



FATHER CANTALAMESSA ON THE FAMILY

ROME, DEC. 25, 2006 (Zenit.org).- *Here is a translation of a commentary by the Pontifical Household preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, on the feast of the Holy Family.*

"Son, why have you done this to us? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." In these words of Mary we see that all three of the essential components of a family are mentioned: father, mother and child. This year we cannot talk about the family without touching on the problem that in the present moment is most disturbing society and causing the Church concern: the discussion in Parliament about the recognition of cohabiting couples.



The state cannot be prevented from responding to new situations present in society, from recognizing some civil rights of persons, even of the same sex, who have decided to live together. That which is essential for the Church -- and which must be essential for all those interested in the future good of society -- is that this is not translated into a weakening of the institution of the family, which is already so threatened by modern society.

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We know that the best way to weaken a reality or a word is to thin it out, to make it banal, making it embrace different and even contradictory things. This happens if homosexual couples are put on the same footing with a marriage between a man and a woman.* The meaning itself of the word "matrimony" -- from the Latin for maternal office -- reveals the insensitivity of such a project.

Above all, I must say that I just do not see the reason for making these two things equal, given that there are other ways of safeguarding the rights in question. I do not understand the suggestion that there has been an offense to the dignity of homosexual persons whom all today feel the need to respect and love. I know personally the rectitude and suffering of some of these persons.

What we are saying applies even more to the problem of homosexual couples adopting children. Adoption by homosexual couples is unacceptable because it is an adoption exclusively for the benefit of the couple and not the child, who could just as well be adopted by a normal couple, that is, by a father and mother. There are many who have been waiting for years.*

Homosexual women have a maternal instinct and they want to satisfy it by adopting a child; homosexual men experience the need to see a young life grow beside them and want to satisfy this need by adopting a child. But what attention is given to the needs and sentiments of the child in this case? Rather than having a father and mother, the child will find himself having two mothers or two fathers with all the psychological problems and problems of identity that this brings with it in and outside the home. At school, what effect will this situation, which makes the child different from his companions, have on the child?

Adoption is disturbed in its deeper significance: It is no longer a giving of something but a looking for something. True love, Paul says, "does not seek its own interests." It is true that even in normal adoptions the parents sometimes seek their own good. They want to have someone with whom they can share their reciprocal love, someone who can benefit from all their labors. But in this case the good of those who adopt coincides with that of the adoptees, it is not opposed to it. Objectively speaking, we are not pursuing the child's good but his harm if we allow him to be adopted by a homosexual couple when it would have been possible for him to be adopted by a normal couple.

The Gospel passage of the feast ends with a small portrait of family life that gives us insight into the whole life of Jesus from 12 to 30 years: "He went with them and returned to Nazareth and

was obedient to them. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and men." May the Virgin obtain for all the children of the world the gift to be able to grow up in grace surrounded by the affection of a father and a mother.

* (See next Article on 'Scottish Adoption' controversy)