

# Pope denounces erosion of families

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News Analysis

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Sarah Delaney/CNS

VATICAN CITY — Those who undermine the fundamental role of the family cause “a deep wound to society” that is often impossible to repair, Pope John Paul II said.

In an apparent reference to laws being passed in many Western countries that expand the definitions of family, the pope said the protection and promotion of traditional marriage and families by the church is a matter of “exceptional urgency.”

The pope gave his warning in a Nov. 20 audience with the Pontifical Council for the Family at the conclusion of its three-day plenary assembly. The theme of the session was “The Mission of Mature and Experienced Couples Toward Betrothed

and Young Couples.”

The pope and other church leaders repeatedly have been calling attention to what they see as the cultural and legal erosion of the established concept of marriage between a man and a woman.

“The family based on marriage is a natural and irreplaceable institution and is the fundamental element of the common good of every society,” Pope John Paul said.

“Those who destroy this fundamental fabric of human society, not respecting its identity and distorting its role, cause a deep wound to society which often provokes irreparable damage,” he said.

The council, he said, must address changes to the status of the family at national and international levels.



Daniele Colarieti/CNS

Pope John Paul II and other church leaders are drawing attention to the cultural and legal erosion of families.

The church opposes legislation which allows same-sex marriage or gives legal status to cohabiting couples.

Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, who leads the Pontifical Council for the Family, told the pope during the audience that council members had “reflected on the current challenges to the family and to life.” He said such challenges “are a concern for humanity,” reported the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

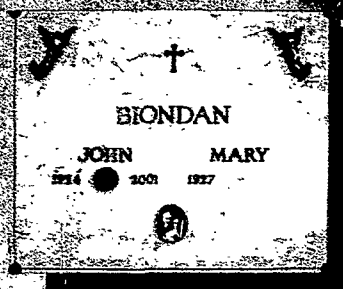
The pope gave a special nod to young couples, urging the members of the council to “renew your efforts to foster young families.”

Young couples, likewise, should “cordially accept and intelligently value the discreet, delicate and generous help of other couples,” he said.

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