

Kansas City Region of the
Sovereign Military Order of Malta
2nd Annual Defense of Faith Lecture
Saint James Academy
Lenexa, Kansas
10 February 2017

The Challenges to the Defense of the Faith in Our Times

Introduction

It is my pleasure, as Cardinal *Patronus* of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to offer the 2nd Annual Defense of the Faith Lecture for the Kansas City Region of the Order. It is a particular pleasure to be able to confirm and support your fundamental mission: the defense of the faith and the care of the poor, especially the infirm. For both aspects of your mission, you seek to meet the particular challenge of remaining faithful to Christ in a world suffering from pervasive confusion and error. Rightly, through prayer, devotion and, above all, participation in the Sacred Liturgy, you seek the conversion of your personal lives, so that you may bring Christ to our culture which once was Christian but which is increasingly pagan. One with the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mother of God, you place your hearts into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, seeking there the purification and the strength needed to restore the foundations of a Christian culture: respect for the inviolable dignity of innocent human life, for the integrity of marriage and its incomparable fruit, the family, which is the cradle of human life, and for religious freedom, the irreplaceable condition for a happy life.

In the context of your prayer and work for the transformation of our culture, I wish to reflect upon what it means to be a Catholic in today's world. To inspire and inform our prayer, it is important to examine the crisis of Christian culture in our time. We must acknowledge the objective situation in which we find our culture. At the same time, we, as Christians, must be full of hope and courage in our mission of building a strong Christian culture in our homes, our communities and our nation. We must be confident that, with the help of divine grace coming to us from the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, we will transform the present popular culture marked by profound confusion and error and, therefore, by the loss of hope and courage.

In my presentation this evening, I will reflect on the crisis of Christian culture in the West

and on our call to restore it, in fidelity to the vocation and mission for which we all were consecrated through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation and for which the married have been further consecrated through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony: the vocation and mission to give faithful, generous and selfless witness to Christ in the world. This was, of course, the mission of our Order from its inception: to protect Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land and to care for the sick, and eventually to defend Christianity from the repeated threat of Moslem domination.

First, I will set the context of the living of our Christian vocation in the present time. I will then present the Church's teaching on holiness of life as the form of a new evangelization of our culture, giving particular attention to the witness to the truth regarding human sexuality. Finally, I will take up a topic of fundamental concern to the family as a primary agent of the transformation of the culture, namely, the responsibility of parents as the first educators of their children.

The Crisis of Christian Culture and Its Ideological Foundation

Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2010 Christmas Address to the College of Cardinals, the Roman Curia and the Governorate of Vatican City State, spoke clearly and strongly about the profoundly disordered moral state in which our culture finds itself. He spoke about the grave evils of our time, for example, the sexual abuse of minors by the clergy, the marketing of child pornography, sexual tourism, and the deadly abuse of drugs.

Regarding the grave evils which afflict the world in our day, Pope Benedict XVI declared that they are all signs “of the tyranny of mammon which perverts mankind”¹ and which has its source in “a fatal misunderstanding of freedom which actually undermines man's freedom and ultimately destroys it.”² They are manifestations, to be sure, of a way of living, to use the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, “as if God did not exist.”³

¹ “... della dittatura di mammona che perverte l'uomo.” Benedictus PP. XVI, Allocutio, “Omina Nativitatis novique Anni Curiae Romanae significantur,” 20 Decembris 2010, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 103 (2010), 36. [AllocNat2010]. English translation: *L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 22-29 December 2010, 13. [AllocNat2010Eng].

² “... un fatale fraintendimento della libertà, in cui proprio la libertà dell'uomo viene minata e alla fine annullata del tutto.” AllocNat2010, 36. English translation: AllocNat2010Eng, 13.

³ “... «etsi Deus non daretur».” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica Post-Synodalis *Christifideles Laici*, “De vocatione et missione Laicorum in Ecclesia et in mundo,” 30 Decembris 1988, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 81 (1989), 454, n. 34. English translation: Pope John Paul II, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici*:

They are a manifestation of sin at its root, which is pride, the pride of man who fails to recognize that all that he is and has comes from the hand of God Who has created us and, after the sin of our First Parents, has redeemed us by the Most Precious Blood of His only-begotten Son. They are a manifestation of the foolishness of seeking our freedom other than in the will of God and thus making ourselves slaves to creaturely realities. That foolishness manifests itself in a most distressing way in a culture strongly marked by addictive behavior, through which we seek our freedom and happiness in some creaturely reality. When we do not find them there, as indeed we never can, we, in our pride, instead of turning in obedience to God, enslave ourselves more and more to the same creature until it destroys us.

Reason and Faith in the Knowledge of Objective Moral Principles

Later, in the same Christmas Address, Pope Benedict XVI recalled his “encounter with the world of culture in Westminster Hall,” during his pastoral visit to the United Kingdom in September of 2010. In that encounter, he reflected “on the proper place of religious belief within the political process.”⁴ Taking inspiration from the example of Saint Thomas More, he addressed directly “the ethical foundations of civil discourse.”⁵ He set forth the Catholic understanding of the matter with these words:

The central question at issue, then, is this: where is the ethical foundation for political choices to be found? The Catholic tradition maintains that the objective norms governing right action are accessible to reason, prescinding from the content of revelation. According to this understanding, the role of religion in political debate is not so much to supply these norms, as if they could not be known by non-believers – still less to propose concrete political solutions, which would lie altogether outside the competence of religion – but rather to help purify and shed light upon the application of reason to the discovery of objective moral principles.⁶

Pope Benedict XVI noted that the role of religion in public discourse “is not always welcomed,”

On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), p. 95, no. 34.

⁴ Benedictus PP. XVI, Allocutio, “Londinii in Aula Vestmonasteriensi colloquium Benedicti XVI cum primoribus Societatis Civilis; com doctis vivis culturae, scientiis et operum conductioni deditis; cum Corpore Legatorum et Religiosis Auctoritatibus,” 17 Septembris 2010, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 102 (2010), 635. [AllocVestmon2010].

⁵ AllocVestmon2010, 636.

⁶ AllocVestm2010, 636-637.

for various reasons which can also include “distorted forms of religion, such as sectarianism and fundamentalism.”⁷

He observed, however, that such distortions do not justify the exclusion of religion from public discourse, for “reason too can fall prey to distortions, as when it is manipulated by ideology, or applied in a partial way that fails to take account of the dignity of the human person.”⁸ What remains necessary and true is the right relationship of faith and reason. The Holy Father concludes:

This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization.”⁹

Pope Benedict XVI concluded his address in Westminster Hall with an invitation to safeguard and foster the right relationship of faith and reason, which is essential to the pursuit of the common good, of the good of society.

Moral Discourse and Human Development

In his Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the same concern precisely in terms of human development, indicating the harm done to society, in general, when religion is excluded from public discourse. He described the deleterious societal effect of two extremes, the exclusion of religion from public life and religious fundamentalism, in these words:

The exclusion of religion from the public square – and, at the other extreme, religious fundamentalism – hinders an encounter between persons and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. Public life is sapped of its motivation and politics takes on a domineering and aggressive character. Human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendent foundation or because personal freedom is not acknowledged. Secularism and fundamentalism exclude the possibility of fruitful dialogue and effective cooperation between reason and religious faith. *Reason always*

⁷ AllocVestm2010, 637.

⁸ AllocVestm2010, 637.

⁹ AllocVestm2010, 637.

stands in need of being purified by faith: this also holds true for political reason, which must not consider itself omnipotent. For its part, *religion always needs to be purified by reason* in order to show its authentically human face. Any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development.¹⁰

To the degree that we restore respect for the essential relationship between faith and reason, to that degree we are filled with hope for the future of a culture which, otherwise, can only be in decline.

Christians discover the true relationship between faith and reason, the true concept of *ethos*, of the moral norm, in Jesus Christ, in a personal relationship with Him as He comes to meet us and make one with Him in His Mystical Body, the Church. Our Lady, the Mother of our Savior and His first and best disciple, leads us to Him, especially as He comes to meet us in the Sacraments and as He deepens our faith, hope and love through our prayers and devotions, especially the praying of the Holy Rosary.

In Jesus Christ, God the Son made man, heaven has come to earth to dispel the darkness of error and sin, and to fill our souls with the light of truth and goodness. If we live in Christ, in the union of our hearts with His Most Sacred Heart, when our brothers and sisters, lost in the unreal world of moral relativism and, therefore, tempted to despair, encounter us, they find direction for their lives and the hope for which they are longing. Living according to the truth which Christ alone teaches us in His Church, we become light to dispel the confusion and error which lead to the many and so grave moral evils of our time. At the same time, we give witness to the freedom and happiness found, when we live in accord with the truth. In a long interview which I gave to Guillaume d'Alançon, Episcopal Delegate for Family and Life Issues in the Diocese of Bayonne, France, which was recently published in English translation, I have wanted

¹⁰ "Tum exclusio religionis ex ambitu politico, tum quoque fundamentalismus religiosus, consortionem inter personas impediunt earumque consociatam operam ad humanitatem provehendam. Vita publica rationum cumulo extenuatur et res politica pugnacem vultum adhibet. Iura humana in periculo versantur ne observentur, quia suo transcendentis fundamento orbantur vel humana non agnoscitur libertas. In laicismo et fundamentalismo facultas amittitur frugiferi colloquii atque efficacis cooperationis inter rationem et religiosas fides. *Ratio semper fide est purificanda*, quod etiam de politica ratione est dicendum, quae non debet putare se omnipotentem esse. *Religio quoque semper ratione est purificanda* ut suum authenticum humanum vultum demonstret. Huius dialogi abruptio perquam onerosum erga humanitatis progressionem secum fert pretium." Benedictus PP. XVI, Litterae Encyclicae *Caritas in Veritate*, "De humana integra progressionem in caritate veritateque," 29 Iunii 2009, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 101 (2009), 692, n. 56. [Caritas in Veritate]. English translation: Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate: On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth* (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009), pp. 94-95, no. 56. [Caritas in Veritate Eng].

to give testimony to the objective truth which makes us free and underlies our sure hope.¹¹ Living in Jesus Christ is our way to contribute to the true human development which every man, in the depth of his heart, desires.

Holiness of Life, the Program of a New Evangelization

Addressing the challenge of Christian living in a totally secularized world, Blessed Pope Paul VI and Pope Saint John Paul II called us to a new evangelization. A new evangelization means teaching the faith, celebrating the faith in the Sacraments and through prayer and devotion, and living the faith through the practice of the virtues, as if for the first time, that is, with the engagement and energy of the first disciples and of the first apostles to our native places. Before the grave situation of the world today, we are, as Pope Saint John Paul II reminded us, like the first disciples who, after hearing Saint Peter's Pentecost discourse, asked him: "What must we do?"¹² Even as the first disciples faced a pagan world, which had not even heard of our Lord Jesus Christ, so, too, we face a culture which is forgetful of God and hostile to His Law written upon every human heart.¹³

Before the great challenge of our time, Pope Saint John Paul II cautioned us that we will not save ourselves and our world by discovering "some magic formula" or by "inventing a new programme."¹⁴ In unmistakable terms, he declared:

No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: *I am with you.*¹⁵

He reminded us that the programme by which we are to address effectively the great spiritual challenges of our time is, in the end, Jesus Christ alive for us in the Church. He explained:

The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its center in Christ

¹¹ Cf. Raymond Leo Burke, with Guillaume d'Alançon, *Hope for the World: To Unite All Things in Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2016). Original French edition: Raymond Leo Burke, avec Guillaume d'Alançon, *Un Cardinal au Cœur de l'Église : Entretiens* (Paris : Éditions Artège, 2015).

¹² Acts 2, 37.

¹³ Cf. Rom 2, 15.

¹⁴ "... formulam veluti «magicam»." Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "Magni Iubilaei anni MM sub exitum," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 93 (2001), 285, n. 29. [Novo Millennio Ineunte]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte: At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2001), p. 39, no. 29. [Novo Millennio Ineunte Eng].

¹⁵ "Nullo modo: servabit nos nulla formula, verum Persona una atque certitudo illa quam nobis Ipsa infundit: *Ego vobiscum sum.*" Novo Millennio Ineunte, 285, n. 29. English translation: Novo Millennio Ineunte Eng, p. 39, no. 29.

himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication.¹⁶

In short, the program leading to freedom and happiness is, for each of us, the holiness of a life lived in Christ.

Pope Saint John Paul II, in fact, cast the entire pastoral plan for the Church in terms of holiness. He explained himself thus:

In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethics and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: “Do you wish to receive Baptism?” means at the same time to ask them: “Do you wish to become holy?” It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (*Mt 5:48*).¹⁷

Pope Saint John Paul II continued, making reference to the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, by reminding us that “this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some

¹⁶ “*Tam enim praesto est consilium seu «programma»: illud nempe quod de Evangelio derivatur semper vivaque Traditione. Tandem in Christo ipso deprehenditur istud, qui sane cognoscendus est, diligendus atque imitandus, ut vita in eo trinitaria ducatur et cum eo historia ipsa transfiguretur ad suam usque in Hierosolymis caelestibus consummationem. Institutum enim hoc, variantibus quidem temporibus ipsis atque culturae formis, non mutatur quamvis rationem quidem habeat temporis et culturae, ut verum instituat diverbium efficacemque communicationem.*” *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 285-286, n. 29. English translation: *Novo Millennio Ineunte Eng*, pp. 39-40, no. 29.

¹⁷ “*Re quidem vera, si pastoralis ordinatio sub signo sanctitatis statuitur, aliquid compluribus cum consecrariis decernitur. Inde enim in primis firma aperitur sententia: si vera est Baptismus ingressio in Dei sanctitatem per insertionem in Christum ipsum necnon Spiritus eius per inhabitationem, quaedam repugnantia est contentum esse mediocri vita, quae ad normam transigitur ethicae doctrinae minimum solum poscentis ac religionis superficiem tantum tangentis. Ex catechumeno quaerere: «Vis baptizari?» eodem tempore est petere: «Vis sanctificari?». Idem valet ac deponere eius in via extremum Sermonis Montani principium: «Estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut Pater vester caelestis perfectus est» (*Mt 5, 48*).*” *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 288, n. 31. English translation: *Novo Millennio Ineunte Eng*, p. 43, no. 31.

kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few ‘uncommon heroes’ of holiness.”¹⁸

Pope Saint John Paul II taught us the extraordinary nature of our ordinary life, because it is lived in Christ and, therefore, produces in us the incomparable beauty of holiness. He declared:

The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living*: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction.¹⁹

Seeing in us the daily conversion of life by which we strive to meet the high standard of holiness, the “*high standard of ordinary Christian living*,” our brothers and sisters will discover the great mystery of their ordinary life in which God daily showers upon them his ceaseless and immeasurable love, calling them to holiness of life in Christ, His only-begotten Son.

Making pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of Saint James the Greater at Compostela in Spain, in November of 2010, Pope Benedict XVI urged Europeans to recognize the great gift of God’s love in the world, in Jesus Christ, and to follow Him in holiness of life. His words to the faithful of Europe, who have grown so forgetful of God and even hostile to His Law, apply also to other dechristianized nations like our own. His words are further illuminated by the context of his pilgrimage, for the very purpose of a pilgrimage is to open our eyes to the great mystery of God’s love in our lives, that is, to open our eyes to see the extraordinary nature of ordinary living. Let us listen to the words of Pope Benedict XVI:

God is the origin of our being and the foundation and apex of our freedom, not its opponent. How can mortal man build a firm foundation and how can the sinner be reconciled with himself? How can it be that there is public silence with regard to the first and essential reality of human life? How can what is most decisive in life be confined to the purely private sphere or banished to the shadows? We cannot live in darkness, without seeing the light of the sun. How is it then that God, who is the light of every mind, the power of every will and the magnet of every heart, be denied the right to propose the light that dissipates all darkness? This is why we need to hear

¹⁸ “... optima haec perfectionis species non ita est iudicanda quasi si genus quoddam secum importet vitae extraordinariae quam soli aliqui sanctitatis «gigantes» traducere possint.” *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 288, n. 31. English translation: *Novo Millennio Ineunte Eng*, p. 43, no. 31.

¹⁹ “Omnibus ergo tempus est iterum firmiter hunc proponere «*superiorem modum*» *ordinariae vitae christianae*: ad hanc namque metam conducere debet omnis vita ecclesialis communitatis ac familiarum christianarum.” *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 288, n. 31. English translation: *Novo Millennio Ineunte Eng*, p. 43, no. 31.

God once again under the skies of Europe; may this holy word not be spoken in vain, and may it not be put at the service of purposes other than its own. It needs to be spoken in a holy way. And we must hear it in this way in ordinary life, in the silence of work, in brotherly love and in the difficulties that the years bring on.²⁰

The words of our Holy Father make clear the inherent dynamism of the life of the Holy Spirit within us, leading us to give witness to mystery of God's love in our lives and so to convert our own lives more fully to Christ and to transform our world.

Holiness of Life and the Fundamental Witness to the Truth about Human Sexuality

Here, it is important to make clear the relationship between the practice of the virtues of purity, chastity and modesty, that is, the living of the truth regarding human sexuality and human life, and growth in holiness of life. What sense does it make to speak of our love of God and of our neighbor, when we do not respect the order which God has placed in nature and in our hearts?

It is instructive to note that Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, made special reference to Pope Paul VI's Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, "On the Proper Regulation of the Propagation of Offspring," underscoring its importance "for delineating the *fully human meaning of the development that the Church proposes.*"²¹ Pope Benedict XVI made clear that the teaching in *Humanae Vitae* is not simply a matter of "individual morality," declaring:

Humanae vitae indicates the *strong links between life ethics and social ethics*, ushering in a new area of magisterial teaching that has gradually been

²⁰ "Dios es el origen de nuestro ser y cimiento y cúspide de nuestra libertad: no su oponente. ¿Cómo el hombre mortal se va a fundar a sí mismo y cómo el hombre pecador se va reconciliar a sí mismo? ¿Cómo es posible que se haya hecho silencio público sobre la realidad primera y esencial de la vida humana? ¿Cómo lo más determinante de ella puede ser recluso en la mera intimidad o remitido a la penumbra? Los hombres no podemos vivir a oscuras, sin ver la luz del sol. Y, entonces, ¿cómo es posible que se le niegue a Dios, sol de las inteligencias, fuerza de las voluntades e imán de nuestros corazones, el derecho de proponer esa luz que disipa toda tiniebla? Por eso, es necesario que Dios vuelva a resonar gozosamente bajo los cielos de Europa; que esa palabra santa no se pronuncie jamás en vano; que no se pervierta haciéndola servir a fines que le son impropios. Es menester que se profiera santamente. Es necesario que la percibamos así en la vida de cada día, en el silencio del trabajo, en el amor fraterno y en las dificultades que los años traen consigo." Benedictus PP. XVI, Homilia, "In eucharistica celebratione sacro Compostellano anno recurrente," 6 Novembris 2010, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 102 (2010), 881-882. English translation: *L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 10 November 2010, 5 and 8.

²¹ "... ut *progressionis prorsus humana significatio describatur, quam Ecclesia proponit.*" *Caritas in Veritate*, 651, n. 15. English translation: *Caritas in Veritate Eng*, p. 20, no. 15.

articulated in a series of documents, most recently John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*.²²

Pope Benedict XVI reminded us of the essential part which a right understanding of our sexuality supplies in the true human development which is holiness of life.

In treating the whole question of procreation, Pope Benedict XVI underscored the critical nature of the right understanding of human sexuality, marriage and the family. He wrote:

The Church, in her concern for man's authentic development, urges him to have full respect for human goods in the exercise of his sexuality. It cannot be reduced merely to pleasure or entertainment, nor can sex education be reduced to technical instruction aimed solely at protecting the interested parties from possible disease or the "risk" of procreation. This would be to impoverish and disregard the deeper meaning of sexuality, a meaning which needs to be acknowledged and responsibly appropriated not only by individuals but also by the community.²³

The restoration of the respect for the integrity of the conjugal act is essential to the future of western culture, the advancement of a culture of life. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, it is necessary "once more to hold up to future generations the beauty of marriage and the family, and the fact that these institutions correspond to the deepest needs and dignity of the person."²⁴

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that "[s]o-called *moral permissiveness* rests on an erroneous conception of human freedom" and that "the necessary precondition for the development of true freedom is to let oneself be educated in the moral law."²⁵ As is clear, from the above considerations, individual freedom and the freedom of society, in general, depends upon a fundamental education in the truth about human sexuality and the exercise of that truth in

²² "Litterae encyclicae «*Humanae vitae*» solida vincula designant, quae inter vitae ethicam et ethicam socialem intercedunt, magistrare quoddam insinuantes argumentum, quod gradatim variis in documentis auctum est, novissime in Ioannis Pauli II Litteris encyclicis *Evangelium vitae*." Caritas in Veritate, 651, n. 15. English translation: Caritas in Veritate Eng, p. 21, no. 15.

²³ "Ecclesia, cui cordi est verus hominis progressus, monet eum ad plenam valorum observantiam, in sexualitate quoque exercenda: quae ad meram rem hedonisticam ludicramque redigi non potest, sicut educatio sexualis in technicam institutionem coartari non potest, si tantum cura habeatur eos quorum interest arceri a quodam contagio vel a generandi «periculo». Hoc modo pauperior fieret et altus sexualitatis sensus extenuaretur, qui econtra agnosci et accipi debet cum responsalitate tam singularum personarum quam communitatis." Caritas in Veritate, 680, n. 44. English translation: Caritas in Veritate Eng, pp. 73-74, no. 44.

²⁴ "... novis generationibus adhuc proponendi pulchritudinem familiae et matrimonii, congruentiam huiusmodi institutionum cum altioribus postulatis cordis dignitatisque personae." Caritas in Veritate, 681, n. 44. English translation: Caritas in Veritate Eng, p. 75, no. 44.

²⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2526. [CCC].

a pure and chaste life. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* goes on to observe: “Those in charge of education can reasonably be expected to give young people instruction respectful of the truth, the qualities of the heart, and the moral and spiritual dignity of man.”²⁶ For the Christian, it is education in holiness of life at its very foundation, in the respect owed to the inviolable dignity of self, body and soul, and of others as self.

The Critical Service of Parents as Primary Educators of Their Children

Education in the home and in the school is the irreplaceable way to guide our children and young people on the way of the happiness for which God has created each of us. With the help of a sound education at home and in school, children know happiness both during the days of their earthly pilgrimage and eternally at the goal of their pilgrimage which is Heaven. It is only such an education which can transform our culture.

The family is the first place of education, and the school is essentially related to the family. Regarding Christian marriage and the family, and the call to evangelization, Pope Saint John Paul II, in his 1981 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Familiaris Consortio*, declared that “the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity.”²⁷ Christian education in the family and in the school introduces children and young people, in an ever more profound way, into the Tradition, into the great gift of our life in Christ in the Church handed down to us faithfully, in an unbroken line, through the Apostles and their successors. Education, if it is to be sound, that is, for the good of the individual and society, must be especially attentive to arm itself against the errors of secularism and relativism, lest it fail to communicate to the succeeding generations the truth, beauty and goodness of our life and of our world, as they are expressed in the unchanging teaching of the faith, in its highest expression through prayer, devotion and

²⁶ CCC, no. 2526.

²⁷ “... christiana enim familia est prima communitas, cuius est Evangelium personae humanae crescent annuntiare eamque progrediente education et catechesis ad plenam maturitatem humanam et christianam perducere.” Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica *Familiaris Consortio*, “De Familiae Christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis,” 22 Novembris 1981, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 74 (1982), 823, n. 2. English translation: Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio: Regarding the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* (Vatican City State: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1981), p. 4, no. 2.

divine worship, and in the holiness of life of those who profess the faith and worship God “in spirit and in truth.”²⁸

The Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, made clear that the primary responsibility for the education of children belongs to parents who rely upon sound schools to assist them in providing any part of the total education of their children which they are not able to impart in the home. The essential good of marriage which is the gift of children includes both the procreation and the education of the child. I quote from *Gravissimum Educationis*:

As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society. It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism.²⁹

²⁸ Jn 4, 24.

²⁹ “Parentes, cum vitam filiis contulerint, prolem educandi gravissima obligatione tenentur et ideo primi et praecipui eorum educatores agnoscendi sunt. Quod munus educationist anti ponderis est ut, ubi desit, aegre suppleri possit. Parentum enim est talem familiae ambitum amore, pietate erga Deum et homines animatum creare qui integrae filiorum educationi personali et sociali faveat. Familia proinde est prima schola virtutum socialium quibus indigent omnes societates. Maxime vero in christiana familia, matrimonii sacramenti gratia et officio ditata, filii iam a prima aetate secundum fidem in baptismo receptam Deum percipere et colere atque proximum diligere doceantur oportet; ...” Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Declaratio *Gravissimum educationis*, “De Educatione Christiana,” 28 Octobris 1965, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966), 731, n. 3. English translation: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, new rev. ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 728-729, no. 3.

Certainly, society, in general, and the Church, in a particular way, also have a responsibility for the education of children and young people, but that responsibility must always be exercised with respect for the primary responsibility of parents.

Parents, for their part, should be fully engaged in whatever service of education is provided by society and the Church. Children and young people should not be confused or led into error by an education outside of the home which conflicts with the education given in the home. Today, parents must be especially vigilant, for sadly, in some places, schools have become the tools of a secular agenda inimical to the Christian life. One thinks, for example, of the compulsory so-called “gender education” in some schools, which is a direct attack on marriage at its foundation and, therefore, on the family. This past December, I spoke with a young Catholic mother whose oldest son is graduating from high school in May. She told me that on the application form for one of our major universities, he was asked the question: What gender do you choose for the first semester?, and then was given 25 choices.

For the sake of our young people, we all must give particular attention to the fundamental expression of our culture which is education. Good parents and good citizens must be attentive to the curriculum which schools are following and to the life in the schools, in order to assure that our children are being formed in the human and Christian virtues and are not being deformed by indoctrination in the confusion and error concerning the most fundamental truths of human life and of the family, which will lead to their slavery to sin and, therefore, profound unhappiness, and to the destruction of culture. Today, for example, we sadly find the need to speak about “traditional marriage,” as if there were another kind of marriage. There is only one kind of marriage as God has given it to us at the Creation and as Christ has redeemed it by His saving Passion and Death.

Education which takes place first in the home and is enriched and supplemented by schools and, above all, by truly Catholic schools is directed fundamentally to the formation of good citizens and good members of the Church. Ultimately it is directed to the happiness of the individual which is found in right relationships and has its fulfilment in eternal life. It presupposes the objective nature of things to which the human heart is directed, if it is trained to follow a correctly formed conscience. It seeks an ever deeper knowledge and love of the true, the good, and the beautiful. It forms the individual to this fundamental pursuit throughout his or her lifetime.

Conclusion: Holiness of Life and Martyrdom for the Faith

The witness of holiness of life is, in fact, martyrdom, in one form or another. In the words of the Holy Scriptures, it is dying to self, in order to live for Christ.³⁰ When we hear the word, martyrdom, we tend to think exclusively of those who have given their lifeblood out of faithful love of Christ, who have been killed because of hatred of Christ and of the Christian faith. Red martyrs or martyrs of blood give the highest form of witness and are our models in giving daily witness to our love of Christ, even though we may not be asked to pour out our lifeblood as they were. Through their martyrdom, they also win for us many graces for our daily living. In the face of the ever advancing anti-life and anti-family agenda of many who are in power in our culture, we pray, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother of God, Saint Joseph and all of the saints, that we may be faithful and courageous in loving Christ in every brother and sister, especially those in most need, those whom our Lord called “the least” of His brethren.”³¹

Given the breakdown in family life, the wholesale attack on innocent and defenseless human life, the violation of the integrity of the union of marriage in our society, and the denial of fundamental religious freedom, the call to the martyrdom of witness is ever more urgent. Reflecting, at length, on the critical state of the Christian culture and our response, in accord with the call to holiness of life and martyrdom for the faith, for the sake of our own salvation and the salvation of the world, we recognize that it is Christ Himself who makes it possible for us to pursue holiness, to be true martyrs. It is in following Him faithfully and without reserve that we bring the light of truth to our world. At the same time, He is with us always,³² as He promised, to sustain us by His grace, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is the fundamental sense of the military nature of our Order: to be soldiers of Christ, in the words of Saint Paul, to fight the good faith, to stay the course, and to keep the faith.³³

The life of the martyr for the faith finds its center and source in the Eucharistic sacrifice, in Eucharistic adoration, and in all forms of Eucharistic devotion, especially visits to the Blessed Sacrament and Spiritual Communion throughout the day. Through Eucharistic devotion and all true devotion, we extend our communion with the Lord in the Eucharistic Sacrifice into every

³⁰ Cf. 2 Cor 5,15; and 1 Pt 2, 24.

³¹ Cf. Mt 25, 40.45.

³² Cf. Mt 28, 20.

³³ Cf. 2 Tm 4, 7.

aspect of our lives at every moment of our lives.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is both our model and our great intercessor in giving faithful and generous witness to Christ. She is one of us. She shares fully our human nature, but, by God's favor, she was preserved from any stain of sin from the moment of her conception. She was from the first moment of her life and remains always totally for Christ. Pope Saint John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, reminds us of our Blessed Mother's irreplaceable help to us in giving the witness which is martyrdom:

Mary shares our human condition, but in complete openness to the grace of God. Not having known sin, she is able to have compassion on every kind of weakness. She understands sinful man and loves him with a Mother's love. Precisely for this reason she is on the side of truth and shares the Church's burden in recalling always and to everyone the demands of morality. Nor does she permit sinful man to be deceived by those who claim to love him by justifying his sin, for she knows that the sacrifice of Christ her Son would thus be emptied of its power. No absolution offered by beguiling doctrines, even in the areas of philosophy and theology, can make man truly happy: only the Cross and the glory of the Risen Christ can grant peace to his conscience and salvation to his life.³⁴

May the Blessed Virgin Mary intercede for us that we may be true and faithful witnesses to Christ alive within each of us. May we turn to her always, so that she may bring us to her Son with her maternal counsel, given to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana: "Do whatever He tells you."³⁵ So may He transform our lives and our world. So may He confirm you in your mission to safeguard and foster a Christian culture in your homes, in your communities, and in our beloved homeland.

Thank you for your kind attention. May God bless you and your homes.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

³⁴ "... indicò con forza profetica nella grande tradizione razionale dell'ethos cristiano le basi essenziali e permanenti dell'agire morale." AllocNat2010, 37. English translation: AllocNat2010Eng, 13.

³⁵ Jn 2, 5.