

ARTICLE 82

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

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Marriage! Modern Difficulties

Family Difficulties.

I want to begin taking a look at some of the problems that we face as families, as Catholics, and as a nation, in our current times. I also want to look at these problems particularly from the perspective of family life. What is 'family'? Where does 'family' come from? What is the role of 'family' in the world? What role do parents have, as parents, and as husband and wife? One of the reasons for this focus comes from something that Cardinal Caffarra has put on record.

Cardinal Carlo Caffara

On February 16, 2008, Cardinal Carlo Caffara, at that time Archbishop of Bologna, and who is also one of the signatories to the recent Dubia that were submitted to Pope Francis seeking clarification of *Amoris Laetitia*, after a Mass celebrated at the tomb of St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, granted an interview to Tele Radio Padre Pio, which was subsequently reported in the monthly magazine "Voce di Padre Pio" in March, 2008.

During the interview, in answer to a query about Sister Lucia dos Santos, one of the seers of Fatima, and of the charge given to him by Pope St John Paul II to plan and establish the Pontifical Institute for the Studies on Marriage and the Family, Cardinal Caffarra replied.

The Final Battle with Satan

"At the start of this work entrusted to me by the Servant of God John Paul II, I wrote to Sister Lucia of Fatima through her Bishop as I couldn't do so directly. Unexplainably however, since I didn't expect an answer, seeing that I had only asked for prayers, I received a very long letter with her signature – now in the Institute's archives. In it we find written: the final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family. Don't be afraid, she added, because anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be fought and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue. And then she concluded: however, Our Lady has already crushed its head."

Family – The Founding Pillar of Civilisation

"Talking also to Pope John Paul II, you felt too that this was the crux, as it touches the very pillar of creation, the truth of the relationship between man and woman among the generations. If the founding pillar is touched the entire building collapses and we see this now, because we are at this point and we know it. And I'm moved when I read the best biographies of Padre Pio, on how this man was so attentive to the sanctity of marriage and the sanctity of the spouses, even with justifiable rigour on occasion."

If the founding pillar of our civilisation, which is the family based on the marriage of one man to one woman is destroyed, then civilisation as we know it will collapse and will cease to exist. Some may see this as a prophecy of doom and gloom, but to simply say that, highlights another one of the problems that we are faced with.

Recently I have been travelling the country with Anthony Murphy and others speaking about family matters, about the pro-life battle, and soon we will be speaking about 'Building a Catholic Action Movement'. During the course of these conferences I have noted a few problems that need to be addressed urgently, but that will take time to correct.

Dreadful Lack of Catechesis

The two particular problems that I have in mind at present are, the dreadful lack of catechesis amongst ordinary Catholics, who simply do not know the things about the Catholic faith that they should know, and this may be what leads to the second problem I am thinking about.

Sentimentalism replacing Catholicism

The second problem is where emotions triumph over reason as a motive for either believing something to be true, or for taking a particular action to solve certain problems. The example above of someone saying 'you're just a gloom and doom prophet' reflects this emotional approach. Such talk of the collapse of civilisation makes people '*feel*' gloomy, therefore they do not want to think rationally about it. Some say 'we'll leave all of that in God's hands' or 'we trust God to sort that out'. That is fine. But what if God has entrusted these problems to **OUR** care? What if God expects **US** to sort out these problems by how we live our lives and by how we challenge those around us who are destroying the family?

Imagine I am walking in a housing estate and I notice a young child sitting in the middle of the road. I notice a woman nearby who is probably the child's mother, and I tell her that her child is sitting in the middle of the road and is in danger of being struck by a car. What would you think of this mother if all she did was reply, 'Oh you're full of doom and gloom'? Or if she said 'I have complete trust in God to look after my child' and left the child where she was sitting in the middle of the road? The great danger with this kind of thinking is, that if something were to happen to that child, then the blame would be laid on God as if it was God who was not doing His job rather than the mother to whom God entrusted the child.

The Priest and the Storm

I am reminded of the story told about the priest of great faith. One day there was a great storm and a nearby dam burst open and the town was in danger of being flooded. The priest was in his church and the waters began to rise. He trusted in God to keep him safe. Soon the waters had reached waist height and then a boat appeared at the door of the church. The men in the boat called out 'Father, climb aboard and we'll take you to safety' The priest replied, 'it's OK, I trust in God to keep me safe and He will keep me safe'. Soon the priest had to climb into the bell tower as the waters kept rising. Another boat arrived and offered to take him to safety. But he replied again 'it's OK, I trust in God to keep me safe and He will keep me safe'.

The waters continued to rise and the priest was forced to climb out onto the roof of the church. He heard a great noise and looking up, he saw a helicopter hovering overhead. A voice came through a loud hailer offering to take him to safety but he told them to go on without him saying 'it's OK, I trust in God to keep me safe and He will keep me safe'. The priest was eventually washed off the roof of the church and he drowned.

Two Boats and a Helicopter

He appears before St Peter at the pearly gates but St Peter refuses him admission. The priest demands to see God. When God arrives the priest says 'there must be some mistake, I am a faithful son of the Church'. God tells him that St Peter does not make mistakes. The priest is confused, 'but God, I trusted in you to save me, I had absolute trust in You'. God replied, 'didn't I send you two boats and a helicopter'.

Reason & Common Sense are Gifts from God

The point of this story is that God expects us to use our reason and our common sense, both gifts from Him, in order to work out our salvation and to help others to heaven. When we see that things are not as they should be, God expects us to apply our God given reason to these problems and to seek first His Kingdom. It is not enough to say that we trust in God, this is the error of protestantism, which claims that man is saved by faith alone. Our faith must lead to holy action for the Kingdom of God and for His greater glory.

Free Will & Intellect

God gave us free will for a reason. God gave us our intellects for a reason. God expects us to act in His interests and to concern ourselves with His affairs particularly with the salvation of souls and the promotion of the Kingdom of God. Christ tells us specifically in St Matthew's Gospel chapter six, "Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33) In Matthew chapter 12 verse 30, Christ tells us "He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth."

Workers in the Vineyard of God

We are called to work in the vineyard of the Lord and to gather men for Christ and for His Kingdom. But how can we do this if we do not know what Christ's Catholic Church teaches?

One common example of this which shows up the lack of catechesis so prevalent among Catholics of our day, is the practice amongst certain Catholic groups of what is called 'Baptism of the Unborn'.

A Sacrament must have the Correct Form and the Correct Matter

For a sacrament to be valid it must have both the correct form and the correct matter. The form of the sacrament of baptism is the recitation of the words of baptism, 'I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. The matter is water which, in the Latin Rite, is poured on the head of the person to be baptised. The water must be poured by the same person who is reciting the words. You may recall a recent case in Ireland whereby a priest thought it would be lovely if the parents of the child poured the water whilst the priest recited the words of baptism. The priest wanted to make the ceremony more meaningful, but he ended up invalidating the sacrament.

Baptism of the Unborn Fails the Test of Matter

Baptism of the unborn fails the test of matter and is therefore invalid. It also leads to the possibility of a dangerous assumption, that if we can do this for the unborn then why not for everybody else who was not baptised? This could then lead to a situation whereby the importance of baptism and particularly of getting children baptised as soon as possible after birth, is further diminished.

We can see how the priest in the invalid baptism case above was proceeding on the basis of the emotional response trying to add emotional meaning to a sacrament which for over two thousand years has already been steeped in deep intellectual and spiritual meaning. This is what happens when we allow false 'pastoral practices' to override the doctrine of the Catholic Church. This abandonment of doctrine would not be acceptable in other spheres of life, so why would we accept it when it comes to the most important thing of all, our eternal salvation?

The Pastoral Mechanic

Imagine if you took your car to the garage for a service because it needed oil. After the service you ask the mechanic how much oil he put into the engine. Supposing he said 'Ah, I just splashed a bit in, but I have put a beautiful air freshener inside. She smells lovely'. You know that the manufacturer specifies how much oil should be into the engine in order to keep it running smoothly. You would not accept the 'pastoral practice' of the air freshener if you could not be sure that there was enough oil in the engine. Similarly when you buy a kilo of rice you want to know that you have a kilo of rice and not 500 grams and that it is rice and not wheat. These examples are not meant to trivialise this matter, on the contrary, if we care about 'doctrine' when it comes to car engines and rice, how much more importance should we place on doctrine when it comes to the salvation of our souls?

Recently, one of the priests of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, reminded us at Sunday Mass that our emotions are 'sub-rational', and that we must proceed along the path of holiness using our will and our intellect. It is important for all of us to realise that we have been badly catechised and then we must begin the process of learning and deepening our knowledge of our Catholic faith. To know the Catholic faith, is to know Jesus Christ.

The Future of the Catholic Church

Let us heed the words of Pope Benedict XVI when in 2009 as Cardinal Ratzinger writing about the future of the Catholic Church he wrote

“It will be hard-going for the Church, for the process of crystallization and clarification will cost her much valuable energy. It will make her poor and cause her to become the Church of the meek...The process will be long and wearisome as was the road from the false progressivism on the eve of the French Revolution – when a bishop might be thought smart if he made fun of dogmas and even insinuated that the existence of God was by no means certain... But when the trial of this sifting is past, a great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church. Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty ...” (Faith and the Future - Ratzinger)

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