

CHRISTIAN FAMILIES, SIGNS OF THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPEL

VATICAN CITY, 25 NOV 2011 (VIS) - A press conference was held this morning in the Holy See Press Office to present the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family, which is to be held in the Vatican from 29 November to 1 December. This year's plenary coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation "Familiaris consortio" and the creation of the pontifical council itself. Participating in today's conference were Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, Bishop Jean Laffitte, Msgr. Carlos Simon Vazquez and Fr. Gianfranco Grieco O.F.M. Conv., respectively president, secretary, under secretary and bureau chief of the Pontifical Council for the Family, and Alfonso and Francesca Colzani, directors of family services for the archdiocese of Milan, Italy.

Cardinal Antonelli focused on certain themes contained in "Familiaris consortio", such as the central role of the family in the new evangelisation and in pastoral care in parishes and dioceses. He also highlighted the missionary vocation of the family "to live, irradiate and express to the world the love and presence of Christ; ... to become a great sign of the credibility of the Gospel through mutual service, generous and responsible procreation, care of children, commitment to work, concern for the poor and needy, prayer in the home, participation in Mass and Church activities, and involvement in civil society".

Bishop Laffitte also drew attention to "Familiaris consortio", wherein Blessed John Paul II spoke "of the need to help society rediscover true family values at a time of moral crisis". For the late Pontiff it was impossible "to consider the family without reference to conjugal love. This would seem obvious but, in fact, recent legislation has juridically legitimised alternative models of the family which separate it from its deepest root: the love of a man and a woman linked by an indissoluble bond".

From a Christian perspective "new difficulties arise", said the secretary of the pontifical council, such as the fact that "getting married in Church is often no longer part of an active life of faith; and this means that an awareness of the sanctity of Christian marriage is lost. Thus we can see why the pastoral care of marriage and the family today requires serious and profound consideration". Non practising Catholics could be offered "a brief training course, including reading the Word of God, an introduction to the most basic elements of Christian faith, and an initiation to sacramental life with particular emphasis on the Sacraments of Marriage, the Eucharist and Penance".

Msgr. Vazquez gave details of the programme of the plenary, which will begin with a solemn concelebration of the Eucharist at the altar of Blessed John Paul II in St. Peter's Basilica. "We wish to render particular homage to the Pope who often described himself as the Pope of families", he said. "There we will pray that the blessed may intercede with the Lord for all the families of the world".

Fr. Grieco announced that the pontifical council's quarterly "Familia et vita" will be dedicating a special edition to the thirtieth anniversary of "Familiaris consortio". The twenty-nine articles it contains have been written by experts and scholars of the main themes contained in the Apostolic Exhortation, among them five cardinals, ten archbishops and bishops, and six lay people including four women. He also

explained that it will be possible to follow the work of the plenary via the dicastery's website: www.familia.va.

At the end of the press conference, attention turned to the seventh World Meeting of Families, due to be held in Milan from 30 May to 3 June 2012. Alfonso and Francesca Colzani explained that the pastoral year in the archdiocese will be dedicated to the family in relation to work and rest. The archdiocesan family services is organising meetings with the aim of "offering individuals, couples and families the inner resources they need to ensure that family life, in both work and rest, coincides with the Gospel. The response from families has been one of great interest as they realise that this has a direct bearing on the difficulties of daily life".

You can find more information at: www.visnews.org