

## LORD MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF YOUR PEACE

# Call to family, community, participation

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### Third in a series

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society - in economics and politics, in law and policy - directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the

common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined.

(USCCB, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching)

The mission of the Christian family is to sanctify and transform our present society according to God's plan (*Familiaris Consortio*, #52). Spouses are responsible to

help each other get to heaven, generate children, and raise their children to be physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy.

The Catechism (#2202), says that the traditional nuclear family, the man and woman united in marriage and their children, is the norm and that public authorities have an obligation to recognize it.

Families are good for society. Studies have shown that traditional nuclear families are economically stronger, more law abiding, more active politically, more productive with fewer days off school and/or work, have less childhood poverty, their children experience better educational outcomes, and present less of a financial burden on the state than other non-traditional families.

The Church and the State have, historically, both supported families. The rights of families are listed in *Familiaris Consortio*, #46. The link between healthy families and healthy society is so strong that governments recognized a vested interest in protecting families and supporting rights that correspond to their familial duties. Many Supreme Court cases over the past hundred years have supported family autonomy and parental authority.

Over the past several decades the traditional family form has given way to adaptations brought on by the prevalence of such things as same-sex relationships, divorce, and out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

These adaptations are problematic for children raised in conditions that are less than ideal and have placed the government in a strangely contradictory position. It still sees the value in supporting families but in doing so, it often works against the traditional family, perpetuating problems

Lord,  
make me an instrument  
of your peace;  
where there is hatred,  
let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness,  
joy.  
- St. Francis of Assisi

which caused the rise of alternative forms in the first place.

The Church teaches that sexual intercourse is an expression of love only proper between a man and woman married to each other and their intercourse must be open to the transmission of life. Sexual intercourse outside of this context is seriously immoral and a grave sin. Society's very contradictory view separates love and life from the act of sexual intercourse, emphasizes pleasure, and proclaims that everyone has the right to express sexuality however he or she chooses just so long as 'it doesn't hurt anyone else.'

Ironically, this faulty viewpoint hurts other people, especially women and children. Women are seen as objects to be used rather than equal partners to be loved and cherished.

Children are no longer seen as good in and of themselves and contributing to the welfare of their parents. They are viewed as burdens, less than human, equivalent to pets, to be had for the pleasure or usefulness they bring to the parents, to be prevented or killed if they are not wanted. Children living in family adaptations are frequently deprived of at least one of their biological par-

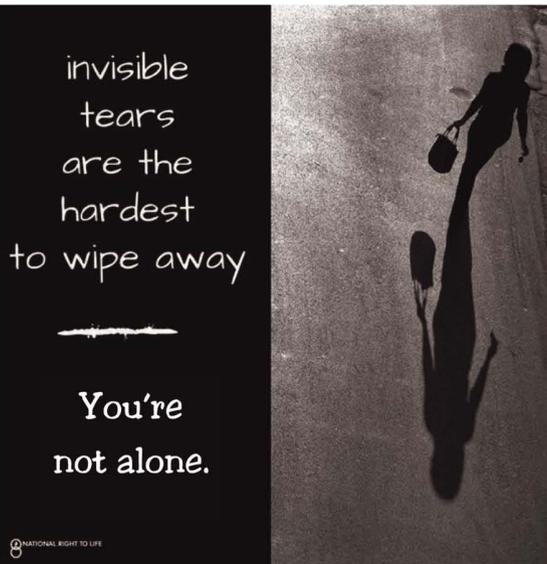
ents, at higher risk for physical or sexual abuse, more likely to have failed marriages themselves and to struggle with anxiety.

The last 50 years shows clearly that Pope Paul VI's four predictions in *Humanae Vitae* have come true. He said that if Church teaching on contraception was disregarded there would be an increase in marital infidelity; a general lowering of moral standards; a loss of respect for women because man would "reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires"; and that governments would coerce people into using contraception and intervene in citizens' sexual relationships. Nothing undermines families more than society's faulty view on sexuality, and this is precisely what leads to most adaptations in family structure. The adaptations themselves should not be promoted nor encouraged.

On the other hand, the people who live in those adaptations are vulnerable and must be supported both materially and spiritually. Family Law must, wherever possible, focus on restoring and promoting a healthy relationship between children and their biological parents, instead of separating them.

All families need help. When we consider helping families through public policy, we need to be clear that the help we are providing is in accord with Catholic teaching. We should oppose laws that increase the availability of pornography, harmful recreational drugs, gambling, abortion, or which allow euthanasia.

Types of policies we should support include: paid family leave, immigration policies that keep families together, living wage, affordable housing, and parental choice in education.



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