



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SPANISH SECTION
OF THE JOHN PAUL II INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES
ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

Thursday, 2 July 1998

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Beloved Priests, Professors, Students and
Friends of the Spanish Section
of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family,*

I am pleased to receive you at this audience during your pilgrimage to Rome, which coincides with the *ad limina* visit of the Bishops of your Ecclesiastical Province, for the theme of marriage and the family is prominent among their pastoral priorities. You wished to come to express your gratitude for the foundation of the Spanish Section and to show me the fruits of these four years of intense academic work.

I thank Archbishop Agustín García-Gasco of Valencia, Vice-Grand Chancellor of the Section, for his kind words addressed to me. I also greet Bishop Juan Antonio Reig of Segorbe-Castellón, dean of the institute, as well as the civil authorities and the members of the recently established foundation that supports the institute's work.

As you are well aware, when the Synod of 1980 reflected on the lights and shadows of the family, I felt the need to create an academic instrument that would appropriately prepare priests to guide and support families as true fathers, brothers, pastors and teachers by assisting them with the resources of grace and illumining them with the light of truth. I also thought it appropriate for lay people to receive this formation so that they could contribute, either individually or through associations, their advice, guidance and support for promoting the family institution. Thus, four years ago, the Spanish Section of the institute you represent was founded. Among its achievements are the formation of a considerable number of students, Bishops and faithful as qualified professionals to help transform the various contexts of society with the leaven of the "Gospel of life".

In view of the confusion prevalent in both the family and in life, it is necessary to offer the beauty and attraction of God's plan for marriage and the family in order to strengthen the will of today's men and women to live up to the greatness of this plan, while being aware of the demands it involves. For this reason study and academic preparation are necessary, tasks to which you must commit yourselves with passion and joy. I encourage you to continue this service to man and society.

The aim of your institute is to study and impart the natural and revealed truth about marriage and the family, offering to the pastoral care of the family suitable philosophical and theological support that will enable it to react to the materialistic conception of man which is unfortunately so widespread in society. Therefore, once you, who are the first generation of the Spanish Section, have acquired a suitable formation, you must commit yourselves as teachers and leaders in the family apostolate to enriching the lives of the faithful by helping them discover the "call to holiness" that belongs to couples and other family members.

This year you are devoting special attention to the study and dissemination of the "*Charter of the Rights of the Family*", which can be an effective means for shedding light on many current problems. I congratulate you for this decision and I urge you to continue to work for an authentic family humanism that will help the family to be seen as the shrine of life, the school for transmitting the faith and for fostering dialogue between its own members and God. May the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Family, whom you venerate in Valencia as "Mare de Deu dels Desamparats", protect the good work you are carrying out with her maternal intercession. Through her, I impart to you, as a pledge of fruitful service to the family and to life, a special Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to all who work with you.

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