

# The Geneva Declaration 1999

## Our Purpose

We assemble in this World Congress, from many national, ethnic, cultural, social and religious communities, to affirm that the natural human family is established by the Creator and essential to good society. We address ourselves to all people of good will who, with the majority of the world's people, value the natural family. Ideologies of statism, individualism and sexual revolution, today challenge the family's very legitimacy as an institution. Associated with this challenge are the problems of divorce, devaluation of parenting, declining family time, morally relativistic public education, confusions over sexual identity, promiscuity, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, poverty, human trafficking, violence against women, child abuse, isolation of the elderly, excessive taxation and below-replacement fertility. To defend the family and to guide public policy and cultural norms, this Declaration asserts principles that respect and uphold the vital roles that the family plays in society.

## The Family and Society

The natural family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centered on the voluntary union of a man and a woman in the lifelong covenant of marriage. The natural family is defined by marriage, procreation and, in some cultures, adoption. Free, secure and stable families that welcome children are necessary for healthy society. The society that abandons the natural family as the norm is destined for chaos and suffering. The loving family reaches out in love and service to their communities and those in need. All social and cultural institutions should respect and uphold the rights and responsibilities of the family.

## The Family and Marriage

The cornerstone of healthy family life, marriage brings security, contentment, meaning, joy and spiritual maturity to the man and woman who enter this lifelong covenant with unselfish commitment. In marriage, both husband and wife commit to a life of mutual love, respect, support and compassion. Spousal conflicts that can arise in marriage are opportunities for personal and marital growth, not, as modern cultures encourage, reasons to break the covenant. Divorce is destructive to families and society. Society and public policy should discourage divorce, while taking legal or other appropriate action in cases of intransigently abusive relationships. Steadfast commitment in marriage provides the security in family life that children need. Children also need and are entitled to the complementary parental love and attention of both father and mother, which marriage provides. Communities and religious institutions should care for families and households whose circumstances fall short of these ideals. Social policies should not promote single-parenting.

## The Family and Children

The natural family provides the optimal environment for the healthy development of children. Healthy family life fulfills the basic human need to belong and satisfies the longings of the human heart to give and receive love. The family informs the human person's original attitude toward such fundamental matters as identity, security, responsibility, love, morality and religion. In personal and intimate ways that no self-defining entity could, the natural family cares for its children and provides for their spiritual, physical, psychological and moral growth. Policy should promote the definition and permanence in family relationships that create the stability and security in family life children need.

## The Family and Sexuality

The complementary natures of men and women are physically and psychologically self-evident. These differences are created and natural, not primarily socially constructed. Sexuality is ordered for the procreation of children and the expression of love between husband and wife in the covenant of marriage. Marriage between a man and a woman forms the sole moral context for natural sexual union. Whether through pornography, promiscuity, incest or homosexuality, deviations from these created sexual norms cannot truly satisfy the human spirit. They lead to obsession, remorse, alienation, and disease. Child molesters harm children and no valid legal, psychological or moral justification can be offered for the odious

crime of pedophilia. Culture and society should encourage standards of sexual morality that support and enhance family life.

### **The Family and Life**

The intrinsic worth, right to life and sanctity of life of every human person exists throughout the continuum of life, from fertilization until natural death.

Every human life is a gift to the person, the family and society. Loving families cherish and serve all their members, including the weak, aged and handicapped. Taking innocent human life through abortion and euthanasia is wrong; respect for human life demands that we choose the life-protecting options of adoption and palliative care. The destruction of embryonic human beings, lethal human embryo experimentation and abortifacients also involve wrongful takings of human life. All experimentation and research on human beings should be beneficial to the particular human subject. Trafficking in the organs and limbs of aborted children and other human beings, cloning humans and human-genetic engineering treat human life as a commodity and should not be allowed. Animal-human genetic experimentation is a crime against humanity. Policy should respect the inherent dignity of human life.

### **The Family and Population**

Human society depends on the renewal of the human population; the true population problem is depopulation, not overpopulation. Many nations are experiencing below-replacement fertility, arising from widespread abortion, birth control, lack of interest in marriage and declining family sizes. People are living longer, increasing the size of elderly populations, while there are proportionally decreasing numbers of taxpayers to support their elders' retirement incomes and health care. Because just governments and creative human enterprise and charity offer the best hope for addressing the problems of poverty, hunger and disease, no country should be coerced to accept policies of "population control." Efforts to assist developing countries should focus on promoting family self-sufficiency, not dependency.

### **The Family and Education**

Parents uniquely possess the authority and responsibility to direct the upbringing and education of their children. By its nature, education is not only technical and practical, but also moral and spiritual. The family is the child's first school, parents the first and most important teachers. Love of community and loyalty to nation begin in the family. The state usurps the parental role when it monopolizes and mandates the educational system, and deprives parents of their intrinsic authority over their children's education. Nor should government schools or health clinics treat minor children's health without parental approval.

School curricula should not undermine the right of parents to teach their children moral and spiritual values. Parents have a duty to their children and to society to provide their children an adequate education. Parents should be free to spend their education resources, including tax money, on the schools of their choice, such as sending them to a religious school or educating their children themselves in the home.

### **The Family and Economy**

Economic policy, both corporate and governmental, should be crafted to allow the family economy to flourish; what is good for families is good for the economy.

Family economy centers on the pursuit of meaningful employment to fulfill one's personal vocation and to provide for the present and future needs, obligations, and desires of the family -- such as food, shelter, education, health care, charity, recreation, retirement income, taxes and the intergenerational family estate.

Healthy families produce good citizens and workers, competent consumers and innovative entrepreneurs. Employers should allow workers flexible family and maternity leave. Corporate philanthropy and national and international funding for economic development should strengthen the natural family. Such funds should not be used to support organizations whose programs harm the family. Commerce in products that appeal to addictions, such as harmful drugs, gambling and violent and pornographic media, undermine the family and should be opposed.

### **The Family and Government**

Government should protect and support the family, and not usurp the vital roles it plays in society.

When the state or its agent attempts to exercise a right or responsibility that belongs to the family, albeit with

good intentions to address a vexing social problem, its effect is to undermine and displace the family and make matters worse. Government policies should not create pressure for mothers to enter the workplace when they would prefer to care for their families full time. Government should secure an orderly, lawful and just society that allows families freely and responsibly to: form in the covenant of marriage and bear children, pursue meaningful work, provide for their material and health needs, direct the education and upbringing of their children, participate in charitable, civic and recreational activities, care for elderly family members, build estates for their present and future generations, and practice their religion.

### **The Family and Religion**

Parents have the right to teach their religious and moral beliefs to their children and to raise them according to their religious precepts. Based on, and consistent with, the human right to religious liberty, families have the right to believe, practice and express their religious views in love. Religious institutions should not accommodate cultural trends that undermine the created nature of the family. One need not hold religious views to recognize that the family is part of human nature and the fundamental social unit. Religious institutions have the crucial cultural-leadership role of affirming that: the natural human family is established in creation and is essential to a good society; life and sexuality are gifts from the Creator, to be enjoyed respectfully and wholesomely; the family is sacred and has the unique authority, responsibility and capacity to provide for its members' education, health care and welfare; and all social institutions should respect and uphold the institution of the family.

### **Call to Respect the Family**

We exhort all persons, families, social organizations and governments throughout the world to respect and uphold the institution of the natural human family, in accordance with the principles of this Declaration, for the good of present and future generations.