

Pro-Life Seminar 22 September 2012
OLHC Parish Rosemeadow - Fr Sarkis Homily

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the Second Vatican Council, described the family as the “domestic church”. Put another way, the family is the ‘Church in miniature’. What does this mean? The Church is the sacrament of God’s love. It is a community of faith and love at the service of the whole human family, leading and guiding it towards its ultimate destiny of eternal life with God. Likewise, the family too, is a community of life and love as it educates, leads and guides its members along the road of life to their eternal destiny. (Pope John Paul II, Perth, 30 Nov 1986; cf. Aust. Bishops Statement, *Families-Our Hidden Treasure*, pp. 34-35). Hence, it really is the ‘Church in miniature’. The family does not do this in a vacuum, but within the concrete reality of the world in which it lives. Thus, in his 1981 Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, Blessed Pope John Paul II stated that “the future of humanity passes by way of the family.” He is not overstating the point since the family by its very nature is the basic unit, the foundation, on which society is founded and built. Take the family away and eventually society will crumble. We have only to take a brief look at history to realise this. The collapse of the great civilizations of the ancient world were all preceded and precipitated by the collapse of marriage and family life, as the foundation blocks of society. Just as a house cannot stand without solid foundations, neither can society stand without strong foundations; and society’s foundation is marriage and the family.

A great defender of marriage and family, the late Pope John Paul II explained this further in his 1994 *Letter to Families* to commemorate the International Year of the Family. In it he set out clearly and articulately the Catholic Church’s teaching on what it understands the authentic family to be; and its role and purpose as ordained by God. The family, the Pope says, “has its origin in that same love with which the Creator embraces the created world.” He then goes on to define God’s plan for the true and authentic family as being based on a man and a woman, married for life, and open to the possibility of having children. No other relationship therefore, despite many attempts by many groups in our society to do so, can be looked upon or considered as families in the true sense of the word. To avoid possible misinterpretation, the Pope then criticises as morally wrong and disordered, any attempt to define as a family union in this sense, a relationship between unmarried people, or between people of the same sex. In equally clear language he condemns abortion and sexual intercourse outside of marriage, together with artificial contraception, as forms of selfishness not worthy of true and authentic love, which of its nature is open and life-giving. Such actions are opposed to real love, he says. Real love, he goes on, has very little to do with how it is depicted on television, in the movies and in advertising. Real love acknowledges the personal dignity and absolute uniqueness of the individual. Real love cannot be bought or sold, but is given freely and mutually in a relationship of giving and receiving. By its very nature therefore, the gift of the person in marriage must be lasting and irrevocable, that is, permanent. In the eyes of the Church and God, family life is a true vocation. “Families are called to contribute to the transformation of the earth and the renewal of the world, of creation and of all humanity,” the Pope says (ibid). Through the true and abiding love they share, husbands and wives help to lead each other to God, and in turn reflect God’s love to others, and teach their children to do the same.

The present situation in today’s society generally speaking, is not only at odds with this Christian understanding of marriage and family, but is increasingly diametrically opposed to it. Indeed it is now clear even to the casual observer, the growing determination of an ideologically driven, very powerful, and extremely well-funded coalition of minority interest,

green, and radical far-left groups, (and even to a certain degree) the growing co-operation of our dominant political parties, that under the so-called 'anti-discrimination' banner, seek with a growing boldness unthinkable even a generation ago, to deliberately orchestrate attacks upon anyone who dares to raise a voice against their anti-marriage, anti-family and anti-life agenda. It seems that 'anti discrimination' does not apply to those who disagree with their own views. Freedom and equality of rights apparently, at least according to these ideologues, is selective!

A sad and disturbingly new feature in all of this however, is that these attacks are readily and gleefully supported, and even deliberately instigated by a secular media that is openly anti-Christian in general, and blatantly anti-Catholic in particular, whose biased and often vitriolic reporting would not be tolerated if applied to other religious and non-Christian groups. I believe the reason for this is two-fold. First, that many in the media are people who have become disenchanted and embittered with Christianity and Catholicism, and who use the media to intentionally and maliciously attack them with immunity. Secondly, and more seriously, the constant attacks by a sympathetic media, who are often in league with these minority and ideologically driven groups, are not really about anti-discrimination, but rather about the total dismantling of the societal and Judeo-Christian structures, which underpin the very democracy that allows them the freedom to peddle their biased and truly discriminatory views. The result is that under the false and misleading banner of 'anti-discrimination' and 'equality', they are, in fact, actually discriminating against the right to hold and live this authentic understanding of marriage and family that underpins civilised society.

This may not appear to be the most optimistic note to finish this homily. However, I believe there is reason to be optimistic today. It has been said that the greatest evil we can do, is to do nothing. In the face of the present anti-family, anti-marriage, anti-life assault we are confronted with a choice. Either we can choose to do nothing, using as our excuse that we cannot do anything anyhow in the face of such powerful minority voices, supported by a deliberately biased media; and even if we could, it would not make any difference because no one would listen or take any notice of us- they would simply dismiss us as religious extremists and bigots. Alternatively, we can believe that we can make a difference and get ourselves and others motivated and organised to at least try. Of course, to take this second option is not the easiest one, since experience shows us that we will indeed be pilloried and ridiculed for our beliefs, and portrayed as trying to impose our narrow religious viewpoint on others. Yet try we must. And as history shows us, if we have the courage and faith to do so, we may just discover that we can make a difference and contribute to the re-evangelisation of society, and the recognition that the authentic family based on marriage is indeed, the very foundation and stability of society itself. But do we, as a Church, as Christians and as members of our society, have the conviction, the faith, the motivation and the courage to take up that challenge? I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the future of our civilisation as we know it, rests upon us taking up that challenge. Indeed, if we truly believe, as we say we do, that Our Lord, Jesus Christ, by His Passion, Death and Resurrection, has already conquered the Evil One, and won the victory of Life, thus inaugurating the Kingdom of God in an irrevocable way, then, in fact, we actually don't really have a choice: we must take up the challenge, relying on the all-powerful grace of Almighty God, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Thus, in humble trust and confident faith we pray: Our Lady help of Christians, Mother of the Church and Queen of the family, pray for us.