter, Apostle;

Because we wish to affirm our desire to realize our vocations and our duty as Christians and as women in accordance with these authentic teachings, following the example and instruction of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and the example of Mary, His mother;

Because we are cognizant of our obligations as Christian women to witness to our faith, being mindful that this witness is important to the formation of the moral conscience of our families and of humanity, we wish to make this affirmation:

1. We believe that through God's grace our female nature affords us distinct physical and spiritual capabilities with which to participate in the Divine Plan for creation. Specifically, our natural function of childbearing endows us with the spiritual capacity for nurture, instruction, compassion and selflessness, which qualities are necessary to the establishment of families, the basic and Divinely ordained unit of society, and to the establishment of a Christian social order.
2. We believe that to attempt to subvert or deny our distinct nature and role as women subverts and denies God's plan for humanity, and leads to both personal disintegration and ultimately to the disintegration of society. Accordingly, we reject all ideologies which seek to eradicate the natural and essential distinction between the sexes, which debase and devalue womanhood, family life and the nurturing role of women in society.
3. We affirm the intrinsic sacredness of all human life, and we reject the notion that abortion, the deliberate killing of unborn children, is the "right" of any human being, male or female, or of any government. Such a distorted and corrosive notion of individual freedom is, in fact, inimical to authentic Christianity

and to the establishment and maintenance of a just social order.

4. We accept and affirm the teaching of the Catholic Church on all matters dealing with human reproduction, marriage, family life and roles for men and women in the Church and in society.

5. We therefore also reject as an aberrant innovation peculiar to our times and our society the notion that priesthood is the "right" of any human being, male or female. Furthermore, we recognize that the specific role of ordained priesthood is intrinsically connected with and representative of the begetting creativity of God in which only human males can participate. Human females, who by nature share in the creativity of God by their capacity to bring forth new life, and, reflective of this essential distinction, have a different and distinct role within the Church and in society from that accorded to men, can no more be priests than men can be mothers.

6. We recognize and affirm the vocations of women who subordinate their human role of motherhood and family life in order to consecrate their lives to the service of God, His Church and humanity. Such women's authentic response of consecrated service to the physical, spiritual and/or intellectual needs of the community in no way diminishes or compromises their essential female nature, or the exercise of inherent attributes, insights and gifts peculiar to women. Rather, it extends the applications of these gifts beyond the individual human family.

7. We stand with the Second Vatican Council which took for granted the distinct roles for men and women in the family and in society and affirmed that Christian education must impart knowledge of this distinction: "In the entire educational program [Catholic school teachers] should, together with the parents, make full allowance for the difference of sex and for the particular role which Providence has appointed to each sex in the family and in society. (*Declaration on Education*, Sec. 8, paragraph 3, from Vatican II Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, 1981)

8. We pledge our wholehearted support to Pope John Paul II. We adhere to his apostolic teaching concerning all aspects of family life and roles for men and women in the Church and in society, especially as contained in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*; and we resolve to apply the principles contained therein to our own lives, our families and our communities, God being our aid.

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APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 29th, 1996

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock,

On the occasion of the 12th Annual Conference of Women for Faith & Family, taking place in St. Louis, Missouri, November 8-10, I have the honor to convey to you and to all the participants the heartfelt greetings and prayerful good wishes of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

It is always a pleasure and reason for special interest to know of your work, your various initiatives and especially your Annual Conference: they really deserve to be followed with attention and esteem.

The name of your association is a beautiful trinomial which deeply links three realities of the greatest importance, and you may be assured of the Holy Father's appreciation for all that you do on behalf of women, faith and family. In his pastoral solicitude as Supreme Shepherd and in his Magisterium for these past 18 years, now so successfully completed, His Holiness has to a very large extent reflected upon these realities, enlightening the indispensable role of the woman in the family also as a promoter and nurturer of faith.

The topic chosen for your Conference, "The Family in Crisis: A Catholic Response," is indeed a very timely one. It is evident that while for sure many families are exemplary, there are others which unfortunately are experiencing a crisis situation. The *Lineamenta* for the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America takes particular note of this fact:

"Many Christian families in America are indeed living cells of communion, bearing witness to fidelity to Christ, love for his word and observance of his will. They are one of the great hopes of the church for the new evangelization...Nevertheless difficulties and obstacles can also be detected in the church's life of communion in America...In families—even Christian ones—there can be seen a weakening of religious values, a relative increase in separations and divorces, and a growing number of children being born out of wedlock." (*Lineamenta*, 32, 33, 34)

May these special days of reflection encourage all those participating in the Conference to renew their commitment as women of faith to "bring the new leaven of the Gospel to temporal activities by the witness of their Christian life and charity in the family, and by promoting respect and peace in civil society" (*Lineamenta*, 38).

As a sign of his spiritual esteem and solidarity, His Holiness imparts to you and all the members of Women for Faith & Family his Apostolic Blessing, granted through the intercession of Mary Immaculate.

To the sentiments of the Holy Father I add my own cordial regards and prayerful best wishes.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan,
Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to the United States



voices

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