

RESPECT LIFE HOLY HOUR FOR MARYLAND REFLECTION FOR OCTOBER 29, 2024: The Family... The Primary Means by Which the Christ's Church Carries Out Its Mission.

THE AMENDMENT TO THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION STATES:

Article 48: That every person, as a central component of an individual's rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but NOT LIMITED TO the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end one's own pregnancy. The state may not, directly or indirectly, deny, BURDEN, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means."

THE BALLOT will say (not required to match amendment language):

Question 1 - Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 245 of the 2023 Legislative Session)

Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom

The proposed amendment confirms an individual's fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but NOT LIMITED TO the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end the individual's pregnancy, and provides the State may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means.

For the Constitutional Amendment

Against the Constitutional Amendment

This November, Marylanders will be asked to vote on Question 1 - The Right to Reproductive Freedom. (The language of the law passed by the House and Senate, and how it will appear on the ballot are at the top of the page.)

I have increasingly become aware of how prophetic and important Pope John Paul II and his teachings on the family are.. His teachings are in many ways more important today than they were when they were first written. At his canonization mass, Pope Francis referred to St. John Paul II as the "Pope of the Family".

In 1994, the year declared as the Year of the Family by the UN, Pope John Paul II wrote "Letter to Families". In the opening paragraph he says, "Christ entrusted man to the Church; he entrusted man to Her as the "pathway" of her mission and her ministry." (Interestingly enough, yesterday, October 28, we read in Luke's Gospel how Jesus chose the 12 apostles from among his disciples (Luke 6:12-16)) However, Pope John Paul II states emphatically that among the many paths by which man might accomplish the task of the Church's mission and ministry, "**the family is the first and the most important.**" (Letter to Families, Pope John Paul II, 1994, 2)

Wow!!! God's plan for the family is for it to serve as the primary means by which Christ's Church accomplishes its mission of conversion and sanctification of all peoples. And how does the family go about doing that? Through love... not the sentimental love our culture often portrays, but the love that was imparted to the world by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, making possible what Pope Paul VI called a "**Civilization of Love**". At his May 17, 1970 Regina Caeli address on the Feast of Pentecost, Pope Paul VI said, "We recall the symbolism at the beginning of this amazing story, of the miracle of many different languages being made comprehensible to everyone by the Spirit. It is the civilization of love and of peace which Pentecost has inaugurated—and we are all aware how much today the world still needs love and peace!"



Outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

To say that the family is the primary conveyer of this civilization of love to the rest of the world may be difficult to believe, given the state of the world and the culture today, were it not for the fact that we already know that from the beginning

God created man in His image and likeness in a willful act of pure love, making man unique among all His creatures. He then, through the Spirit, united man and woman in a marriage mirroring the unity of the Holy Trinity. And after the Fall, He sent His only beloved Son to save mankind from sin and death. So it makes sense that the family, created and sanctified by God through the sacramental bond of marriage, blessed by children conceived and borne in love, baptized and nurtured in and by the family, would be used as the primary agency by which the Church would spread God's love and mercy throughout the world

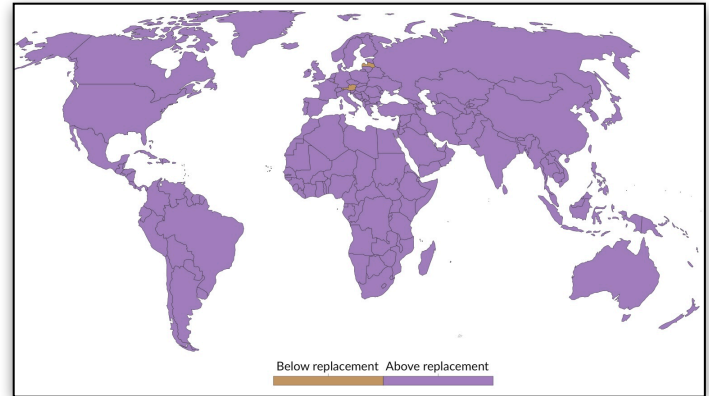
The idea that the family is the primary instrument of spreading the faith has a long history in the ministry of St. John Paul II. In 1981, Pope John Paul II released the Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* in response to a list of proposals submitted to him by Bishops who participated in a 1970 Synod of Bishops on the family. He states: "the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity." (*Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul, II, Nov. 22, 1981, 2).

However, in section 46 of *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II also states:

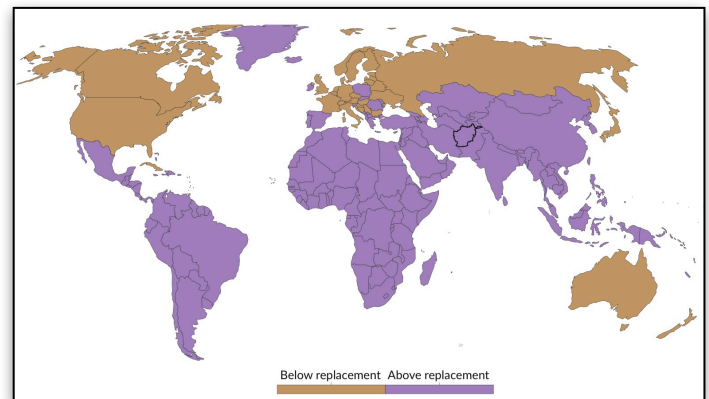
"46. The ideal of mutual support and development between the family and society is often very seriously in conflict with the reality of their separation and even opposition. In fact, as was repeatedly denounced by the Synod, the situation experienced by many families in various countries is highly problematical, if not entirely negative: institutions and laws unjustly ignore the inviolable rights of the family and of the human person; and society, far from putting itself at the service of the family, attacks it violently in its values and fundamental requirements. Thus the family, which in God's plan is the basic cell of society and a subject of rights and duties before the State or any other community, finds itself the victim of society, of the delays and slowness with which it acts, and even of its blatant injustice.

For this reason, the Church openly and strongly defends the rights of the family against the intolerable usurpations of society and the State. In particular, the Synod Fathers mentioned the following rights of the family:

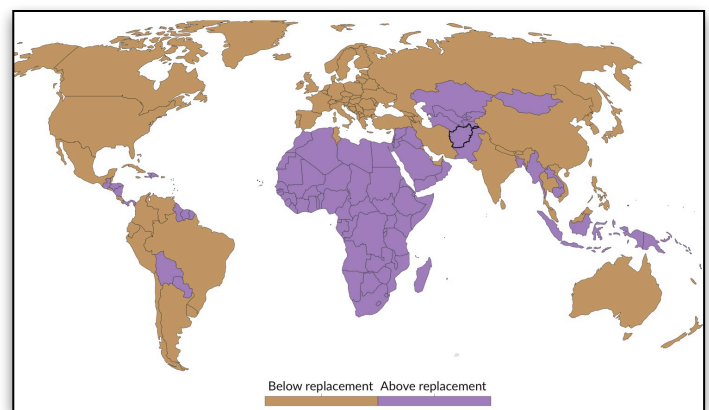
- the right to exist and progress as a family, that is to say, the right of every human being, even if he or she is poor, to found a family and to have adequate means to support it;
- the right to exercise its responsibility regarding the transmission of life and to educate children; family life;
- the right to the intimacy of conjugal and family life;
- the right to the stability of the bond and of the institution of marriage;
- the right to believe in and profess one's faith and to propagate it;
- the right to bring up children in accordance with the family's own traditions and religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means and institutions;
- the right, especially of the poor and the sick, to obtain physical, social, political and economic security;
- the right to housing suitable for living family life in a proper way;
- the right to expression and to representation, either directly or through associations, before the economic, social and cultural public authorities and lower authorities;



1950 Fertility Rates - Tan is below and purple is above replacement rates.



1980 Fertility Rates - Tan is below and purple is above replacement rates.



2023 Fertility Rates - Tan is below and purple is above replacement rates.

- the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and expeditiously;
- the right to protect minors by adequate institutions and legislation from harmful drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc.;
- the right to wholesome recreation of a kind that also fosters family values;
- the right of the elderly to a worthy life and a worthy death;
- the right to emigrate as a family in search of a better life. ”

Prophetic, indeed!!! If John Paul II thought things were bad in 1981, what would he say about today's plummeting number of marriages, especially sacramental marriages, the increasing divorce rate, and a declining birth rate due to contraception and abortion, resulting in below replacement birth rate levels in most countries and on most continents except Africa. It makes perfect sense that the Evil One would try to destroy the Church by destroying the primary means by which it is spread... the family. And what would he have to say about Question 1? The referendum disregards the traditional marital bond and the common good of family members by atomizing the family. It focuses on the individual, regardless of age or familial ties. It potentially pits one family member against another. It's a recipe for not only destroying the family but the church and society as well.

So what is the solution? Pope John Paul II had and still has the answer. In *Familiaris Consortio* he states, "At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family,^[7] the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God." (*Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul, II, Nov. 22, 1981, 46).

St. John Paul II and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pray for Us!