



ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008

OF THE CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR LIFE AND FAMILY

presented to
the Plenary Assembly
of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

In keeping with its mission to bring about a culture of life and a civilization of love in Canada, the Catholic Organization for Life and Family engaged in various projects during the year 2007-2008. Its activities on the educational, pastoral and cultural levels continually aim to promote respect for life and human dignity and the essential and fundamental role of the family.

This report provides a survey of the work accomplished by COLF — projects and publications — between 30 June 2007 and 30 June 2008.

PUBLICATIONS

"Families, where are the saints of the new millennium?"

In an increasingly secularized society, parents face enormous challenges in transmitting the faith to their children. In its 2007 Message to Families, COLF seeks to help parents to teach their children to discover the greatness of the vocation that they received at baptism – a call to become saints, cooperators of Christ, and an invitation to build their life with Christ. This brochure offers reflections that will help families to realize the beauty of their mission of evangelization and to engage resolutely in this task. It is an ideal gift for parents whose children are receiving the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion or Confirmation, and for young adults considering marriage.

"Marriage in the Catholic Church – Frequently Asked Questions"

With the consent of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, which holds the copyright to this brochure, COLF translated and adapted it for a Canadian audience. Given the redefinition of civil marriage in this country, there is a great need to proclaim the greatness and immense dignity of marriage in God's plan – a real vocation and a road to sanctity. This document will touch all people interested in discovering or deepening the truth about marriage as a *natural institution* willed by the Creator, and as a *sacrament* instituted by Christ. It responds to the major questions young adults ask about marriage, including: "Why does marriage matter so much to the Church?"; "Does the Church really believe that sex is good?"; "Does getting married really add

anything?"; "Why should marriage be for life?"; "Why is marriage only between a man and a woman?"; "What are the best ways to strengthen a marriage?"; and "So do all marriages go through difficult times?" This publication will be of particular interest to young people, educators, those involved in marriage preparation and youth ministry, as well as all Catholic families that are looking for ways to guide their children on the path to happiness!

“Vivir, sufrir, morir... ¿para qué?”

COLF's first Spanish leaflet! Given the great popularity of our publication on the Christian meaning of life and suffering, entitled *Living, Suffering and Dying...what for?*, we have translated it with the aim of reaching the Hispanic population. This leaflet offers people who are struggling with illness, as well as others, the opportunity to discover or deepen their understanding of the unexpected meaning that Christ gives to our lives and to our suffering. Many find in him the source of their perseverance, of their hope, and even of their joy in adversity.

“Familias, ¿Dónde están los santos del Tercer Milenio?”

A second Spanish publication! This is a translation of our Message to Families 2007, *Families, where are the saints of the third millennium?* As with the previous leaflet, this brochure was published thanks to the generosity of the Knights of Columbus, just in time for the International Eucharistic Congress where it was offered to enthusiastic Hispanic visitors.

SEMINAR ON BIOETHICS

The VIIIth Seminar on Bioethics took place in Ottawa on 28-29 February 2008, 40 years after the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Some 35 people, including 17 experts, helped COLF to reflect on the theme: "Bioethics, human sexuality and procreation". Topics discussed included: "*From Humanae Vitae to the Theology of the Body: God's Plan for Love and Human Sexuality*"; "*Assessing the impact of contraception*"; "*Overpopulation or Demographic Crash?*"; "*Novel Writing, or the Art of Inviting Youth to Chastity and Courtship*"; "*Artificial Procreation: The Radical Separation of Unity and Procreativity*"; "*Conceiving Parenthood—Debate on Parenthood Law in Public Policy*"; "*Abortion: An Experience Without Consequences?*"; "*A Life-Affirming Program: The Perinatal Palliative Care Protocol*"; "*Natural Family Planning: Integrating Science and Faith*"; "*Sex Education: Have We Failed?*"; and "*The Great Challenge in Education: Integrating Love and Sexuality*".

INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

COLF was present at the International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City, 15-22 June 2008. All of the staff spent the week there, welcoming pilgrims at COLF's display booth at the *Expo-Cité* ("Eucharistic City"), offering our publications in French, English and Spanish on life and family questions, and discussing the challenges and needs of

the family in Canada. We prepared a PowerPoint presentation on the mission and publications of COLF and encouraged visitors to check out our website.

A second display booth was set up under the large tent at the *Montmartre canadien*, and was an occasion for warm encounters with families who came to participate in the family weekend of the IEC. There, we placed an emphasis on the Symposium on the Theology of the Body (November 2008), on the transmission of the faith and on the media as major challenges for families.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Message on the occasion of the National March for Life: "Building Respect for the First of Human Rights: Invitation to a Necessary Cultural Renewal"

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the organizers of the march placed an emphasis on the first fundamental right: the right to life. We were pleased that this was the theme of our message in 2007. This time, our message stated that our country had a need not only of legislative reform, but of a great cultural renewal inspired by a new understanding of the value and dignity of each human life from conception until natural death. The message also stressed the need to rediscover the greatness of the vocation to parenthood.

Basing itself on the ideas contained in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, our message affirmed: "Our youth are eager to know that they were created for love that is permanent, exclusive, faithful and fruitful, a love whose fullest expression can only occur in marriage between a man and a woman. They want to know the truth about contraception, which has resulted in so many effects that are the opposite of what was promised. Why has the promise of sexual liberation in fact resulted in the dehumanization of women, who are so often treated as objects for sexual gratification?"

Letter from the Chairman of COLF on Bill C-484, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence)

In April, in response to the call to arms of the opponents to Bill C-484, COLF Chairman Bishop Jean Gagnon invited Catholics and all Canadians to contact their MPs and ask them to support Conservative MP Ken Epp's Bill. He also urged them to sign Ken Epp's petition. Bill C-484 aims to correct the current legal situation where the person who attacks a pregnant woman and hurts or kills her cannot be accused of having hurt or killed the child that she is carrying. The Bill would amend the Criminal Code in order to allow for a double criminal charge in these cases: one for the act of violence against the mother, and the other for the act of violence against the unborn child.

COLLABORATION WITH THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

2007 CCCB Forum for National Catholic Associations and Movements

The COLF Director participated in this meeting and was asked to serve as co-moderator.

Declaration on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae"

COLF collaborated in drafting the declaration by the CCCB Theology Commission for the 40th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*.

COLLABORATION WITH THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY

The Apostolic Nunciature asked for COLF cooperation in the creation of the Canadian section of a worldwide database on the status of life and family that is currently being created by the Pontifical Council for the Family. We are preparing a report that includes the legal and political situation, the customs and habits of our country with regard to life and family, as well as the activities and documents of various Canadian dioceses on these issues.

OTHER NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

National Symposium on the Theology of the Body – A second Symposium on the Theology of the Body, again having the theme *Towards a New Sexual Revolution*, will take place in Quebec City on 8-9 November 2008. The main speaker will be Yves Semen, a specialist on the theology of the body. Holding a Doctorate of Philosophy and Professor at the *Faculté libre de philosophie de Paris*, Mr. Semen is also Director of the *Institut européen d'études anthropologiques Philanthropos* (Fribourg, Switzerland), and author of the book ***La sexualité selon Jean-Paul II*** ("Sexuality according to John Paul II") (Presses de la Renaissance).

End of life questions – At the invitation of the coordinator of faith development for the Archdiocese of Ottawa (English sector), the COLF Director agreed to serve on a subcommittee on end-of-life issues. This subcommittee will elucidate different ways of dealing with the confusion around euthanasia, of promoting palliative care and of forming people who will be capable of intervening in the public debate. It will reach out to people in general, but especially the faithful, as well as health workers who need permanent support and formation.

Website — Our website, which is regularly updated, invites visitors to discover our most recent publications and declarations. Some readers have begun placing their orders through our website.

Collaboration with the missalette *Living with Christ* — At the invitation of the editorial board, COLF drafted an article on the theme of its 2008 Message to Families. This text will be published in August in *Living with Christ* and in the French version *Prions en Église*.

Participation in conferences — Members of the Board of Directors and staff participated in several conferences during the course of the year and also had the opportunity to speak on subjects linked to life and the family. For example, Bishop Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B., did a presentation on stem cells during a conference organized by the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute (CCBI) regarding “*The Vocation of the Catholic Physician – Integrating the Practical, the Bioethical and the Spiritual*” (April 2008); Mr. Dennis Savoie was the keynote speaker at the closing banquet of the National Pro-Life Conference in Moncton (October 2007); thanks to the generosity of the Knights of Columbus, Ms. Michèle Boulva attended an international congress at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family (Rome) on the aftermath of abortion and divorce, and on some pastoral responses to these sufferings (April 2008); she was also a speaker at the 10th anniversary conference of the *Centre de recherche et d’éducation à la vie familiale* (September 2007); Ms. Lea Singh traveled to Toronto for the first International Symposium on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (December 2007) and for the CCBI conference on the vocation of the Catholic physician (April 2008); and Ms. Sharron McKeever organized a workshop on the topic of loss and grieving during the “*When Faith Meets Pedagogy Conference*” held by the Catholic Curriculum Co-operative.

Interviews and letters — Various matters relating to life and family questions attracted the attention of the media, and some members of the Board and staff had the opportunity to be interviewed.

Links with dioceses — COLF continues to maintain links with diocesan resource people and appreciates their essential cooperation in promoting our activities and publications. The same is true of its contacts with the national executive of the *Catholic Women’s League*, the State Deputies of the Knights of Columbus, the members of the *Table provinciale de pastorale familiale* (TPPF), and other people and groups who are registered in our database.

IN PROGRESS

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, the COLF Message to Families 2008 stresses the great dignity of the human body and the beauty of God's plan for love, sexuality and marriage. Largely inspired by Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, this text proclaims that sexuality is a friend, a gift from God, a beautiful and good reality. It constitutes an invitation to rediscover and to return the real and profound meaning to the word "love". It presents, in simple terms, the teachings received by the participants of the first National Symposium on the Theology of the Body, which COLF organized in Edmonton in June 2007. This publication will be launched at the end of August 2008.

We are also working on two new brochures: one on assisted procreation, and the other (in collaboration with the Catholic Health Association of Canada) on organ donation.

This report is respectfully submitted by the members of the Board of Directors and the staff of COLF:

Board of Directors

- Mr. Mickey Casavant, St. Albert, AB – retired social worker and Knight of Columbus
- Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B. – Bishop of London, ON
- Most Rev. Jean Gagnon, Bishop of Gaspé, QC
- Ms. Andrée Leboeuf, St-Augustin-de-Desmaures, QC – clinical nurse
- Ms. Sharron McKeever, Oshawa, ON – retired religious and family life education consultant
- Dr. Marie Peeters-Ney, Victoria, BC - Director of Medical Research for the International Foundation of Genetic Research ("The Michael Fund") Pittsburg, USA, and Scientific Advisor, Down Syndrome Research Foundation, London, Ontario
- Ms. Suzanne Philips-Nootens, Sherbrooke, QC – Tenured professor at the Law Faculty of Sherbrooke University and director of the Program of Law and Politics of Health
- Mr Dennis Savoie - New Haven, Connecticut, Deputy Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus

Staff

- Ms. Michèle Boulva (Director)
- Ms. Lea Z. Singh (Assistant Director)
- Ms. Jocelyne Pagé (Administrative Assistant)

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