

World Congress of Families IV

On May 11, 2007 the World Congress of Families IV started in Warsaw under the patronage of President of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczyński. Representatives of academic and, political milieus, lay and religious non-governmental organizations from Poland, Mexico, France and the United States are to debate for three days in the Congress Hall of the Palace of Culture and Science. A letter from the President of the Republic of Poland to the organizers and participants to the Congress was read by Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka from the Presidential Chancellery.

Here is the text of the letter:

I cordially welcome all of you assembled at the World Congress of Families IV. I am glad that for the first time Warsaw was selected as the place of this important meeting of people of culture and science, political elites and religious communities, but most of all families from several dozen countries from all continents. I accepted with satisfaction the kind words of Secretary General of the Congress Allan Carlson about Poland as the bastion of strong faith and strong families in the increasingly laicizing Europe whose inhabitants are getting older. I also hope that the numerous guests that came from abroad to participate in the Congress will also have the opportunity to have a closer look at the capital of our country and establish numerous friendship ties with its inhabitants.

At this moment, it is very important to recall the personage of archbishop Kazmierz Majdański, the determined defender of the civilization of life and the great Polish patriot, who did not live to participate in the Congress and fulfill the function of the head of the Honorary Committee. Recalling the experiences of his young years, spent in German concentration camps, where he was subjected to pseudo medical experiments, he devoted all his life to family, as a union of man and woman with children as its fruit. His merits include efforts aimed at the official recognition of a new science – family studies, developed today by the Institute of Family Studies, which he had established.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

For centuries, the family has been occupying a special place in the Polish tradition. The power of the Republic was not based most of all on the arms or financial resources but its main source was the strength of the families that created it. The Polish material culture many from among its most beautiful memorabilia owe to the magnate and nobility families. But also the same families did not spare the blood of their fathers and sons when the freedom and order of the motherland required the highest sacrifice.

This readiness of families to sacrifice for the common good was especially visible in the times of the 19th century uprisings and also during World War II when the Polish anti-Nazi subversion found support in homes of the families of young soldiers of the underground Home Army, among them parents and grandparents. What is important

is that this many generations and patriotic ethos united the citizens of the Republic of different nationalities and religious denominations.

Finally, I would like to recall one more feature of the Polish understanding of the family: about the special position and role of women. In times, when men in their prime were leaving homes to defend the country or when they were jailed for their independence actions, it was the women who secured the continuation of family in unity, took care over the households and properties and were upbringing successive generations in the Polish spirit, transferring to them the heritage of identity.

The durability of his formation originating from family homes is also manifested by strong ties, which despite dozens of years and generation changes, the Polish emigrants cherishing with their motherland and compatriots all around the world. All this is possible owing to the fact that the citizens' nations of the Polish Republic have considered itself for ages as the great community of families.

The present Congress is held under the slogan the Natural Family - the Springtime for Europe and the World. The questions about the family – about its today's and future shape – remain in the centre of the most important dilemmas of modern times. Questions concerning globalization and demographic processes, current social model, solidarity as the foundation of order and development of states and nations and methods of reconciliation of tradition with contemporariness – all of them do not find a satisfactory reply without taking into consideration this fundamental perspective of perceiving challenges facing humanity, which is the point of view of individual family.

The observation of the live of the societies – in the past ages as well as today – confirms the existence of a deep interdependence between the situation of families and the people and nations created by it. Montesquieu was right when he wrote that Family life constitutes the foundation of nations and states.

There is no way not to see that the material and moral conditions of the societies, values proclaimed by it and the dynamics of adopted actions – more than from the political system, civilization and economic level and other external circumstances – are dependant on the liveliness, coherence and strength of this fundamental element of the entire social building that the family constitutes.

The Primate of the Century, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński understood it perfectly when several dozen years ago – polemically against the existing materialistic ideology of communism – stressed that Citizens are not produced in factories; it is in the family, under the mother's heart where the nation is.

Therefore, the future of our motherland depends on the today's condition of Polish families just as the fate of the world depends on the future of the families in all countries on all continents. That is why, as the President of the Republic of Poland, I support all initiatives for the consolidation of the rights of the family, improvement of their economic situation and opening of new prospects for development.

Apart from many instruments, it is also to be served by the social pact between the state representatives, employers and workers' and trade union organizations, that

sponsor the establishment and which already in its name: Economy – Work – Family – Dialogue points to the significance of the family as one of the pillars of the order and guarantees of success of Poland and Poles in the 21st century. I am glad that the activities of the Polish government also go in this direction, in line with the recently presented program of family policy for the years 2007-2014.

Thinking about the future, at the beginning we should consider what changes should be made as to make Poland, the European Community and other institutions of the international community become more friendly to families to which they owe its existence and for which wellbeing they are created.

I am convinced that we need today – In Poland as well as in all developed countries – the consolidation of the pro-family policy and promotion of attitudes and mentality within which friendliness towards families and affirmation of family values would be a natural thing. Decreasing population observed in the whole of Europe, tied with ageing may lead to a lasting collapse in the economic growth.

It may also cause that the hitherto undisputed and generally binding principle of Inter-generation solidarity may crumple. This principle is the foundation on behalf of which, the old age pension system guaranteeing older people a safe autumn of life functions.

We must get into the causes of the present problems In order to stave off this threat. The growth of prosperity and at the same time the requirements on the labor market, rejection of authority and traditional values and customs, often concentration on self-realization than on duties – all these phenomena cause that the starting of a family and having children is experienced as an inconvenience. Parenthood is postponed, a model of a small family is getting popular, with one child at the most, and more numerous are people who completely give up parenthood.

It becomes indispensable to concentrate energy and resources for supporting the family itself and popularization of the awareness how great its social value is. The matter is that devotion to care over children did not signify an automatic exclusion of parents from the labor market or the loss of the right to old age pensions. But also that this choice of giving birth and upbringing of children did not encounter disregard but due respect.

Because these new people after years are to secure calm retirement to the entire generation of their parents, and also to childless persons. Actions are thus needed to overcome everything that puts equals sign between having many children and poverty. Combating persisting stereotypes and prejudices and replacing them with reliable knowledge and positive image of many children family is a great task.

All this postulates have already become a reality to a certain extend. Discussion over the significance and the future of the family – underway in a lot of countries with the participation of various milieus: academic, political, religious and artistic – does not remain only in the scope of an idea, but has a direct influence on activities undertaken by state and local authorities and international organizations. The dynamics of demographic changes causes that the importance of his issues will be appreciated by growing circles of the society. Because we are speaking about

matters, which are of lively importance and are hard not to be appreciated.

That is why the just starting World Congress of Families IV has to play an important role in the stimulation and guiding into the proper track the debate over the new pro-family policy. I wish you to make the debate and important contribution into this discussion and personal meetings and talks of the participants to the Congress result in new initiatives for the better future of the family in Poland, Europe and the world.

Let the creative ability and potential of the people of science, art, politics and culture unite in the work for this result. On my part, I want to assure you that the authorities of Poland are going to continue their efforts to make Poland of the 21st century become a country more friendly to the family, caring for it and serving it as a common welfare of us all”.

Secretary General of the World Congress of Families Allan C. Carlson presented President Lech Kaczynski with a diploma and extended his thanks for support and activities for families in Poland, Europe and the world.