



## **POPE THANKS KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FOR DEFENDING MORAL TRUTHS - BENEDICT XVI REAFFIRMS CHURCH OPPOSITION TO CONTRACEPTION - SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON THE SCRIPTURES TO START SUNDAY**

Friday, October 03, 2008

Just a little note before today's news. You will surely want to tune in to my weekend radio show, "Vatican Insider" because my special guests this week on the interview segment are Anton (Tony) and Mira Abu Al Zuluf, the Palestinian Catholic father and daughter whom we met in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, in February on our pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and for whom we arranged a visit to Rome last month, as you know from reading this column. This weekend I present Part One of an amazing two-part interview. You will hear things you have never heard before about life in Palestine.

### **POPE THANKS KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FOR DEFENDING MORAL TRUTHS**

Pope Benedict Friday received members of the board of directors of the Knights of Columbus, who are on pilgrimage to Rome for the Pauline Year. He thanked them for their "efforts to provide a solid formation in the faith for young people, and to defend the moral truths necessary for a free and humane society, including the fundamental right to life of every human being." He recalled his pastoral visit to the United States, noting how he had sought to encourage the lay faithful "to recommit themselves to growth in holiness and active participation in the Church's mission. This was the vision," he said in his English-language talk, "that inspired the foundation of the Knights of Columbus as a fraternal association of Christian laymen, and it continues to find privileged expression in your order's charitable works and your concrete solidarity with the Successor of Peter in his ministry to the Universal Church."

"That solidarity," noted the Holy Father, "is manifested in a particular way by the 'Vicarius Christi' Fund, which the Knights have placed at the disposal of the Holy See for the needs of God's people throughout the world. And it is also shown through the daily prayers and sacrifices of so many Knights in their local councils, parishes and communities. For this I am most grateful." The Pope concluded: "In the spirit of your founder, the Venerable Michael McGivney, may the Knights of Columbus discover ever new ways to serve as a leaven of the Gospel in the world and a force for the renewal of the Church in holiness and apostolic zeal." Supreme Knight Carl Anderson is in Rome to attend the three-week long Synod of Bishops on Scripture.

### **BENEDICT XVI REAFFIRMS CHURCH OPPOSITION TO CONTRACEPTION**

The Vatican Friday released a Message from Pope Benedict to Msgr. Livio Melina, president of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, on the occasion of an international meeting to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Paul VI's Encyclical "Humanae vitae." The encyclical, he said, "deals with one of the essential aspects of the vocation of marriage. ... The possibility of procreating a new human life is inherent to the complete self-giving of the spouses," he observed.

Repeating the Church's opposition to contraception, he said, "To exclude this communicative dimension by acts that seek to impede procreation means to deny the intimate truth of married love." In the light of the Encyclical, said Benedict, "children are not seen as the aim of a human project but are recognized as an authentic gift, to be welcomed with an attitude of responsible generosity towards God, Who is the primary source of human life." The Pope acknowledged that "during a couple's life serious situations may arise that make it prudent to space out the

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births of children or even suspend them altogether. It is here," he stressed. "that a knowledge of the natural rhythms of a woman's fertility become important."

Benedict XVI asked why the world today, including many faithful, "find it so difficult to understand the Church's message, which explains and defends the beauty of conjugal love in its natural expression." He said, "Technological solutions to the great human problems often seem the easiest, in reality they hide the basic problem which concerns the meaning of human sexuality and the need for responsibility."

He also wrote of the fight against sterility, noting that many researchers, "while fully safeguarding the dignity of human procreation, have achieved results which previously seemed unattainable."

## **SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON THE SCRIPTURES TO START SUNDAY**

Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, gave a briefing Friday on the 12th Ordinary General Assembly which starts Sunday with Mass presided over by Pope Benedict in St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls Basilica. The theme of the three-week synod is "The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church."

"This will be the first time a Synod of Bishops has been opened in a basilica other than St. Peter's," said the archbishop, the reason being that the synod falls during the Pauline Year. Over 400 people will attend, including 253 Synod Fathers representing 113 episcopal conferences, 13 "sui iuris" Eastern Catholic Churches, 25 dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General. There will also be 41 experts from 21 countries, including 6 women, and 37 auditors from 26 countries, including 19 women. A number of fraternal delegates from ten Churches and ecclesial communities will also attend. And, for the first time in the history of synods, a Jew - Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen of Haifa, Israel - will address the assembly, the first time that a non-Christian has done so. He is one of three special guests of the Holy Father, along with Rev. A. Miller Milloy, secretary general of the United Bible Societies, and Frere Alois, prior of the Taize Community.

Pope Benedict inaugurated a change at the last synod that will be repeated this year, that is, there will be a period of free discussion from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the end of the daily General Congregations. On 18 October, Pope Benedict and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I will preside at first Vespers for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Fr. Federico Lombardi, head of the Holy See Press Office, told journalists that China has denied permission for Catholic bishops from mainland China to travel to Rome for the synod. Bishops, however, from Macao and Hong Kong, which have a certain degree of autonomy from Beijing, will be in attendance. Fr. Lombardi indicated that talks (had been held) "with the Chinese authorities to see if other bishops from mainland China could come. It was clear that there would be no agreement and they won't come."

The Holy See has been trying for years to improve relations with mainland China, since diplomatic ties were broken off in 1951. Improved relations are a focus of Pope Benedict's pontificate, his most notable gesture being his June 30, 2007 Letter to Catholics in China.

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