

Pope says the family needs support for stability and development

Pope John Paul II has spent 5 days in Croatia. On June 8, he celebrated Mass before 100,000 people in Rijeka.

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The theme of the Pentecost Sunday Eucharistic celebration was the family.

"The Church of Christ is always, so to speak, in a situation of Pentecost," said the Pope in his homily. "The Church is kept ever young and alive, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, because the Spirit constantly descends upon her in order to remind her of all that the Lord has said to her and to guide her into the fullness of truth."

John Paul II recalled that they were gathered "at the foot of this hill, beneath the Shrine of Trsat, where, according to a devout tradition, the house of the Virgin Mary sojourned and was cared for. Recalling the life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph at Nazareth reminds us of the austere beauty and simplicity, and the sacredness and inviolability of the Christian family."

"Nowadays the family, also in Croatia," he continued, "requires special consideration and concrete

policies aimed at promoting and protecting its essential nature, its development and its stability. Among other things, I am thinking of the serious problems associated with housing and employment. It must not be forgotten that in helping the family we also help to resolve other important problems, such as providing assistance to the sick and the elderly, stopping the spread of crime, and finding a remedy to drug use."

The Pope exhorted Christian families "not to be afraid to present to others, first and foremost by the witness of your lives, God's authentic plan for the family as a community of life founded on marriage, in other words, on the stable and faithful union of a man and a woman, bound to each other by a bond which is publicly manifested and recognized. It is your responsibility to provide for the human and Christian

education of your children, trusting also in the expert assistance of committed and well-trained educators and catechists."

"Society today," he emphasized, "is tragically fragmented and divided. This is the reason why it is so desperately unfulfilled. But Christians do not become resigned to weariness or paralyzed by inertia. May you be a people of hope! May you be a people who prays!"

The Holy Father assured the faithful that "Christ's desire is that all people should be one in him, so that all may experience the fullness of his joy. ... For this reason He, together with the Father, has sent us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is tirelessly at work, overcoming every division and healing every wound."

The Pope invoked the gifts of the Holy Spirit "on all Christian spouses of Croatia, that by their mutual gift of

self, in fidelity to the duties of marriage and in service to the cause of the Gospel, they may be in the world a sign of God's love for humanity."

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