



S S P X

## Petition to the Holy Father

Most Holy Father,

It is with great anxiety that we observe all around us a persistent degradation of marriage and the family, the origin and foundation of all human society. This decay is rapidly accelerating, particularly because of the legalization of the most immoral and depraved sorts of behavior. Today the law of God, even the simply natural law, is being publicly trampled underfoot; the gravest sins are multiplying in a troubling way and cry out to Heaven for vengeance.

Most Holy Father,

We cannot conceal from you the fact that the first part of the Synod dedicated to “Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization” greatly alarmed us. From ecclesiastical dignitaries we heard and read statements so contrary to the clear and constant doctrine of the Church concerning the sanctity of marriage, that our souls were deeply disturbed. These men claimed to have your support, and their claims met with no public denial. What worries us even more is that certain of your words give the impression that it might be possible for doctrine to evolve in response to new needs of the Christian people. Our disquiet comes from the fact that in his encyclical *Pascendi*, Saint Pius X condemned an alteration of dogma that would make it conform to so-called requirements of the present time. Both Pius X and you, Most Holy Father, received the fullness of the authority to teach, sanctify, and govern in obedience to Christ, Who is the head and pastor of the flock at all times and in all places, and whose faithful vicar the Pope must be on this earth. That which has been subject to a solemn condemnation cannot, over time, become an approved pastoral practice.

God, the author of nature, established the stable union of a man and a woman for the purpose of perpetuating the human species. Old Testament revelation teaches us, in the most obvious way, that indissoluble marriage between one man and one woman was established directly by God, and that its essential characteristics were not left by Him to the free choice of men, such that marriage remains under a very special divine protection: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife.” (Exodus 20:17)

The gospels teach us that Jesus Himself, by virtue of his supreme authority, definitively reestablished marriage in its original purity, which the corruption of men had altered: “What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:6)

Throughout time it has been the glory of the Catholic Church to defend the human and divine reality of marriage against turmoil, despite entreaties, disregarding threats and temptations. Even though corrupt

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men abandoned her for this reason alone, the Church has always held high the standard of fidelity, purity, and fruitfulness, in short, the standard of genuine conjugal and familial love.

As the second part of this Synod dedicated to the family approaches, in conscience we feel it our duty to express to the Apostolic See the profound anxieties which seize us at the thought of “conclusions” that could be proposed on that occasion, if by some great misfortune there were to be a new attack against the sanctity of marriage and the family, a new weakening of couples and home life. We hope with all our heart that the Synod will on the contrary perform a work of genuine mercy by recalling in its entirety, for the good of souls, the Church’s salutary teaching on the subject of marriage.

We are fully aware, especially in the present context, that people entangled in abnormal marital situations must be welcomed pastorally with compassion, so as to show them the very merciful face of the God of love proclaimed by the Church.

Nevertheless, the law of God, expression of his eternal love for mankind, is in itself the supreme mercy for all periods of history, all persons, and all situations. Therefore we pray that the gospel truth concerning marriage, which the Synod ought to proclaim, may not be skirted in practice by numerous “pastoral exceptions” that would distort its true meaning, or by legislation that would almost unfailingly abolish its real import. On this point we feel obliged to say that, despite reminders concerning the indissolubility of marriage, the canonical changes required by the Moto Proprio *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* facilitating declarations of nullity will *de facto* open the door to legal proceedings authorizing “Catholic divorce,” even if goes by another name. These modifications acknowledge contemporary morals without attempting to put them in accord with the divine law. Are we then not to be heart stricken by the fate of children born to these marriages annulled in haste and who cannot but be victims of the “culture of waste”.

In the sixteenth century Pope Clement VII refused to accord Henry VIII of England the divorce he was demanding. Despite much pressure and at the risk of an Anglican schism, the Pope upheld the sublime teaching of Christ and his Church concerning the indissolubility of marriage. Will his decision now be repudiated by a “canonical repentance”?

Throughout the world in recent times, many families have courageously rallied against civil laws that undermine the natural and Christian family and publicly encourage scandalous behavior contrary to the most basic morality. Can the Church abandon those who, sometimes to their own detriment, and always subject to mockery and taunts, wage this necessary but very difficult battle? Such a stance would constitute a disastrous counter-witness, and for these persons it would be a source of disgust and discouragement. Churchmen, on the contrary, by virtue of their very mission, should offer them clear support backed up by solid arguments.

Most Holy Father,

For the honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for the consolation of the Church and of all faithful Catholics, for the good of society and of all humanity, in this crucial hour we petition you therefore to let your voice resound throughout the world with a word of truth, clarity, and firmness, in defense of Christian and even merely human marriage, in support of its foundation, namely, the difference and complementarity of the sexes, upholding its exclusivity and indissolubility. With filial piety we beg you to let your voice be heard by all, and that it be accompanied by actions too in support of the Catholic family.

We entrust this humble petition to the patronage of Saint John the Baptist, who underwent martyrdom for having publicly defended the sanctity and exclusivity of marriage, even against a scandalous civil authority in a case of “divorced-and-remarried persons.” And we pray the Precursor give Your Holiness the courage to recall before the whole world the true doctrine concerning natural and Christian marriage.

On the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, September 15, 2015

+Bernard Fellay

Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X