

# Personhood

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teaching including *Humanae Vitae*, and contemporary theological reflection, biological and social scientific research, and those factors influencing the spiritual and emotional quality of their marital and family lives. Also each diocese should have established effective means of making family planning training available to all couples, including non-catholics.

3. Whereas education to mature sexuality is required at all stages of a person's growth and development; and whereas developmental direction of a person's sexuality begins during the first months of life; and whereas the parents, as the primary educators, need adequate preparation and counseling for their parental responsibilities and their own personal development, we recommend that educational programs be developed within parishes to prepare parents to assume their obligations as primary educators within the field of sexuality; we recommend that educational programs for the young should begin at an early age and be developed with the cooperation of parents, teachers, pastors, and include as well the experience of young adults.

Programs should be adapted to the distinctive concerns and needs of both sexes and various ages, ethnic communities, vocations and social groups. All involved in this ministry should receive the necessary support, training and formation to enable them to deal with their own attitudes toward sexuality as well as with the issues facing their communities.

4. That the church actively seek to serve the pastoral needs of those persons with a homosexual orientation, to root out those structures and attitudes which discriminate against homosexuals as persons and to join the struggle by homosexual men and women for their basic constitutional rights to employment, housing and immigration. That the church encourage and affirm the pastoral efforts of Dignity, the organization of gay and concerned Catholics, to reconcile the church with its homosexual brothers and sisters.

5. That the church provide pastoral care to all sexual minorities who are subjected to societal discrimination and alienation from the church. Existing ministries of this type should receive recognition and support from church members and leadership. That the church also offer victims of rape and their families pastoral care, and toward that end, education of priests, religious and lay persons be improved or at least offered.

### RECOMMENDATION: A CATHOLIC BILL OF RIGHTS

The 1974 Synod of Bishops declared that the church desires "to perform her ministry by manifesting respect and regard for human rights in her own life, knowing that her ministry of fostering human rights in the world requires continued scrutiny and purification of her own life, her laws, institutions and policies." In order to assist the Catholic Church in the United States to more fully pursue the mission of the church in defense of human rights and rights accruing from baptism and to build a community of shared life in faith, we recommend:

1. That the bishops of the United States, in consultation with canon lawyers, theologians and other scholars, and in cooperation with representatives of the entire church, prepare a bill of rights for Catholics in the United States, which would ultimately be included within canon law. Such a document should include:

a. An explicit statement of the church's commitment to defend and promote human rights and human dignity, to include the assertion that all human beings are

entitled minimally to food, clothing, shelter, health care, and fulfilling economic opportunity, all these in accordance with their needs; and

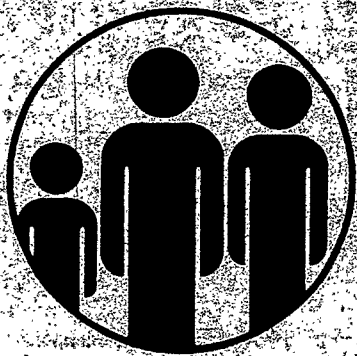
b. A clear affirmation of fundamental rights and consequent responsibilities of church members including among others, the right to freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to participate, in accord with each person's gift of the Spirit, in the life and ministry of the Christian community on a non-discriminatory basis; and

c. A statement of procedural rights, including a reaffirmation of due process procedures for indicating rights and adjudicating disputes.

2. That the bill of rights, as affirmed by the U.S. Conference of Bishops, be implemented in the following ways:

a. That it be included in the revised Code of Canon Law.

b. That pending its inclusion in the law of the church, the U.S. bishops, both collectively and individually, implement it in the government of the church of the United States.



## Family

### RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT FOR FAMILY VALUES

Christ, our Savior, both beautifully and forcefully spoke of the permanence and indissolubility of marriage. In response to his teaching and to assist the whole Catholic community to reaffirm its support of the beauty, dignity and sacramentality of marriage and the family, and to increase its awareness that Christian marriage is to be a great sign of Christ's love for the church, we recommend:

1. That this assembly affirm: a) that committed lifelong marriage is a part of God's plan; b) that when husbands and wives love each other, they serve God; c) that children are an expression of the creative fruitfulness of human life and love; d) that to live in peace and security is the right and duty of every family, beginning in service to its members; e) that each family, as one among many families in the world, finds fulfillment in service to others; f) that within the common bonds of faith, each family has the right, and is encouraged to express its religious values within the context of its cultural heritage and to share it with others; g) that within the Christian family commitment marriage and family life should also enhance the freedom of men and women to fulfill their personal potential and participate fully in the life of their world; and h) that there is a powerful witness in loving families in which parents have been separated by divorce, death or economic crisis and in which a single parent and children cooperate in nurturing and supporting one another.

2. That the whole church, through the example of the lives of its members and through action undertaken in cooperation with other religious and civic groups

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pledges itself to combat those contemporary social, economic and cultural forces which threaten all families.

There is a special need within the church that theologians collaborate in developing further the theology of matrimony. Recognizing the special needs of married couples and families, we strongly believe that a catechesis of marriage, sexuality and family based on contemporary and sound theology and the lived experience of the married should be implemented on every level of the church's life. This educational process should involve the church in educational programs for effective parenthood. This catechesis should create a favorable impression of marriage and an appropriate understanding of sexuality.

3. That the church, with the leadership of the bishops, develop a comprehensive pastoral plan for family ministry based upon a continuing process of dialogue between families and competent authorities.

Recognizing the value of the traditional nuclear family, we see a need to broaden our concept and practice of family ministry to families of diverse lifestyles, including, but not limited to, single-parent families, childless couples, widowed and separated people.

In developing such a plan, particular concern should be shown for:

a. The racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of the Catholic community;

b. The need for family-centered worship and religious education, both in the home and in the parish; we further recommend that Sunday be truly the Lord's day by establishing that day as a family day for all members of the parish. In addition to the liturgy, the day shall include educational, recreational, and paraliturgical celebrations;

c. Pastoral programs which encourage formation of family groups for prayer, worship, sacramental preparation, marriage enrichment, family life education and mutual support, either within parishes or across parish boundaries;

d. The need for consideration of the family in Catholic programs of social service at all levels;

e. The need to develop an overall vision of social legislation that will strengthen marriage and foster family life, including legislation to protect the rights of parents to the moral guidance of their children; f. The need to utilize the resources of other private and public agencies in the community, if the needs of all families are to be served;

g. The need to formulate diocesan policies that would not only stress marriage as a sacramental vocation within the church but also apply some of the same safeguards and principles of preparation utilized in readying candidates for holy orders.

h. The need for providing information, counselling and support for families who have members who are part of the "sexual minority."

We recommend, further, that the bishops declare in the near future a family year.

4. That the bishops in conjunction with existing Catholic marriage and family life movements provide a national structure to formulate and implement a pastoral plan for integrated family ministry. This structure should involve:

a. Establishment of a standing committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops with responsibility for marriage and family life. Furthermore we strongly recommend the

enlargement and support to the National Family Life Office by July 1, 1977.

b. Prompt establishment and support for diocesan family life offices with appropriate diocesan, vicariate, deanery and parish committees. To further this goal, we urge that every diocese name at least a family life liaison officer by September 1, 1977.

c. Recognition of the special competency of permanent deacons and lay people, especially married couples, in family ministry by seeking them out and assuring them roles of leadership and authority.

d. Appropriate training for all those involved in leadership positions in family ministry.

e. A just allocation of church

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### SOME THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

By Ed Sulowski

Someone you love has died. You may feel you want to deny the death which has occurred. It is not unusual to try to do so. However, it is necessary to admit to yourself death's presence, even though this can be a painful experience. One of the ways some attempt to eliminate a confrontation with death and hope to avoid the pain that loss brings, is to resist viewing the body of the deceased. They say that they wish to remember the deceased as he or she appeared alive. However, for you to view the body is an important first step toward accepting the death.

The funeral, from the first announcement of death to the committal service, is a declaration that death has occurred. Viewing, when possible, is an essential part of the affirmation. If you are religiously oriented, the funeral service is a spiritual occasion. If you do not profess a specific religious belief, you may want to consider having what is called a "humanistic service." This should also be public to grant to your family and friends the opportunity to share their love and sorrow with you.

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