(A short excerpt from the...)

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE BENEDICT XVI
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
WORLD DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 2008

THE HUMAN FAMILY, A COMMUNITY OF PEACE

1. At the beginning of a New Year, I wish to send my fervent good wishes for peace, together with a heartfelt message of hope to men and women throughout the world. I do so by offering for our common reflection the theme which I have placed at the beginning of this message. It is one which I consider particularly important: *the human family, a community of peace*. The first form of communion between persons is that born of the love of a man and a woman who decide to enter a stable union in order to build together
a new family
. But the peoples of the earth, too, are called to build relationships of solidarity and cooperation among themselves, as befits members of the one
human family
: "All peoples" as the
Second Vatican Council
declared "are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth (cf.
Acts
17:26); they also have one final end, God"(
1
).

The family, society and peace

2. The natural family, as an intimate communion of life and love, based on marriage between a man and a woman(2), constitutes "*the primary place of 'humanization'* for the person and society"(3), and a *"cradle of life and love"* (4). The family is therefore rightly defined as the first natural society, *"a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order"* (5).

3. Indeed, in a healthy family life we experience some of the fundamental elements of peace: justice and love between brothers and sisters, the role of authority expressed by parents, loving concern for the members who are weaker because of youth, sickness or old age, mutual help in the necessities of life, readiness to accept others and, if necessary, to forgive them. For this reason, the family is *the first and indispensable teacher of peace***. . .**

(Later the document continues . . .)

5. Consequently, whoever, even unknowingly, circumvents the institution of the family undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect *the primary agency of peace*. This point merits special reflection: everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman, everything that directly or indirectly stands in the way of its openness to the responsible acceptance of a new life, everything that obstructs its right to be primarily responsible for the education of its children, constitutes an objective obstacle on the road to peace. The family needs to have a home, employment and a just recognition of the domestic activity of parents, the possibility of schooling for children, and basic health care for all. When society and public policy are not committed to assisting the family in these areas, they deprive themselves of an essential resource in the service of peace. The social communications media, in particular, because of their educational potential, have a special responsibility for promoting respect for the family, making clear its expectations and rights, and presenting all its beauty

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