



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE FAMILY AND THE ECONOMY**

Friday, 8 March 1996

*Your Eminence,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. It is a pleasure for me to welcome the participants in this *International Meeting on the relationship between the family and the economy*, convened at the initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Family. Since the family is the basic cell of society, its life, harmony and stability are full of consequences for every aspect of human well-being and progress; not least for the development of local and national economies, as well as of the global economy itself. This is the object of your reflections during these days.

2. *Many aspects of the economy strongly condition the life and harmony of families.* The phenomenon of poverty and under-development strikes hard at the institution of the family. Various kinds of limitations and privations make the mission God has willed for parents and children very difficult. There are problems concerning food, housing, hygiene, education. These are compounded by unemployment and the lack of a just wage that allows families to live with dignity. In many countries, the tax systems penalize families or aggravate their economic condition.

In western societies in particular, young people, faced with serious economic uncertainties, are frequently tempted to put off the time to get married and to have a family. Nor can you overlook, in your reflections, *the negative effects on the social fabric caused by family breakdown*, with the enormous economic costs that ensue. It is paradoxical that in such a situation, political authorities often seem incapable of taking measures, including economic investments, which will strengthen the family institution and make families once more the main protagonists of family policies.

3. Dealing with the relationship between the family and the economy, you cannot fail to face the question of *the work of women outside the home*. The issue today is generally not the right of women to enter the work-force or to follow a career. *The pressing question is that of finding ways for working wives and mothers to carry out their irreplaceable service within the family, as a community of love and the sanctuary of life.*

4. Another theme of concern to you must be that of education, which represents an element of great importance for the economic life of the family and of society. While it implies a set of conditions and an investment of goods and energies that have great bearing on the economy, education cannot be subordinate to merely economic demands, since it *has to do with the integral development and well-being of individuals and of society*. In this perspective, *the relevance of religious and moral values for the economic vitality of families and communities* should be considered. It is enough to mention the moral and religious values that underlie unity and peace within families, moral integrity, love for work and for saving, cultural progress and social solidarity, as well as the moral and spiritual strength needed to avoid a hedonistic and selfish waste of economic resources and human energies.

5. I am sure that you understand that the fundamental question on which the Church wishes to hear your expert opinion is this: how can society organize the economy so that couples will have the necessary time and tranquillity for being together, for having and raising children, for all those things which make the home and family life the place of human fulfillment? I thank you for bringing your wisdom and experience to bear on such a central concern.

May the Lord bless you in your efforts. May he keep you and your own families in his grace and peace.

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