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Family is the center of life and is the key to true happiness.

In Nov of 2014, there was a special event addressing marriage and family was held at the Vatican in Rome, Italy. In attendance were religious representatives from 14 different faiths and from six of the seven continents, all of whom had been invited to express their beliefs on what is happening to the family in today's world.

Pope Francis opened the first session of the assembly with this statement: "We now live in a culture of the temporary, in which more and more people are simply giving up on marriage as a public commitment. This revolution in manners and morals has often flown the flag of freedom, but in fact it has brought spiritual and material devastation to countless human beings, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. ... It is always they who suffer the most in this crisis."

In referring to those of the rising generation, he said it is important that they "do not give themselves over to the poisonous [mentality] of the temporary, but rather be revolutionaries with the courage to seek true and lasting love, going against the common pattern"; this must be done.

This was followed by three days of presentation and discussion with religious leaders of every kind, and from all over the world, addressing the subject of marriage between a man and a woman.

When various faiths and denominations and religions are united on the subject of marriage and family, they are also united on the values and loyalty and commitment which are naturally associated with family units. It was truly amazing to see how marriage and family-centered priorities cut across and superseded any political, economic, or religious differences. When it comes to love of spouse and hopes, worries, and dreams for children, we are all virtually the same.

We believe that strong traditional families are the basic units of a stable society, a stable economy, and a stable culture of values. No one has ever come up with a more efficient way to raise the next generation than a household of married parents with children.

Why should marriage and family matter—everywhere? Public opinion polls show that marriage is still the ideal and the hope among the majority of every age group—even among the millennial generation, where we hear so much about chosen singleness, personal freedom, and cohabitation instead of

marriage. The fact is that strong majorities worldwide still want to have children and to create strong families.

David Brooks, a New York Times columnist said: “People are not better off when they are given maximum personal freedom to do what they want. They’re better off when they are enshrouded in commitments that transcend personal choice—commitments to family, God, craft and country.”

We want our voice to be heard against all of the counterfeit and alternative lifestyles that try to replace the family organization that God Himself established. We also want our voice to be heard in sustaining the joy and fulfillment that traditional families bring. We must continue to project that voice throughout the world in declaring why marriage and family are so important, why marriage and family really do matter, and why they always will.

I focus today on the good that men can do in the highest of masculine roles—husband and father.

David Blankenhorn, the author of *Fatherless America*, has observed: “Today, American society is fundamentally divided and ambivalent about the fatherhood idea. Some people do not even remember it. Others are offended by it. Others, including more than a few family scholars, neglect it or disdain it. Many others are not especially opposed to it, nor are they especially committed to it. Many people wish we could act on it, but believe that our society simply no longer can or will.”

Fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. We believe that far from being superfluous, fathers are unique and irreplaceable.

Some see the good of fatherhood in social terms, as something that obligates men to their offspring, impelling them to be good citizens and to think about the needs of others, supplementing “maternal investment in children with paternal investment in children.

The key for men is to be fathers. The key for children is to have fathers. The key for society is to create fathers.