

# Family Life Sunday Scheduled Dec. 31

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half of powerful interests but no one speaks for the family. Therefore Christian families must unite in their efforts to influence public policies and to establish a just social order that safeguards human rights.

This important role of the family — which may aptly be described as a political role — involves three aspects:

1. The Christian family should exercise a critical function. It should question the directions of society and proposed social programs in light of Christian faith and Christian values and moral principles. The Christian must remember that it is man's responsibility to shape events in the light of God's plan for the world. That is, to weigh everything in the light of the demands of justice and truth.

2. Christian families should exercise a directive influence on the formulation of laws and social policies. As a nation we do not have an integral corpus of family law. Moreover, many of our laws and social policies attempt to respond to particular problems, and are sometimes inconsistent or ambivalent in regard to our understanding of the role of the family. This is especially true of laws affecting age and preparation for marriage, parent-child relationships, divorce and adoption. It also is evident in welfare legislation, in social programs for minorities, the poor and underprivileged or disenfranchised.

3. Christian families must take a hold on the future by involving themselves in efforts at responsible social planning. They must bring to bear on all social planning their conviction that human life and the stability of the family are not realities that are bound up with this world alone. Thus, social policies cannot be formulated merely in terms of earthly life, but must always consider the eternal destiny of man.

This is especially true in regard to concerns about future genera-

tions. The child is the representative of the future, and the way a society regards children tells us much about its beliefs in the dignity of man. Our society is deficient in protecting the rights of children. Permissive abortion laws violate the unborn child's right to life, and many of our social policies ignore the needs of children or assign the child an inferior status in society. Moreover, there is a growing tendency to treat children as burdens, or as interlopers in the private lives of their parents. Some parents seem to be involved in a continual flight from their children.

Jesus' relationship with children presents quite a different perspective, one that is at the very foundation of Christian life. Jesus places the child in a favored position and gives the child a special place among those who believe in Him. Our Lord praises the openness and innocence of children, and speaks with indignation of those who would threaten the child. Jesus treats the child as a child, not merely as an adult-to-be. He commends the child's ability to learn, the child's trust and confidence, and the child's humility. Finally, Jesus pays attention to children, and in blessing them, proclaims their right to future existence.

There are many apostolic groups that are actively engaged in helping Christian families fulfill their role in society. The Christian Family Movement deserves recognition for its efforts to train families to assume a leadership role in society. The programs of the Marriage Encounter and Teams of Our Lady strengthen family life, and the basic educational work is being pursued with new enthusiasm by the priests and couples in pre-Cana and Cana programs. But in the face of unsolved social problems such as poverty, war, disease and injustice there is a sense of frustration and a tendency toward discouragement. This, however, cannot be the mood of the contemporary Christian family.

## Church Needs Laws, Says Pope Paul

Vatican City (RNS) — In a strong defense of Church law, Pope Paul declared here that the Catholic Church is not "solely charismatic" and that the Church needs legislative power which is closely related to its pastoral mission.

Calling the law of the Church "insuppressible," the pontiff told a group of canon law experts that legal questions in the Church are often the cause of differences and disagreements among Church members. And, he said, "There are those who would like the Church to be free from canon law, those who disclaim this law and consider it harmful."

"These are errors deriving from false opinions which some people spread about the Church, as though the Church were solely charismatic and therefore not bound by the law," the Pope observed.

According to a Vatican Radio report, the Pope addressed participants in a Polemical Renewal Course for judges and officials of ecclesiastical tribunals organized in Rome by the Pontifical Gregorian University. He had granted the canon law experts a special audience.

Pope Paul also commented on the attitude of those "who fear that the spiritual side of the Church will be weakened by excessive legalism."

He also mentioned those who maintain that there exists an "incompatibility between love and law, as though justice based on law were not itself a virtue closely linked to charity."

Affirming that with respect to the "visible society" the Church is required to promulgate laws which the faithful are bound in conscience to observe, the Pope said respect for laws issued by the Church throughout the centuries "is based on the conviction that canon law is inseparable from the mission entrusted to the Church by Christ."



**Ribbon Cutting**

Ribbon cutting ceremonies started the grand opening celebration of the newest branch office of First National Bank in the Georgetown Plaza. From left, W. E. Loebmann, president of First National; Terry Falk, manager at Georgetown Plaza; Frederick White, assistant branch manager; Mrs. Barbara Deming, wife of Supervisor Donald Deming; Fred M. Kravetz, chairman of the board; and Charles F. Halick Jr., director of First National.

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