



# K O I N Ō N I A

*...together on the journey*

CONFERENCE OF OFS GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS -- YOUFRA

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY FOR THE OFS AND FOR THE GIFRA

### Introduction

From October 5 to October 19, 2014, it was celebrated in Vatican *the Extraordinary Synod about the family*, in which the main theme was: The pastoral challenges on the family in the context of evangelization. In this Synod, the Church, with the pastoral guidance of Pope Francis, dedicated another moment of reflection and pastoral attention to the family, together with prayers.

The members of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS), as Saint Francis's sons and daughters, wish to satisfy the mission of the Church. For the next six years, in fact, among the priorities of the OFS, it is rightly that about the family (cf. Conclusions of the General Chapter OFS, Assisi 1 to 8 November 2014).

Giving voice to the OFS of the whole world, the four numbers of Koinonia of this year 2015 will focus their articles in the importance of the Family for the OFS and for the YouFra.

In this first number, Br Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM<sup>Cap</sup>, will consider the theme of the family in the Magisterium of the Church, since the Second Vatican Council until today. In the second number, Br. Martin Bitzer, OFM<sup>Conv</sup>, will consider the family in the Rule and General Constitutions of the OFS. The third number, edited by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, will be dedicated to the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization. Finally, the fourth number, edited by José Antônio Duarte Cruz, OFM, will focus on the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world.

### THE FAMILY IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH FROM THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL TO OUR TIMES

*"Fill the jars with water" (Jn 2,7)*

*Br. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM<sup>Cap</sup>*

When the wine has been lacking for the guests of the wedding at Cana, Jesus asked the servants to do something absurd and out of time, that is, fill the jars intended for ritual purification of the Jews, with water. (See. John 2: 1-11). In times of crisis, the way out indicated by God can be truly absurd for human logic. Herein lies the difference between a believer and a non-believer. As a

result, the ways which indicates the Church, which has received the mission to proclaim the Word of God and to make known His will to all nations, they may seem absurd and out of time for someone. Even here you can see the difference between those who say "I believe the one holy catholic and apostolic ..." and those who, instead, do not accept it. Today, these claims have great relevance to the family of which, many would say without hesitation that it is in trouble. What is the value of the family according to the Church, what It does and proposes for the sake of the families? How the attention of the Church for families is manifested concretely since Vatican II on? That's what we hope to highlight, although we will do it with a panoramic look and succinctly.

## **The value of the family**

The family is the first human society, whose value for the life of every person, for society and for the Church is expressed in this vision of Pope Benedict XVI:

*"The family is the" sanctuary of life "and vital cell of society and the Church. It is in it that shapes the face of a people; it is here that its members acquire basic teachings. They learn to love inasmuch as they are unconditionally loved, they learn respect for each other person as they are respected, they learn to know the face of God inasmuch as they receive a first revelation of a father and a mother full of attention. Whenever these fundamental experiences are lacking, it is society as a whole that suffers violence and becomes in turn the progenitor of more violence".<sup>1</sup> It is certain that "the future of humanity passes through the family!"<sup>2</sup>*

## **The warning farsighted of the Church**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical letter, the *Humanum Genus* sulla Freemasonry. In it, the Pope denounced the dangers of naturalist doctrine promoted by the Freemasons and that the company welcomed with charm and without discernment. One hundred years later, we understand better what denounced the Pope:

*"Marriage belongs to the genus of commercial contracts, which can rightly be revoked by the will of those who made them, and that the civil rulers of the State have power over the matrimonial bond; that in the education of youth nothing is to be taught in the matter of religion as of certain and fixed opinion; and each one must be left at liberty to follow, when he comes of age, whatever he may prefer. To these things, the Freemasons fully assent; and not only assent, but have long endeavored to make them into a law and institution. For in many countries, and those nominally Catholic, it is enacted that no marriages shall be considered lawful except those contracted by the civil rite; in other places the law permits divorce; and in others every effort is used to make it lawful as soon as may be. Thus, the time is quickly coming when marriages will be turned into another kind of contract - that is into changeable and uncertain unions which fancy may join together, and which the same when changed may disunite."<sup>3</sup>*

When a person or a company does some choice, the consequences are very predictable, especially for those who view reality with eyes of faith The Church, which is always watching over

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Africae Munus*, n° 42.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, November 22, 1981, n° 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Humanum Genus*, 21

the flock of God entrusted to his care, often senses danger and offers guidance. In *Gaudium et Spes*<sup>4</sup>, the family is identified by the Second Vatican Council as the "living cell" of society, which needs special attention because it suffers and must be cured.

### **The situation of the family in today's world**

It is important to know the family well into the concrete in which it lives, to be able to evangelize and help in charity and truth.

Here is the situation of the family, according to the description of Saint John Paul II, Pope:

*“The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of the institution of the family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life. Finally, there are others who are hindered by various situations of injustice in the realization of their fundamental rights.”*<sup>5</sup>

Today's culture has, therefore, good and bad, light and shadow.

On the positive side, we note *“a more lively awareness of personal freedom and greater attention to the quality of interpersonal relationships in marriage, to promoting the dignity of women, to responsible procreation, to the education of children. There is also an awareness of the need for the development of interfamily relationships, for reciprocal spiritual and material assistance, the rediscovery of the ecclesial mission proper to the family and its responsibility for the building of a more just society.”*<sup>6</sup>

On the negative side, there is a degradation of some fundamental values: *“a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces; the scourge of abortion; the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality.”*<sup>7</sup>

To cause or aggravate these negative aspects, contributes a certain lack of education in the use of the media. The virtual mingles with reality; real and concrete human relationships are weakened or destroyed by virtual relationships. The family suffers the consequences. The economy has imposed his dictatorship over society. It determines (directly or indirectly), many times, who can marry and who can not, when you can have a child and how many children the couples can afford; who can live and who must die, etc. Relativism is felt with cruelty in marriage his destructive force; divorce becomes normal. In a culture of "liquid relations" marriage often arises

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. G.S. 47-52

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Familiaris Consortio*, n.6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

"sick". This is the culture in which are born and live many families; *"the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it."*<sup>8</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI points out some forces that now threaten the family: *"the distortion of the very notion of marriage and family, devaluation of maternity and trivialization of abortion, easy divorce and the relativism of a 'new ethics'."*<sup>9</sup> So the family and marriage that bases it are hit by politics, economics and the various ideologies that exploit it. To this family, the Church comes to the aid as *Mater et Magistra*, Mother and Teacher.

## **Manifestations of the attention of the Magisterium on the Family**

### **Three Basic Documents**

The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, on the Church in today's world, devotes an entire chapter to the topic of marriage and the family. The text expresses a great work for the family; listening, research and study, sharing prayer. But, it is also indicative of the doctrinal and pastoral work to be done. Since the Council, the family has always had more space in the Church.

*The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* dedicates an entire chapter to the family that is considered "vital cell of society." As the term 'compendium', the magisterial document of 2004 is developed to expose in a concise but complete, the social teaching of the Church. Forty-six numbers are devoted to family<sup>10</sup>. The priority of the family in society policy is emphasized. The family is the first human society and the natural divine institution, which every person needs for his integral development and gradual integration into the larger society. So you can not treat the family as an association whatsoever. The family theme returns in other subjects, such as work, but the text is essential in the fifth chapter.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is another great fruit of the Council. Since marriage and the family exist in every culture, the CCC, expresses the Church's teaching on the family and Christian marriage.<sup>11</sup> *"A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family,"*<sup>12</sup> *"marriage and the family are ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children."*<sup>13</sup> Among the baptized, the bonds of marriage are sanctified by the sacrament that is indissoluble. *"The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit"*.<sup>14</sup> It has a singular importance in the Church, within which offers a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion. So *"it can and should be called 'domestic church'"*.<sup>15</sup> The role of spouses in procreation and raising children is irreplaceable. Society needs to be in the service of the family and not the other way. *"The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which*

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<sup>8</sup> *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n° 43

<sup>10</sup> Cf. CDSC 209-254.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. CCC 2197-2257. 1601-1666. 2360-2391.

<sup>12</sup> CCC 2202.

<sup>13</sup> CCC 2201.

<sup>14</sup> CCC 2205.

<sup>15</sup> CCC 2204.

husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life.”<sup>16</sup> The family, therefore, has its special rights and also their duties.

## **Synods and Apostolic Exhortations**

The first Synod of Bishops on the family took place from 26 September to 25 October 1980. The theme was: *The tasks of the Christian family in the world today. "The Synod, said John Paul II, has meditated on the plan laid out by God for the family; in the light of God's plan, it reaffirmed its greatness and the irreplaceable role of the family in the service of life, to shape free and responsible men, as "domestic church" and open to others as a primordial cell, with its rights and obligations to society".*<sup>17</sup> The result of this Synod was the exhortation Post-Synodal Apostolic, *Familiaris Consortio, on the role of the Christian family in the modern world* (22 November 1981). This is still a reference document for the pastoral of the family. The extraordinary Synod for the family in October 2014 convened by Pope Francis, is in preparation for the Synod Assembly ordinary scheduled for October of this year 2015. The fact that Pope Francis has called before an *Extraordinary General Meeting* (the third of this kind)<sup>18</sup> in view of the *Ordinary General Assembly*<sup>19</sup>, both focused on the family, proving once again that the question of the family is very urgent for the Church.

## **Papal offices, diocesan and parish to the pastoral care of the family**

The faith and the Church's teaching on the family they will be useless if they do not turn into a life and pastoral practice. In 1973, Blessed Pope Paul VI created the *Committee for the family* that 9 May 1981 was replaced by the *Pontifical Council for the family* of John Paul II. This Department of the Roman Curia is intended to promote the pastoral care of families, promote their rights and their dignity in the Church and in civil society so that they may ever be more able to fulfill their functions. The aforementioned Department has ensured the creation in the dioceses and parishes therefore, of special offices for the promotion of the pastoral care of the family. Since 1994, the Department organizes world meetings of families: Rome (1994), Rio de Janeiro (1997), Rome (2000), Manila (2003), Valencia (2006), Mexico City (2009) and Milan (2012). The next will be in Philadelphia, USA (September 2015).

Worthy of particular note are the celebrations dedicated to the family: the year of the family, pilgrimages, congresses, conferences, prayer vigils, etc.. These are as many expressions of attention of the Church to the family, who live from day to day, at different levels: parish, diocesan or universal.

## **Conclusion**

*"Fill the jars with water"* (Jn 2.7). We started to consider this quotation evangelical family in the Magisterium of the Church by the Second Vatican IIa today. In difficult situations in which many families live, the Church invites her sons and daughters to love and pray for families.

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<sup>16</sup> CCC 2207

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, *Messaaggio all'Angelus*, Domenica, 28 dicembre 1980.

<sup>18</sup> The first he referred to the episcopal conferences and collegiality (1969); the second, in 1985, concerned the *Application of the Second Vatican Council*.

<sup>19</sup> This will be the XIV General Assembly of 1967 and already the second on the Family.

*“Loving the family means being able to appreciate its values and capabilities, fostering them always. Loving the family means identifying the dangers and the evils that menace it, in order to overcome them. Loving the family means endeavoring to create for it an environment favorable for its development. The modern Christian family is often tempted to be discouraged and is distressed at the growth of its difficulties; it is an eminent form of love to give it back its reasons for confidence in itself, in the riches that it possesses by nature and grace, and in the mission that God has entrusted to it.”<sup>20</sup>*

Pope Francis invites all, and especially families, to prayer: *“May we all, then, pray together so that through these events the Church will undertake a true journey of discernment and adopt the necessary pastoral means to help families face their present challenges with the light and strength that comes from the Gospel.”*<sup>21</sup>

The Lord invites us to fill the jars with water; He will do the miracle.

*“The Christian family is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity.”<sup>22</sup>*

We offer the text of the prayer of St. John Paul II for families, urging everyone to use it and spread it.

### **Prayer for the Family, by Pope St. John Paul II**

Lord God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

Father, you are Love and Life.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,  
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,

grant that every family on earth may become  
for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives  
for the good of their families and of all the families in the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family  
solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage,  
may prove mightier than all the weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission  
in the family and through the family.

Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Familiaris Consortio*, n.86.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis, *Letter to Families*, February 2, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> CCC 2205.

## NEW – CHAPTERS – VISITS – MEETINGS

### **Rome – CIOFS Secretariat – Christmas Greetings**

Like every year, the members of the Secretariat of the International Council, as well as the General Assistants OFS who are in Rome, have exchanged Christmas greetings on 17 December. The opening prayer was prepared by Br. José Antônio Cruz Duarte and songs by Br. Amando Trujillo Cano. Tibor Kauser, the Minister General of the OFS, and Benedetto Lino were present. It was made a courtesy call to Encarnación Del Pozo (Encarnita). With plentiful refreshments, it was done the traditional toast.

### **Togo - National Elective Chapter**

The National Elective Chapter of OFS Togo has been celebrated on January 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Michel Janian, delegate of Tibor Kauser, OFS Minister General, presided over the Chapter in the presence of Br. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM, Assistant General OFS-YouFra. It was also present Br. Peter Williams, OFM, National Spiritual Assistant OFS-YouFra and over eighty Secular Franciscans with fifty-four voters. From the election made on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the following were elected: Joseph Adegnon - National Minister; Adolph Assagba - Vice National Minister and International Councilor; Darius Ramanou - Secretary; Pierrette Doh-Egueli - Treasurer; Léopold Bitassa - Fomator; René D'Almeida – YouFra Animator. Michel Janian confirmed all the elected. For the election of the international councilor, the chapter members had first to vote for an article that allowed this procedure, which was not in the national statutes and submit it to CIOFS, for approval. This will then be entered in the national Statutes. Br Francis Dor presided over the opening and even the closing Mass, during which Michel Janian installed the new National Council for the next three years. The Chapter was well prepared, and that really helped its performance.

### **Korea – National Elective Chapter**

The National Fraternity of Korea celebrated its National Elective Chapter from January 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> 2015, at Hannamdong, Seoul. In the Chapter, 74 of the chapter members were present from the 78 brothers summoned. The Chapter was presided by Maria Consuelo de Nuñez (Venezuela), delegate of the the General Minister OFS, accompanied by Br Na Johan, OFM (OFS spiritual assistant of the local fraternity in Japan), delegate of CAS. The new National Minister is Catherine Hyun Joo Lee and the International Councilor is Michelle Lee Yoon-Kyung. The inaugural Mass was celebrated by Br Lorenzo, OFM, and the closing Mass was celebrated by Br Tito Yoon, Provincial Minister OFMConv.

### **South Africa - Pastoral visit to the OFS**

Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, General Assistant OFS-YouFra carried out the pastoral visit (VP) to the OFS in South Africa from February 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>. The VP started on February 8<sup>th</sup> with a fraternal meal with the new OFS local Fraternity of the Croatian parish of St. Jerome, in Johannesburg, soon after the Sunday Eucharistic celebration, presided by Br Ivan Karmelo Strčić, OFM, vicar and local assistant. Later, it happened a meeting of the visitor with the active members of the National Council of the OFS in which it was spoken about their service and the different challenges that have been found since they were appointed in 2012. The following morning, Monday 9<sup>th</sup>, took place a formation session on the OFS, YouFra with the spiritual and pastoral assistency of them, in the "St. Francis House of Studies " of OFM, at Wingate Park, Pretoria. Br David Barnard, OFM Minister Provincial, the National Assistants Br Ewald Nangay, OFM, and Br Mbelelo Sikotoyi, OFM, other assistants, six OFM postulants and their formators, and other friars

<sup>23</sup> Angelus, Sunday, Dec. 28, 1980

were present. On the morning of Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, Amando along with two members of the National Council of the OFS, Jenny Harrington and Joan Kerswill, they had a brief meeting with Archbishop William Slattery, at the chancellery office, in Pretoria, during which the Archbishop expressed his observations and pastoral suggestions about OFS. On Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, on the occasion of the priestly ordination of Br Bongani Mkhize, in Hibberdene, KZN, Amando spoke of the OFS with the ordaining bishop, Mlungisi Pius Dlungwane, of the diocese of Mariannhill. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, in Durban, the visitor also spoke with Br Emmanuel M. Khathi, TOR, Assistant Regional, about the spiritual assistance to the local fraternity of the region. In the end, on February 16<sup>th</sup>, Amando also spoke with Br Angelicus Mchunu, TOR, Provincial Minister, the role of the major superiors towards the OFS and other topics related to the spiritual assistance to the OFS. In all the meetings of the visitor a central theme has been the use of a habit by some Secular Franciscans and the need to seek the best way to implement the decision taken by the OFS General Chapter of 2011.

### **Malawi - fraternal and pastoral visits to the OFS**

The continuation of the fraternal and pastoral visits (VFP) to the National Council of the OFS in Malawi was conducted by Jenny Harrington OFS, Presidency Councillor, and Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, General Assistant, respectively from February 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>th</sup>, Lilongwe. An important aspect of the visit was to examine how the National Council carried out the tasks assigned to it and the recommendations when it was appointed in 2012 by Encarnacion del Pozo, General Minister of the OFS, in view of the serious difficulties present in the life of the National Fraternity, especially about brothers and sisters who persist in bringing something very similar to a religious habit. In addition to several meetings they had with the Interim National Council, visitors have also had meetings with various groups such as the Clare nuns, the major superiors of the First Order (Br. Laiju Kilukkan, OFM, Br. Theonest Kagenzi, OFM, Br. Linus Malenga, OFM), the representatives of the regional councils (in formation sessions), the Spiritual Assistants (formation session with four Capuchin friars and a diocesan priest), the Episcopal Conference of Malawi and the Apostolic Nuncio. At the request of the group who still wears the habit it was granted a meeting with the visitors which do not have later joined. On the evening of Friday 20<sup>th</sup>, at the chapel of the Poor Clares, the Eucharist was presided over by Br. Amando, during which Jenny Harrington confirmed the members of the Interim National Council for a year, having given them specific tasks. On the morning of Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>, at the beginning of the last meeting with the National Council and on behalf of the General Minister, Jenny Harrington has appointed Francisca Munthali as national formator. Visitors were very grateful to the Capuchin friars and the Missionary Sisters of Saint Mary Mediatrix in Kaggwa for their generous hospitality.

### **Japan - National Elective Chapter**

From February 27<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>. it was held at the Catholic Training Center, Nanzan University, Nagoya, the National Elective Chapter of Japan OFS. Augustine Yoon Young Hak, Councilor of the Presidency CIOFS for the English Area (Asia / Oceania), presided over the Chapter, accompanied by Br. Mathew Bang Young Jin, OFM Cap, National Assistant to the OFS of Korea. The thirteen Chapter members who attended the event have elected Francisco Takeda Fumihiko Takeda as National Minister and International Councilor.