

## **“Family Artisans of an Evolving Society: An Historic Perspective”**

Talk Given at the International Conference of the Christian Family Movement

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I would like to thank Wayne and Sue Hamilton for inviting me to this International Conference of the Christian Family Movement.. Years ago I spent some time studying the Chicago Catholic Worker Movement., and the names of the Crowley’s, Fr Hillenbrand, Ed Marciniak, John Cogley and others connected to the founding of the CFM often popped up in the midst of my research. Chicago in the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s became a veritable hotbed of Catholic social action among the laity and it is not surprising that the Christian Family movement would trace it’s roots there.

**It** is also fitting that for this year you have chosen the theme “Family: Artisans of an Evolving Society” because if you trace the roots of family history further, you would discover that the medieval Church in an attempt to redeem a world in turmoil , established the family as cornerstone of a Christian society, and in this era gave us the concept .of the nuclear family which we still cherish today.

### **FAMILY IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

And that is where I would like to begin this talk. I’d like to take you back to the Middle Ages, which was like today, another period of uncertainty and tumultuous societal evolution. Around the ninth century, the evolving European society was attempting to merge the traditions of Rome, which were preserved for the most part by the Roman church, and the traditions of the Germanic war lords who had been conquering and consolidating the remnants of the fallen empire. Integral in this new society was the Church. The Church through its bishops and priests were vitally necessary to the Germanic lords in their attempt to consolidate power. It was the local priests who had the records of births, deaths, and property ownership, and it was the local prelates who also had the loyalty of the people, and in many cases were the only representatives of order and authority after the abandonment of the Romans. The local ecclesiastical leaders used these powers to negotiate with the new Germani leaders a vision of a reformed society, a society based on Christian principles. Fundamental to those principles was the integrity of the individual soul , and the most immediate point of reference and protection of the individual was the family. The Germans had brought with them into Western Europe the concept of the clan or the extended family of cousins, uncles, and grandparents. It was the clan that controlled wealth, and administered justice, and made political and social decisions. In the clan the individual was a small part of a greater whole, a means to an end, in the Church’s scheme of things the individual was a unique creation of God and therefore an end in himself, and the family provided the means of nurturing and protecting this unique person.

For the Warlord’s part, he began to see the Church’s view of a nuclear family as a means of consolidating power, As the conjugal unit began to be viewed as the basic unit of society. The lord began to take over traditional roles of the clan through official police and judicial bodies. the new practice of young couples creating their own households had a significant effect on women. In the extended Germanic family or clan, the eldest woman had control over all the other female members. In the nuclear family, although the wife may be dominated by her husband, she had control

of her own household and her children. Also, through the cult of Mary as mother of God, a concept which the medieval Church developed. The image woman as Mary, co-partner in creation began to supplant the previous dominant image of woman as Eve or temptress, Birth became a sign of sharing in creation rather than a sign of suffering for the guilt of Eve. And finally, as the centripetal force of the household, women played an integral role in the nuclear family the new basic societal unit, and thus became more fundamentally integrated into the structure of medieval society. In negotiating power with the new Germanic warlords, the Catholic Church had begun to make an impact upon Frankish family life and marital and sexual attitudes. For example, in the Germanic scheme of things all marriages were arranged for the purpose of strengthening the clan. Women had no say at all in the choice of partners and in some cases of female resistance to this arrangement, rape preceded the marriage ceremony. The Church's intervention attempted to protect women by stipulating that a girl must give her consent to her guardian's choice of her husband or her marriage would not be valid in the eyes of the Church.

It was also in the Middle Ages, that the church made serious attempts to become the caretaker of marriage. Although marriage was a civil arrangement, priests tried to add special blessings and strengthen the concept of a special marriage ceremony. A local church council in 755 stated that weddings of all lay people should be public. To stabilize marriage the Church also began to emphasize monogamy and permanence. A Frankish Church council in 789 stipulated that marriage was an indissoluble sacrament and condemned the practices of concubinage and easy divorce. Although women were expected to be faithful to their husbands the practice of men having numerous concubines had been quite common. Frankish aristocrats often kept concubines. Even the most Christian king Charlemagne had numerous concubines. On the issue of divorce. At first the church limited it to two issues: Flagrant adultery on the part of the wife or impotence on the part of the man. But during the reign of Emperor Louis the Pious (814-840) the Church established its right to prohibit divorce. Now a man who married was expected to stay with his wife even though she be "sterile, deformed, old, dirty, drunken, a frequenter of bad company, lascivious, vain, greedy, unfaithful, quarrelsome, or abusive, for, "the church fathers affirmed, "when that man was free he freely engaged himself in the marriage." Although these laws were established in the ninth century, it was not until the thirteenth century that the indissolubility of marriage found widespread acceptance among the common people and the nobility.

### **MEDIEVAL MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

The actual ceremony, or lack thereof, was a longstanding problem for the Church. Many village couples saw no need for more than a kiss and a promise. Which left room for debate over the nature of the promise.

Twelfth century legal scholar Peter Lombard wrestled over the question of what constituted a legal marriage and Pope Alexander in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century laid down rules "a valid marriage could be accomplished either by words of the present (I take thee John. . .) or by words of the future (I will take thee John. . . a more indefinite promise) if it was followed by consummation of the marriage. The Fourth Lateran council in 1215 stipulated that the wedding must be public and the bride must receive a dowry, but did not insist on witnesses nor on Church presence.

Peasant couples usually spoke their vows at the church door the most public place in the village. Here the priest inquired if there were any impediments, usually meaning kinship within a degree prohibited by the church. In this era of ritualization the Church introduced the wedding ring. The bridegroom named the dowry which he would provide his wife giving her as a token a ring and a small amount of money to be distributed to the poor. The ring according to fourteenth century documents must be “put on the fourth finger of the woman to show that true love and cordial affection be between them, because as doctors say” *there is a vein coming directly from the heart of the woman to the fourth finger*”.

Vows were then exchanged and then the bridal party entered the church where a nuptial mass was celebrated.

One such mass began with the following words:

*“Most worshipful friends we come here at this time in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to join, unite, and combine these two persons by the holy sacrament of matrimony, granted to the holy dignity and order of priesthood. Which sacrament of matrimony is of this virtue and strength that these two persons who now are two bodies and two souls during their life together shall be one body and two souls.*

The ceremony was usually followed by a feast in a private house or tavern.

Despite the Church’s attempt to integrate the wedding ceremony into the liturgy and therefore have the final word on marriage, Many couples spoke their vows elsewhere- in a tavern, in the woods, or even in bed. These were known as ***clandestine marriages*** and remained a vexation for Church courts. Frequent suits were brought by one party or another against someone who broke the vow of clandestine marriage. As you can imagine, clandestine marriage obviously shaded off into seduction. Clandestine marriage continued until the Protestant Reformation when requiring witnesses to be present at a wedding ceremony abolished it. The village records also record frequent instances of leirwite, a fine for premarital sex also separate fines for childwite, bearing a child out of wedlock. In all these cases only the woman was named and she had to pay the fine.

Despite the fine, little social stigma was attached to premarital sex and daughters of elite families figured prominently among those paying fines. Often, women engaged in premarital sex, and became pregnant as a prelude to marriage to prove their fertility.

A much more serious matter in the village was adultery which threatened the stability of the family. Fines were steep and they were collected not only by the Church court but by the lords. Divorce (latin *divortium* which is synonymous with annulment) was a recurring problem for the church among the aristocracy who frequently searched for ways to dissolve a barren marriage. But among peasants divorce was a rarity. When it did occur the commonest ground was bigamy. Couples often simply separated. They avoided legalizing this separation in church court because of the expense involved.

The end design of marriage then and now was the procreation of children. In the castle as well as the village, children were born at home, their birth attended by midwives. Men were excluded from lying in chamber. Childbirth was of course a

very dangerous procedure for both mother and child. The child was prepared for baptism almost immediately after birth lest it die in a state of original sin. If a priest was not present then someone else had to perform the ceremony. The words were as today: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. . . But using the correct words was of utmost importance. If the words were not said correctly the baptism was not valid. On one occasion a child was dying and the midwife in great haste cried out the words: "God and St. John Christen this child both flesh and bone" When the priest arrived and heard the formula she had used he cried out against her incompetence and declared that for her error a soul had been lost. The midwife was forbidden by the priest thereafter from delivering babies.

In a normal healthy birth, the child was swaddled, the godparents were summoned and a small procession proceeded to the church the mother was not present, in fact she would not be seen in church for weeks after birth until she had gone through the ritual of purification or "churcing" This is a practice which remained in the Church through the 1960's.

As in marriage, the baptismal party was met at the church steps. The priest put salt on the tongue of the baby to exorcise demons and symbolize wisdom, he then ascertained the credentials of the godparents then they proceeded inside the church. The child was immersed in the baptismal font, the godmother then dried it and dressed it in a Christening garment, and the priest anointed the baby with holy oil. The ceremony was completed then at the altar where the godparents made a profession of faith. The Christening party then returned to the parent's home for feasting and gift giving.

Speaking of children, there has been a common assumption that given the fact that many children died maybe 2/3s before their fifth birthday, medieval parents withheld their emotional connections to their children until they had survived the perils of early childhood, More recent research into village coroner reports suggest that this assumption may not be true.

One father searching for his son found him drowned in a ditch, he "lifted him from the water, could not save him and he himself died of grief." Another whose son was struck by lightning in a field came running toward him found him lying there "took him in his arms to his house thinking to save him." A mother dragged her son out of a ditch because she believed she could save him. A father whose son fell into the millpond tried to save him and entered the water but could do nothing. And finally there was a case of a man who died defending his young daughter from rape. Sermons also give glimpses into the paternal and maternal love within the medieval family. These sources show babies in cradles by the fire, little girls following their mothers around helping to stir the cooking pot, draw water, or gather fruit, little boys following their fathers to the fields to the mill, or fishing or playing with bows and arrows.

In one sermon a priest advised parents that after chastising a child to remember that the child did not bear malice toward those that punish him. "For it is normal for a child to have due chastising, however after thou hast beaten him, show him a fair flower, or else a fair red apple then he hath forgotten all that has been done to him before and then he will come running with his embracing arms to please thee and kiss thee.

In the typical medieval family: Small children played, older ones did chores, teenagers began to learn to do adult work.

In the first year of life infants were usually left alone in the house while parents worked in the fields. Older children were more likely to be left with a sitter, usually a young girl. Although this neglect might lead to tragedy there was no evidence of infanticide as there had been in the ancient world. In the Roman era, as well into the Germanic era, the most common form of birth control had been infanticide, or simple exposure. The Church from the early middle ages on fought against this practice. Old age for those who survived childhood came quickly life expectancy was around 40. At that age men and women were too old, if they were alive, to work they turned their land over to the son who promised to care for him the rest of his days assume his taxes and legal burdens..

### **FAMILY IN THE RENAISSANCE**

By the mid fifteenth century as Europe was entering the era known as the Renaissance the Catholic Church had established its primacy over spiritual Europe and in some cases over secular Europe as well. The merger of the sacred with the profane was nowhere more apparent than in Renaissance Italy. And it was the Italian princes of the Renaissance along with their cousins who were Cardinals and Popes who began to bring about changes to the nuclear family established by the medieval Church. As their dominions expanded, the great Italian princes found it to their advantage to appropriate the idea of the Germanic clan and mesh it with the inherent patriarchy of the nuclear family. In this way the Italian princes created the extended nuclear family with a patriarch at its head. Whereas the clan had been somewhat democratic, this new hybrid was anything but. The patriarch's power was absolute over his family which in many cases extended over city blocks of people, sometimes entire neighborhoods or cities. The family bond provided a great sense of security in a dangerous and violent world. The Italian vendetta has its origins in the Italy of the Renaissance the vendetta assured that a crime against one member of a family became a crime against the entire family.

To maintain the family, careful attention was given to marriages which were arranged by parents often to strengthen business or family ties. Details were worked out well in advance sometimes when children were only two or three years old. These marriages were reinforced with legally binding marriage contracts.

The important aspects of the contract included the size of the dowry ( a sum of money given by the wife's family to the husband upon marriage). A dowry could determine social movement, and dowries were so important that charitable organizations were formed to provide dowries for poor girls.

The father husband was the center of the Italian family He gave it his name was responsible for it in all legal matters managed all financial affairs and made all crucial decisions that determined the children's lives. A father's authority over his children was absolute until he died or he formally freed his children.

In Renaissance Italy children did not become adults upon reaching a certain age instead adulthood came when the father went before a judge and formally emancipated him. The age of emancipation varied from late teens to the early 20's. Wives managed the household which gave them a certain degree of autonomy in their daily lives. Most wives understood however that their primary function was to bear children. Upper class women were constantly in a state of pregnancy and many noble women bore children at the rate of one a year. Alessandra Strozzi of Florence

an upper-class woman married at sixteen and had 8 children over the next ten years. Poor women did not have as many children because they nursed their own babies.

Childbirth in Renaissance Italy was a fearful occasion. 10 percent of women who went into delivery died. A Florentine merchant Gregoria Dati lost 3 of his 4 wives in childbirth. The third wife died in childbirth after bearing 11 children in 15 years. Surviving mothers often faced the death of their children. In 15<sup>th</sup> century Florence 50 % of children born to the merchant class died before they reached 20 years old.

The Age of the Renaissance marked a significant change in the design of the medieval nuclear family. The establishment of the Church's vision of a nuclear family in the middle ages witnessed the emergence of a partnership, albeit a junior partnership, between husband and wife they shared dominion over their home and those who lived in it. This idea was overthrown by the Renaissance princes who established the dominant male paternalism. Symbolism in the church documents this male revolution. Think of medieval symbolism.

Mary was the dominant figure in the medieval Church, Think of Notre Dame, or the cathedral of Chartres over which Mary reigns. On the other hand, in the Sistine Chapel of Renaissance Italy, God the Father watches over and controls all.

## **REFORMATION AND THE FAMILY**

The medieval concept of family also underwent great changes during the Reformation.

Both Catholic and Protestant clergy preached sermons advocating a positive view of family relationships. The Protestants were especially important in developing new ideas of the family. Protestants brought the family to the center point of Christian society. Since Protestantism had eliminated any idea of special holiness for celibacy abolishing both monasticism and the celibate clergy the family could be placed at the center of human life and a new stress on mutual love between man and wife could be extolled.

However old habits are hard to die and even Luther advised that the chief role of the woman was to please her husband and be an obedient servant to him. "The rule remains!" said Luther, "with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages war, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds, and plants.. The woman on the other hand is like a nail driven into the wall . . .so the woman should stay at home and look after the affairs of the household as one who has been deprived of the ability of administering those affairs that are outside and that concern the state."

Woman's other role, of course, was to bear children.

However, by encouraging men and women to read the bible together Protestantism helped advance the education of women on the other hand, the advance of Protestantism can be seen as a step backward in the liberation of women, for protestants took away the Convent the means by which a woman could pursue an economically independent life.

## **FAMILY AND MARRIAGE IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Throughout the Renaissance and Reformation and into the modern age, Family remained at the heart of European social organization. For the most part people still

thought of the family in traditional terms that is a patriarchal institution with the husband dominating his wife and children.

Parents especially fathers, especially upper class or middle class fathers, still picked marriage partners based on the families best interests

### **ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN CHANGE IN THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.**

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century traditional attitudes toward children still prevailed but over this century attitudes toward children changed radically. This was due mainly to the influences of Enlightenment thought. Childhood began to be viewed as a phase in human development. For example, children were beginning to be dressed as children in more comfortable looser clothing which allowed freedom of movement. Up until then, children were dressed as little adults.

Shops for children's clothes began to appear. Primogeniture also came under attack and the new idea that all children in the family should be treated equally began to take hold. In England games and toys specifically for children began to appear. The jigsaw puzzle was invented in 1760 and children's books began to appear at the same time. These changes however were primarily in the middle and upper classes and did not extend to the peasants. For the lower classes it was a tough time for children. They were considered another mouth to feed and infanticide increased and foundling homes became overcrowded. Despite being a crime punishable by death infanticide remained a solution to the problem of too many children. Another alternative was foundling homes which became a favorite charity of the rich.

One historian has estimated that in the 1770s alone over one third of all children born in Paris ended up in foundling homes. These homes were not prepared for caring for children and the mortality rate in foundling homes sometimes reached ninety per cent, in other words, foundling homes became a legitimate form of infanticide.

Most young couples in the 18<sup>th</sup> century established their own households once they were married, and the nuclear family established in the middle ages continued to represent the normal life pattern. In order to have the means to establish their own houses, men and women often married quite late, the average for men was between 27 and 28 and for women 25 and 26.

Among the working classes whether peasants or urban workers the contribution of the woman and children was essential to the survival of the family.

Children were hired out as servants or worked the fields. Women worked as seamstresses, or helped their husbands in his skilled craft. The line between respectable poverty and devastating life of beggary on the streets was very thin. And families could be reduced to a life on the streets through sickness or sudden, unexpected, death.

### **FAMILY AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

The early industrial revolution which put men in factories doing hard labor for pay and left women at home doing hard labor for no pay, crystallized gender defined social roles. Gender defined roles had existed in previous eras but they were never so solidified as they were in the early industrial era. In the early modern era women were often economic partners in their husbands craft, or they worked alongside men in their fields, or as abbesses, they ruled over convents, or some times as in the case of Spain and England, women ruled over empires. However in the early nineteenth century, equality, such as it was, was overturned and women as a result of the early

industrial revolution became economically dependent, legally inferior, and socially defined by household roles.

Consequently, throughout most of the nineteenth century marriage was viewed as the only honorable and available career for most women.

The newly emerging middle class glorified the ideal of domesticity, and for women marriage became an economic necessity. The lack of meaningful work and lower wages paid to women made it difficult for a single woman to earn a living wage.

Many women who could not find a husband, hired out as domestic live in servants. Since most women chose marriage in the nineteenth century, marriages increased during the century. Despite the rise in marriage, birth rates dropped and an important factor in the evolution of the modern family began: the decline of births in the family. Although birth control methods were still primitive (prophylactics although available after 1840 were not widely used until after WWI) birth rates declined radically. Historians debate methods of birth control used. Some believe it was due to the widespread use of coitus interruptus while others maintain that women made increased use of abortion and infanticide to regulate the number of children.

In 1882 the first family planning clinic was opened in Amsterdam based on the idea that one way to reduce poverty would be to reduce birth rates among the poor. But although the clinics were set up to provide information to the poor, the ones who used the clinic most effectively were the upper and middle classes.

## **THE INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION AND THE ERA OF THE MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY**

The family was the central institution of nineteenth century middle class life, it became a man's refuge from the harsh world of factories, smoke and hard headed business. Men provided income, while women focused on the art of domesticity creating a comfortable household and child care. The use of domestic servants reduced the amount of time women spent in household chores. Mothers could devote more time to child care and providing domestic leisure and tranquility for their husbands. Middle Class families fostered the ideal of togetherness. The Victorians created the family Christmas. The celebration of Christmas had been forbidden in many Protestant countries and cities including Boston and Philadelphia, and in many places it became nothing more than a week of drunken celebration by factory workers who were often furloughed during these coldest and darkest weeks of the year.

In the U.S: the fourth of July turned into a time for family picnics rather than the drunken revelries of previous decades.

A trend that had begun in the previous century continued and a new emphasis was placed on child rearing and education. The prevailing attitude among the middle class was that childhood years were important formative years which would determine the rest of the person's life. New Children's games as well as mass produced dolls began to appear and books on child rearing also began to appear.

## **WORKING CLASS FAMILIES**



Women in working class families of course lived much differently. Hard work was the standard for the entire family. For the children, childhood ended at 8 or 9 when they became apprentices or were sent to work at odd jobs. By the end of the century however working class salaries had risen enough to allow some the luxury of allowing the woman to stay at home and lower class families began to imitate as best they could the family values of the middle class.

One might say that the early 20<sup>th</sup> century represented the high water mark of the middle class idea of the nuclear family.

### **TWENTIETH CENTURY FAMILY IN THE PERMISSIVE SOCIETY**

After World War I the rigid code of manners and morals established in the nineteenth century began to crack, and in the post World War I era “Permissiveness” became a term often used to describe society. In the 1920’s experimentation with drugs, hard core pornography, new sexual freedom, the automobile, and Freud, all led to new ideas about love, sex, and marriage. What began after World War I accelerated after World War II. Sweden took the lead in the so called sexual revolution in the 1960’s but the rest of Europe and the US quickly followed.

The introduction of the birth control pill gave people much more freedom in sexual behavior, and films and books took new freedom in creating sexually explicit presentation of once taboo subjects. Heretofore loyal and obedient American Catholics for the first time began to question the infallibility of their Pope when he spoke on issues of marital sex.

The new standards were evident in the breakdown of the traditional family. Divorce rates increased radically from 1 in 4 in the 1960’s to 1 out of 2 by the 1980’s. And by mid century the meaning of the word family began to be clouded as the word was appropriated by any group of people living or working together. In the late 1960’s a popular rock song entitled “We are Family”, had little to do with the traditional nuclear family.

By the mid century 20<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial revolution which had in its first stages, left women economically disenfranchised, now began to open up new possibilities to them. And after World War II women found new freedoms of expression in the market place which they would not surrender. When Betty Friedan published the *Feminine Mystique* in 1963 she set off a movement that had already been born in the minds of many women. Friedan said “The problem that has no name which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacity is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease.”

By mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the morally precise world that our nineteenth century ancestors had carefully assembled began to unravel. Henry Adams the 19<sup>th</sup> century Harvard historian predicted quite accurately the central problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> and now the 21<sup>st</sup> century.. One afternoon in 1893 Adams was visiting the Worlds Fair in Chicago. One of the great attractions to the fair was The Great White Way, a long promenade lit brightly at night by a new invention, the incandescent light bulb. This explosion of light was made possible by an electro dynamo that had been constructed on the fair grounds. Adams sat next to the dynamo and contemplated it’s force as it spun silently. To Adams, the historian, every age is defined by the force that propels it. Adams recognized that the force that would propel the new century would be the dynamo. He compared that force to the force that had propelled the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the

Virgin. Mary, he noted, was one of the most powerful centripetal forces that Europe had ever experienced. This force which drew people to itself was responsible for the great cathedrals of Europe, for the cohesiveness of the village, for 4/5 of the worlds art, he began to wonder where the new force, the dynamo would propel history. He wondered if the dynamo would be as creative a force as the Virgin had been in her era. He doubted it. For one thing he said the dynamo is a centrifugal force which propels energy outward. The new century, he lamented because of this force, will be a century of fragmentation not unity.

This fragmentation has accelerated because it was accompanied by a void of spirit. One of the by-products of the great industrial revolution of the last century and a half, has been the ascendance of the bourgeoisie, their cultures and their values. Those values emphasize the material over the spiritual. For example, as the bourgeoisie imposed their values on the nuclear family in the nineteenth century, the nuclear family role was to provide material and domestic comfort not spiritual. The bourgeoisie think solely in terms of material progress Time was the new grace, time is money,, new time saving devises were constantly being introduced. Nobody stopped to think how many more hours they were going to work for that new time saving device. Those of us who grew up in the 50's and 60' remember this worship of progress in time, "At G.E: Progress is our most important product" We dreamt of a world where robots would do the work, where we would vacation on a crater on the moon, we would scoot around on jet packs, it was going to be a wonderful future world. Like all myths it comforted us, created community for a while, but like all myths it disintegrated into a harsh reality. Faith in science, technology and material progress brought us many wonderful things but it also brought, the possibility of nuclear annihilation, and an assault on the natural environment the likes of which we have never witnessed. . Our children haven't bought into this myth. Although they find it difficult to verbalize their feelings, listen to their music, look at their heroes, things haven't made them happy, Although they might not admit it, they'd rather have mom and dad to talk to rather than working overtime to buy more stuff. If given a choice, they'd certainly trade the unity of the nuclear family for the fragmentation of modern society. They see what un questioned material progress has done to the environment, to their family, to themselves. And many children today are left devoid of a spiritual sense. Young people have become part of a culture of death. A new dark age where the future does not seem to be an improvement on the past. Into this dark age we as Christians Parents have to inject a new life of the spirit And just as the Church resurrected the dark ages of the 9<sup>th</sup> century by beginning with a Christian concept of family, we once again must go down that road.

### **SOME FINAL THOUGHTS**

This is where we historians usually end. We love to talk about the past, even the past up to yesterday. But there we stop. History can not be used to predict the future but lessons from history can be used to help make a better future I know this is an international conference and there are representatives of many nations here , I apologize for the Euro centric vision that I have presented, but Europe is where the history of the Church is. On the other hand I believe the era I have just spoken about is ending and the Catholic Church is truly becoming a world church and the future is not Europe that era is over. The Church I believe is now in the hands of Africa, South America and the Pacific basin, To those people I say, our era of leadership is over,

we did our best, it's your turn now, I hope you will do better. On the other hand, marriage is a universal phenomenon, and it's possible that this European model I have discussed can provide some ideas that transcend nation and culture. Having said that I'd like to end with a few conclusions that I have reached as a result of this journey through the history of the Western family.

As I said, as an historian I hardly ever venture into the area of future talk and I would never dare tell people of another culture what they ought to be doing so I am limiting my suggestions to my fellow Euro-Americans.

First of all, I have great optimism. both for the future of the family and for its ability to strengthen our spirit in a rather dispirited world. Through all its eras, through all its outward influences and permutations, marriage remains the common thread of our humanity which is weaved into all patterns of our past. The current era through which we are now passing, that is the era of the bourgeoisie, attempted to celebrate the "rugged individual". But marriage has survived because of an unspoken common agreement that in spite of the persuasive bourgeois mythology, we are communal beings and that the basic expression of that yearning for community is the family. So I have great faith in the betterment of humanity and faith that the instrument of that improvement is the family.

Secondly, history tells us that we have to begin with the idea that marriage is a partnership. The paternal order established so well during the Renaissance is dead. The Feminist movement of the past century had it right initially. They saw themselves as Co creators, they believed that as partners in a new vision, women could humanize the workplace. Their goal was nothing less than a redemption of bourgeois masculine culture. But as the philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev has said the bourgeoisie never attack, they simply absorb that which is hostile. The woman's movement was co-opted by the bourgeoisie and soon they fell into the same patterns as their male counterparts, . The first generation of feminists saw all women regardless of class as one exploited class. In the current era, middle class women in a new form of exploitation have brought third world women into their homes to care for their children and clean their homes. International capitalism and the world market is doing its magic and each year hundreds of thousands of poor women enter this country illegally looking for a chance to better their lives and they end up working at low pay, without social benefits, caring for the children of middle and upper class women.

On one hand this new exploitation has resolved the burning questions of the first generation of liberated families. And those of you who went through that era know well those burning questions:--- "Who's gonna make the bed" "Who's gonna wash the clothes?" "Who's gonna make the supper? Who's turn is it to get the kids ready for school?"

----But this exploitation of third world women has created another more profound dilemma which Christian families must resolve, it has accelerated the decline of spirituality which should be at the core of the nuclear family. For history teaches us that no one can keep another person in bondage no matter how benign and not lose something of their own freedom of spirit. Furthermore, mothers and fathers should not surrender their rights and obligations as spiritual center of their family to another person. There isn't a nanny or domestic worker in the world who hasn't received a measure of the love that a child would much rather have bestowed on his or her mother. So now the professional class working mother, inheritor of Betty Freidan's realizations about domestic imprisonment, and the happiness offered by work, is oppressed by guilt about her decision to keep working.. If you doubt this comment

the next time you are in a supermarket check out line, spend a few minutes browsing the women's magazines they have very cleverly staked out this journalistic territory of dealing with anxiety and guilt of the working mother. A Christian family ought to be aware of this and ought to work to alleviate this problem. Pay your worker a fair wage, pay their social security. Get them legal.

Third on my suggestion list, and always a priority for those concerned with Christian family life, is the issue of birth control and abortion. As I hope I have pointed out this evening this is not a new problem. It has always been with us. The solution of the hierarchy has been as it has always been, condemnation. Let the hierarchy moralize on those issues, but as Christian families we need to go further. We need to think how we can use our local parishes and schools, institutions which we support, to promote adoption, foster homes, and life giving alternatives to the culture of death we all contribute to.

Fourthly, we need to recognize that we are raising a generation of children who have wonderful skills who have everything material thing they could imagine but they remain spiritually bereft. Spirituality begins at home. It is there where the soul is nourished. Too often this nurturing of our children has been turned over to the teacher, the soccer coach, the piano instructor or the ballet instructor.

I wonder how many young children if asked, would rather not sit down with mom and dad and the family for dinner together than go to ballet or soccer, or piano lessons. Of course those activities are good, but we knock ourselves out in a labor intensive process of giving our children the best. In reality the best comes from us. That is the security, wisdom and spiritual comfort that come from a tranquil home.

Finally on the subject of children, Christian families should send their children to public school. Schools are in crisis, they need the direction support and compassion that Christian families can give them. The Catholic schools in the United States served a wonderful purpose in the last century, they served as the vehicle by which a ghettoised portion of the population could get educated and integrate itself into the broader secular society. The Catholic schools succeeded in that mission and consequently except for those schools that bravely survive in the inner cities they have now for the most part become exclusive private schools which rob the public schools of good minds and concerned involved parents.

There are many other much deeper societal problems that have been created by a society that is living in a spiritual vacuum. I've just scratched the surface. Each of you could probably come up with a better list. But as you think of your own list of challenges reach into your own soul your own traditions. Solutions are there. It is time, as Peter Maurin said, to build the new within the shell of the old. As the medieval church built a new human society out of the ashes of a spiritually deprived Roman empire, the Christian family is challenged to build a new vision for the spiritually bereft bourgeois society of the current era..

Well that's about all I have to say,. I hope the historic background of the family and its origins will give you some perspective to carry on the great work you have set before you