



Consortio

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The Meaning of Marriage and the Family in a Confused World

Amidst the rubble of the “everything goes” culture, especially the young seek stable relationships

To read reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God, this is what Christians all over the world are called to do today, especially where it relates to marriage and the family.

Modern society seems to be preoccupied, even obsessed, with the question of how finally to have the Catholic Church and Christians in general abandon God’s unique plan for humanity, especially where it concerns marriage, human sexuality, and the family. One need only read the headlines in secular and Christian media accompanying every erroneously perceived change in Church doctrine – as if the Church and its leaders were even able to change God’s plan for humanity! It seems that despite the widespread acceptance of infidelity, unlimited promiscuity and abortion, the massive breakdown of marriages and the subsequent disintegration of families, the Catholic Church’s lone and unchanging stance on these matters is still being heard,



albeit mostly with disdain or disbelief. The 2014 and 2015 Synods on the Family – and especially the heavily biased press coverage of both events – was a good reminder of this popular preoccupation and the common failure of many Christians to tirelessly, and with merciful love, show the world the joy, beauty, and hope that can be found in sacramental marriage, in openness to life, and in fidelity.

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The Intensifying Persecution of Christians – Today More Than Ever

The following is a true story that occurred less than a year ago. It happened in the city of Aleppo, Syria, a country that has for years now been suffering from a brutal proxy war, a war instigated by a series of violent groups and foreign powers vying for influence in the Middle East. Pope Francis has repeatedly pointed out this reality in no uncertain terms, and so have Christian bishops and patriarchs from the Middle East and elsewhere. But is anybody really listening? In a recent interview, the Syriac Catholic Patriarch, Ignatius Younan, stated: “The West is fueling the catastrophic tragedies we see unfolding before our eyes. We have said many times that inciting violence in Syria would only lead to chaos; and chaos leads to civil war, or vice versa. Yet chaos is also the greatest enemy of minorities, especially the Christian minority both in Syria and in Iraq.”



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The Meaning of Marriage and the Family continued from page 1

The Holy Father Pope Francis in October 2015 reminded participants at the opening of the Synod on “The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World” that “the Synod is rather an ecclesial expression, i.e., the Church that journeys together to read reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God; it is the Church that interrogates herself with regard to her fidelity to the deposit of faith, which does not represent for the Church a museum to view, nor even something merely to safeguard, but is a living source from which the Church shall drink, to satisfy the thirst of, and illuminate, the deposit of life.”

To read reality with the eyes of faith

and with the heart of God, this is what Christians all over the world are called to do today, especially where it relates to marriage and the family. To answer this call, in April 2016, the ITI organized a well-attended two-day international symposium to address the outcome of the Synods and the way forward for the Christian family. The first aim of this international symposium was to provide answers to the many questions both the 2014 and the 2015 Synods left in their wake. The conference thus focused on fundamentals, on what went on substantially during the Synods and what the Holy Father is planning concretely. It was the aim of the conference to distinguish between fact and fiction since much has been said, written and interpreted by many, often wrongly or misleading, whilst at other times enlightening and true. Careful discernment is needed here.

“The desire of God about the family, and the design of God is correct, and good, and needs not be changed, or tampered with.”



Bishop Wainaina speaking, flanked by Bishop Gudziak and Cardinal Schönborn.

Laetitia, published on the first day of the symposium, April 8, 2016. In the light of the Magisterium of the Church and guided by the powerful mystery of God’s unending mercy highlighted in this Holy Year, we went on to answer the question that was the title of our conference: **How to Re-invigorate the Sacrament of Marriage and the Christian Family today?**

One of the symposium speakers, Bishop James Wainaina from Kenya, a Synod father, expressed very clearly during his presentation how our fundamental look on marriage and the family should be: “The desire of God about the family, and the design of God is correct, and good, and needs not be changed, or tampered with.” He went on to explain the details of God’s design, which he called “Family as designed by God”:

Male and Female

The design of the family, from the beginning, is clearly expressed by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, already alluded to above: “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female” (Matt 19:4-6). It is like saying that it is indisputable that a family is made up of a male and a female. Anybody claiming another combination has either “not read” or he is plainly contradicting the way things should be. It is also noteworthy that Jesus is talking about “he who made them from the beginning...”, in other words, the author. Who can contradict the maker, or who else should come up with another family design?

Man and woman

In talking about leaving one’s own family, Jesus now uses the term man and woman, no longer male and

female, which is too general. The emphasis on leaving implies having reached maturity, and therefore being capable of:

Becoming

ONE: immature people (a boy and a girl) cannot join to become one, because they are still attached to their parents, and have not developed the capacity of self-giving;

Becoming **FRUITFUL:** what is not mature will, naturally, not be fruitful.

Husband and Wife

When the man and the woman have come together (in marriage) and become one, then we can talk of them as husband and wife. They are now in a special union, characterized by love and gifted in permanence. It is more than a union based merely on human desire; it is also willed and divinely gifted.

Father and Mother

As husband and wife then, the union can become fruitful through bearing children. That is, they become parents: father and mother. The children are the fruit of their union and love, and they are protected and nurtured by the same. In other words, it is this wonderful complementarity that brings stability and completeness, which can lead to love and life.

The Values of a Christian Marriage

The family model as willed and designed by God is a source of mutual support for a couple. There is not anything else that can replace the partner. The husband and wife are of the same stock (Gen. 2:21-23). They find intimacy in the presence of the other (verse 25). Love is the quality that can best describe this mutual relationship. Love is naturally fruitful, and this is most evident in the family. The family is indeed a fountain of life, especially where love is strongly felt and lived. God cooperates with the parents by His creative power, in bringing a fresh soul into the world. Therefore the family is the ideal environment for giving life and nurturing it. It is



Grace Before the Meal by Fritz von Uhde

indispensable to society; it ensures its continuity and provides material for the social fabric that keeps society together.

As ever more studies show, it is especially the young that are today putting a loving and stable family life as their main priority. They experience daily what the confused society they live in

proposes and have found it wanting. Today, the

Church has a unique chance to especially show young men and women the attractiveness of a faithful marriage and the power of sacrificial love in family life. With the publication of *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis is taking on this opportunity whilst challenging all Christians to look with God's merciful eyes at all the brokenness in ourselves and others and what this means. God's unending mercy and the full truth of his word are not competing, but interlocking foundations of a life lived according to the Gospel. There are, however, no checklists and templates available for a life in Christ, only the humble acceptance that we are all pilgrims to an ever deeper union with Christ, which requires incessant prayer and the continuing formation of our consciences – as the Holy Father says about the Church in *Amoris Laetitia* (37): “We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them.”

The ITI plans to host a follow-up symposium in April 2017 during which we will study in-depth *Amoris Laetitia* one year after its publication and a series of in-house study seminars on the Apostolic Exhortation that will commence in September 2016.

You may listen or view the audio and video of all the talks, including the presentation of *Amoris Laetitia* by Cardinal Dr. Christoph Schönborn, via our website www.iti.ac.at and the popular ITI YouTube Channel. ✂

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The Intensifying Persecution of Christians continued from page 1

Aleppo is a city that before the war had up to 1.8 million inhabitants and in total 2.5 million people counting the suburbs. Until the city became embroiled in the war in 2012, it was a vibrant and culturally diverse city, typical of the rich history and heritage of the Middle East – Roman, Byzantine, Jewish, Muslim and Christian, these peoples mostly living together in relative peace.

Up to twenty percent of the Aleppo population consisted of Christians – who together with their Jewish brethren are the original inhabitants of these lands, where the ideology of Islam was subsequently imposed through conquest and violence as of the seventh century after Christ. Since that time, especially Christians in the Middle East have suffered many periods of intensive persecution, which has flared up again since 2003 and has led to the near extinction of the Christian population in these countries. Christians were and are not persecuted

victim selected for brutality. Like his fellow Christians, he refused to deny Christ. He was then tortured – his nails were pulled out one by one – in front of his father, who was being told that they would stop the torture only when father and son would renounce Jesus Christ. They still refused. Father and son, and two other Christians, were then crucified and left to die on their crosses. The eight other Christians of the village suffered a similar fate later, including torture and the rape of the women amongst them.

This was not an isolated incident. Nor is this a new incident, as these horrendous acts mark the history of the Middle East from its very beginnings. Now it happens daily in Syria, in Iraq, in Northern Nigeria and in too many other countries where Christians are being publicly despised and executed as “infidels” and “pigs”. What many of our politicians and media called the “Arab Spring”, the so-called popular “democratization” movement that started some years ago, has actually turned out to be, amongst other things, a slaughter and uprooting of the Christians and other groups on a scale that has now eclipsed the early persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire. In Iraq this persecution, that includes the planned total destruction of a more than 2000-year-old Christian culture that far precedes anything Islamic, started right after the invasion of Iraq by United States and coalition forces in 2003. Of the 1.5 million Christians who resided in Iraq in 2003, today barely 200,000 remain. Syria is suffering a similar fate, although many Christians there are internally displaced. When they did not leave everything behind fleeing violence, they were tortured and killed, often in the most brutal ways - including beheadings and live burnings - by fellow human beings who think they are actually doing the will of God, that they are doing him honor, thus making Jesus’ words in the Gospels come true: *“I have told you this so that you may not fall away. They will expel you from the synagogues; in fact, the hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he is offering worship to God. They will do this because they have not known either the Father or me. I have told you this so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you.”* (Gospel of John, Chapter 16, verses 1-4)

Another story was related in 2014 by the well-known Anglican priest Canon Andrew White, who ministered courageously in Iraq under the above described circumstances. He tells the story of a group of Christian children he had ministered to being subsequently captured in a village raid by jihadists who then told them to convert to Islam and renounce Christ or die. The four children, all under fifteen, said: “No, we love Jesus. We have always loved Jesus. We



A Christian girl who was bruised and burnt during the Orissa, India violence in August 2008

In more than sixty countries in the world, Christians face persecution because of their faith.

because of ethnic or nationalist reasons – a misplaced theory some like to spread – but only because they are not Muslims and are regarded as “infidels”. Ethnically speaking, and as to their nationality, Christians however belong to the same original population as other Syrians who happen to be part of the Muslim majority. They speak the same language, share the same national history, live in the same towns and villages, and work the same land. They are all Syrians or Iraqis.

What happened in one of the villages in the metropolitan area of Aleppo on August 28, 2015 has unfortunately become commonplace in the Middle East during the last years, in a repeat of history, where so often Christians have been brutally persecuted and massacred. Jihadists, people who claim to fight a so-called “holy war” to eliminate everybody and everything not adherent to their view of Islam, attacked a village and captured twelve local Christians. These Christians did nothing else than to be God-loving and charitable villagers, helping to provide the village with that which was needed to survive in this time of war. Only because they professed Christ, were they hauled by the jihadists (also called *daesh*) before a hastily assembled village crowd, and told to renounce Jesus and convert to Islam. One of the captured Christians was a twelve-year-old boy, the first

have always been with Jesus. Jesus has always been with us.” They were then beheaded.

These gruesome stories have to be told again and again, because this is the reality of our world, and these Christians, men, women, and children, are our brethren in Christ, and we need to care about them and care for them. We need to do all we can to stop this unspeakable injustice.

The persecution of Christians, in all its bloody forms, is unfortunately as old as Christianity itself. The first large-scale persecution of Christians took place in the first three centuries after Christ under the Romans, with many of the same methods. But the genocide of Christians we see today is taking place on an unprecedented scale and is well organized – as we have not seen it since Roman (especially under Emperor Nero) and later Ottoman times (the Armenian Genocide). Aid to the Church in Need, an international Church organization that monitors persecution of Christians, reported in her 2015 overview that:

- The genocide of Christians in the Middle East and parts of Africa is a direct threat to the existence of the Church in these countries, nations where Christians are the original inhabitants. This is especially the case in Iraq and Syria. The worst state offenders include Saudi Arabia, which bans – even in private homes – any expression of a religion that is not Islam and which is a country known for its export and financing of terror.
- In more than sixty countries in the world, Christians face persecution because of their faith. 100 million people around the globe are affected by this gross trampling on their basic human rights. An average of 322 Christians are killed every month because of their faith, whilst 214 Churches, monasteries, and schools are being destroyed and 772 forms of violence are committed against them.

The worst persecution in numbers of victims and destruction of Christian buildings and heritage currently takes place in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Egypt, all at the hands of violent groups and angry mobs who claim to do this in the name of a God they call merciful. They follow the same methods and apply the same arguments used by the Ottoman Turks, who one hundred years ago, between 1915-1916, killed up to 1.5 million Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Christians. This is what U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt said about this first genocide of the twentieth century:

“The Armenian massacre was the greatest crime of the war, and the failure to act against Turkey (...) and to deal radically with the Turkish hor-



An icon of the 21 Coptic martyrs of Libya by artist Tony Rezk tonyrezk.blogspot.com

ror means that all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous nonsense.”

How true these words ring today when we see the carnage in the Middle East. Today, the Turkish government still vehemently denies the genocide ever took place – despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Even more, a new genocide against Christians is now taking place in an even larger geographical area. And the world mostly ignores all this.

One of the most important things to do for Christians all over the world is to inform themselves (the secular media is not a trustworthy source in this regard), to pray fervently, and finally to act wherever they can. Once again Patriarch Younan said in a recent interview:

“If your dear readers in the West consider that the countries where they live are democratic countries, then they have to raise their voices and tell their governments: You are participating in a genocide of minorities, especially the Christian minority. Because genocide doesn’t only mean killing all the members of a community, but also forcing them to flee their country to all parts of the world, uprooting them from the homeland of their ancestors, and destroying a culture and society and religious tradition.” ✂

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The following are some trustworthy sources for more detailed information:

Aid to the Church in Need: www.acnuk.org

Knights of Columbus: www.kofc.org

Open Doors Ministry: www.opendoorsusa.org

Christian Solidarity International: www.csi-usa.org

The Solution is in the Church's Tradition Confronting the Challenges to Marriage and Family Today

by Prof. Dr. Michael Wladika

The term 'marriage and family' has acquired an almost sentimental quality by now, as have so many sound realities. Such an occurrence has to be mentioned initially. The time in which we live is characterized by a forced leveling, by a lowering of standards as far as questions of ethics and community are concerned.

The great demolition enterprise of modern times is perhaps most grotesquely seen in the attacks against "authority and the family." There have been many political and journalistic inventions of modern times, their primal

source being a view of man as a solitary being, who revolves autonomously around himself. Correspondingly, we hear words which have become devoid of meaning, full of emotion.

Since the institution of marriage and the family is a not an arbitrary form, but is defined unconditionally according to its nature, it is culturally demanding. "Marriage" and "family" are not determined by culture but, as unconditional standards, they themselves determine culture and tradition. We need to con-

form our thoughts and actions to the traditional forms of these institutions and not just drift downstream with the arbitrary standards of our disintegrating culture.

There are many wonderful things connected to the topic of marriage. What is rather less wonderful is that marriage is under fire in a *kulturkampf* – the culture war of our times. Marriage is simply an enormously challenging lifestyle – but this is good and as it should be. As C.S. Lewis wrote: "The only fatal thing is to sit down content with anything less than perfection" (*Mere Christianity*, 1952).

The Marriage and Family Conferences – Many People, Many Thoughts and Many Experiences

The ITI has focused on marriage and the family since its beginning and throughout its now twenty year



The Nativity

history. This is the fundamental orientation of our school. It can be seen in the fact that there is at the ITI a specific program in the "Studies in Marriage and Family." And it shows itself in the series of conferences about the many aspects of "marriage and family" that will be reviewed here.

In January of this year, the fifth conference of this series took place at the ITI in Trumau, organized jointly by the ITI and the Institut für Ehe und Familie (IEF the Institute for Marriage and the Family in Vienna). These joint conferences started in 2012, with the topic "*Verlobung*" (Engagement). This was followed in 2013 by "*Umfassende Ehevorbereitung*" (Comprehensive Marriage Preparation), in 2014 by "*Ehe als Entscheidung und Geschenk*" (Marriage as Decision and Gift), in 2015 by "*Ehebegleitung – auf dem Weg zur Fülle des Lebens*" (Marriage Accompaniment – on the way to fullness of life), and now in 2016 by "*Gott als Mitte im Bunde*" (God as the Center of the Covenant). And the series is to be continued. *Venite et videbitis!*

Many things developed during these meetings. Many people came together, people who live in and bear witness to a commitment to marriage and family. Contacts arose and developed, thoughts and manifold experiences met. There are also fruits emerging from the conferences that are relevant beyond these occasions of coming together, for example, a number of edifying publications.

In 2012 the volume *Kirchliche Verlobung* (Ecclesiastic Engagement) (ed. M. Wladika and G.

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Danhel, Be&Be-Verlag Heiligenkreuz) was published; in 2014 *Sinn und Glück der sakramentalen Ehe* (The Meaning and Happiness of Sacramental Marriage) (ed. M. Wladika, Be&Be-Verlag Heiligenkreuz). This second volume has two parts, due to the fact that the papers of the second and third conferences are collected in it. In addition, the publication of the lectures of the two last conferences is planned for this year. *Tolle, lege!*

Now I do not intend to review these conferences and papers but, rather, I would like to reflect upon the relative values and merits of the topics of the past years.

To Want to Know Something

One should always start thinking by concentrating on reality and purpose. If one wants a good marriage, then one should try to know what a good marriage is. What are the purposes of matrimony? How do nature, grace and sacrament relate to each other within marriage? One has to learn again to use words carefully. Because it does sometimes happen that reality itself follows and is formed, as it were, according to word-reality; sometimes only slightly, sometimes – as is the case today – to a considerable degree. And then it comes about that, as one commentator put it, *“die Tatsachen und Menschen sich sozusagen in das Gerede von ihnen hineinentwickeln”* (facts and people develop in the discussion of them – A. Gehlen: *Moral und Hypermoral*, 1969). Yet there is, in reality, no “marriage for all” as those campaigning for so-called same-sex “marriage” would have it. Marriage is, by definition, between one man and one woman.

But if human beings over a considerable time are talked into assuming another definition of “marriage,” would it then be otherwise? In the end, almost everybody conforms to the new definition because, as Aristotle observed, man is always the imitating, the mimetic animal (*Peri poietikes*). That is why the atmosphere, the milieu, the surroundings, are so important in man’s education and formation.

It is good and useful to know, for example, that there really are only men and women. This is something that is assumed by some to be a prejudice. Now the magic word “prejudice” – born in a decadent world – is one of the most useful things when the demolition of the most excellent ways of life are intended, when criticism becomes the state of consciousness. Simplifications enter in on a large scale leading to a wholesale identification with the *zeitgeist*. This is one of the many things that Friedrich Nietzsche knew: *“Jeder will das Gleiche, jeder ist gleich. Wer anders fühlt, geht*

freiwillig ins Irrenhaus” (Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse – *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883)

So it is important to know what marriage and the family are. And that on the theological, philosophical, psychological, sociological levels – synoptically. And all this without fear, without “the insidious modern disease of tolerance” (D.H. Lawrence: *The Plumed Serpent*, 1926).

In thinking about marriage and family we learn something about ourselves. This has something to do with the fact that not only the *polis* (city), but also the *oikos* (family and home), is a form of community (*koinonia*) so fundamental that without it the actualization of humanity does not work (Aristotle: *Politika*).

Finally, one can learn that marriage is not a secular thing. Rather, it is a natural institution that precedes society. Institutions are entities from whence human beings act. As far as elementary acts of founding institutions are concerned, the word-combination *“transzendenz ins diesseits”* (transcendence into immanence) has been used (A. Gehlen: *Urmensch und Spätkultur*, 1956). This is wise. It is true in an eminent degree for marriage. No human being can claim that he invented this institution. Indeed, compared to it, to put it this way, conventionalism itself is something that was invented.

Human Essence Itself Is at Stake

One conference participant memorably observed: “People invest much more into their flats than into the relationships for which they need these flats.” This is one of the many examples of confusion relating to means and ends. Flats are means, marriage transcends the means-level, for it is a good within itself. Marriage is mission, with an “appeal-quality” of binding force.

Now such “binding force” is an essential quality belonging to natural institutions. The relationship between man and woman is so fundamental for life and for the good of human beings on this earth that we cannot, as it were, reach back to a time when it was not yet institutionalized. There are only two or three institutions that are so fundamental.



Marriage Conference participants.

The relationship between man and woman is so fundamental for life and for the good of human beings on this earth that we cannot, as it were, reach back to a time when it was not yet institutionalized.

In touching upon these things we touch on the very possibility of human existence in a fundamental sense. In a sense it is even more fundamental than such concerns as, for example, the extinction of human life on earth when threatened by an apocalyptic military confrontation or the like. In such thoughts, the concern regards the question of human *existence*, whereas in the question of marriage human *essence itself* is at stake. When the institutional stability of the relationships between man and woman and parents and children, and the institutional stability of the family is threatened, then the essence of mankind itself becomes unintelligible. Without the stable institution of marriage, there would be no humans in relations to which one could ask whether they

exist or not.

In these fundamental institutions – in marriage and family – we are in deeply serious contact with reality. Where else?

Work Hard on the Virtues

What counts in life are never the comfortable things and the infantile babble corresponding to them. A complacent society does not account for the fall of man – that man *post lapsum* is not as he should be – that he therefore also cannot put himself in order. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the “happy savage” who was so unhappy, is constantly

being proven to be empirically false. To see this we do not even need these novels, good and interesting as they are, to see traced the slide back into barbarism, such as is found in Aldous Huxley’s *Ape and Essence*, 1948, or W. Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, 1954)

Because of the fall of man there are the problems of putting a theory into practice.

Man knows how he should act and yet does not act that way. How does this come about? It is – on the natural level – a question of habit, character and therefore of education.

We always act on the basis of our character. Our character is dependent upon which dispositions we acquired via education, training, history, work, and so on. Education is learning to be somebody who acts well by a kind of second nature. If one is educated, one leaves behind infantile always-wanting-to-have-everything-somehow-immediately, putting

oneself into the foreground, superfluous nagging, egoism, and becomes a person who simply does not want to be that way. This is habit. No habits, no character. The unconditionally good habits are the virtues. There is – on the natural level – nothing better than good habits.

Thus, there are “theory versus practice” problems if one is immature in the virtues. Then it is necessary to try hard, but without good examples, without role models, without education within the family, this certainly cannot work at all.

Overcoming all this is dependent on the relationship between God and man. Man is to be born again (John 3:3). The ultimately decisive things are not done solely by oneself – and this is especially true in marriage and family. Therefore one must work hard not only to acquire the natural virtues, but to be recipients of the supernatural virtues.

The Solution is Here

We do not need to think up something, after all. We want to know reality, and we want to act in an excellent way. In regards to marriage and the family these two things belong closely together, because marriage and family are equipped with the binding force of an institutional appeal-quality.

The solution for our manifold problems is tradition. There is no reason to distance oneself from it in any way. Concerning marriage and family what is preeminently important is the received tradition, what the magisterium of the Church teaches, in binding way. It is validated day-by-day, anthropologically, politically, sociologically, psychologically. Alternatively, wherever humans think up something else there is chaos, regression, and nonsense. This is not something one can build one’s life on.

What else can provide a firm basis for marriage and family except the traditional, non-arbitrary forms, lived in the way in which they are non-arbitrarily taught and spread by the Church? We must want to form ourselves correspondingly. ✂



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The solution for our manifold problems is tradition. There is no reason to distance oneself from it in any way.

ITI Seminar for Erste Bank Managers Mastering the Leadership Challenge – A Business Ethics Workshop

by Christiaan Alting von Geusau

On February 24, 2016, a Seminar with the managers of Erste Bank was held. In Western democracies, freedom of conscience is considered to be a fundamental human right that allows the individual conscience to inform the decisions human beings make in life. But how is our conscience informed, and is it formed at all? A conscience that is not continuously formed – and therefore at times also corrected – becomes hostage to human passions and desires, rather than the careful discernment of what is good and what is evil. This is where the Natural Law comes in; a concept many in modern society reject as outdated or unusable, but which in fact we cannot do without if we want an ordered society. The twentieth century French philosopher Jacques Maritain describes natural law as: “the principle that we must do good and avoid evil – the Natural law being the ensemble of things to do and not to do which follow therefrom in a necessary fashion.” Since the human being has intelligence it is able to rationally understand these principles.

The virtues, as already the ancient Greeks

practiced them, are the principles of life; the tools that allow us to act according to our conscience in

concrete situations, like those a business leader encounters every day. Virtues are a more concrete way to ethical business than mere “values” we often talk about, because virtues are a set of universal principles that never change, whereas values tend to be vague and changeable according to the current fashion. Virtues are timeless; we still apply the classical virtues the early Greeks already wrote down and discussed, especially the four cardinal virtues – fortitude, temperance, justice and prudence. Virtues are the universally applicable tools of life and enable us, when we are formed and trained in those virtues, to also take the right decision in the most difficult of situations. A well-formed conscience leads to a virtuous life and can thus make you a great leader, because without virtue there is no greatness. ✂



Business leaders gather at the ITI for formation.



Visit of Mr. Ján Figel

Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside the EU

Mr. Figel visited the International Theological Institute on May 12, 2016, as part of a series of meetings in Vienna assuming his new office as *Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside the European Union* created by the European Commission. Mr. Figel has had a distinguished political career as deputy prime minister in the Slovak Government, as European Commissioner for Transport and Infrastructure, as Vice President of the Slovakian parliament and before his latest appointment he served as President of the Slovak Christian Democratic Party, the KDH. Jan Figel is also a Roman Catholic with a deep love for his Church. ✂

“The Lord is my strength and my shield” Psalms 28:7

Standing with Soldiers in the Battles They Go Through

I was one of the very first students to join the ITI - well before its official recognition by the Holy See. It began like a true adventure in the course of which I could experience not only what the Church can do for me, but also what I can do for the Church - to quote the very words of Dr. Feugerousse, director of our program at the time.

During the long years of my academic endeavors, professors and administrators have come and gone, but one thing never changed at the ITI: the commitment of the students to the earnest study of eternal truths in loyalty to the Magisterium and with due respect to Catholic Tradition.

After receiving my Licentiate in Sacred Theology in 2002, I joined the Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, Nebraska. Following an apostolic visitation of the seminary, I was sent to Rome in order to pursue doctoral studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Due to a disagreement with my superiors regarding my further formation and future relocation to Hungary, I left the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter after five years and finished my dissertation on my own. I defended my thesis, entitled: “The Christological Thought of St. Robert Bellarmine - A Selective Study in Light of the Sixteenth Century Christological Controversies” with great success in 2008.

The same year I joined the Hungarian Military Ordinariate, I was ordained to the diaconate on December 6 and to the priesthood on April 18, 2009. As of October 1, 2009, I was appointed military chaplain to the 5th Mechanised Infantry Brigade, Hódmezővásárhely Garrison. Since then I had two six-month deployments, first to Sarajevo, Bosnia, then to Pristina, Kosovo. As I am writing these lines, I am about to commence my training for my



third foreign mission to Erbil, Iraq (Kurdistan).

Given my manifold duties as an officer of the Hungarian Armed Forces, I have very little time and energy to pursue academic work. Nevertheless, I am involved in several projects, among them, publishing in critical editions all the available mediaeval Hungarian liturgical sources (*Monumenta Ritualia Hungarica* Series) and creating a digital library and database for the study of Latin liturgical history in the Middle Ages and early Modern Period (www.usuarium.elte.hu). I also give lectures on theological, liturgical and pastoral topics, and translate books from Latin and English. ✂

Rev. Dr. Ervin Alacsi (MTS 1998 & STL 2002) is a man of many talents and duties. Whenever his busy schedule allows, he pays occasional visits to the ITI in order to see his old friends (some of them are here doing different jobs) or to do a wee bit of research in the library. In summer-fall 2015, he was involved in military operations on the Hungarian border in connection with the difficult migrant situation in Europe.



“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” Matthew 4:19

Mentoring People to Become Catholic

I was born and raised in a “normal” American, Catholic family in northern California. From a very young age, I loved being Catholic and loved the teachings of the Church and I loved God. This set me apart from my peers, which meant that my experience of faith was always in the context of having to defend it. Being Catholic meant that you had to be counter-cultural, and this was difficult for me as a child and as a teenager. I loved the Church, but I also loved my friends – this dichotomy brought a lot of pain and suffering in my early years.

I was first exposed to the ITI through the exchange program at Ave Maria College in Michigan. The other students who came back from the program seemed changed, as if they had participated in something truly wonderful and life-altering. I signed up to do a semester abroad in my junior year, but due to financial circumstances I was unable to go. I was disappointed at the time and from that moment gave no more thought to the idea of studying abroad.

“Theology? I love God, but there’s no practical use for it...”

As I approached my graduation from college, I thought I had my life planned out. I was going to go to law school, study international law, and become a prestigious lawyer. But as graduation got closer and closer, the door to that path started to close, leaving me confused and lost – I no longer saw God’s will for me in my life. During those brief months when my dreams started to unravel, a friend who had spent a semester at the ITI recommended that I give it another look, this time as a full time student getting my masters. I remember thinking to myself, “Theology? I love God, but there’s no practical use for it, there’s no profit in it.” I also remember thinking, “Well, I may as well apply and if I get in, I’ll think about it.” From that moment, everything fell into place – application, job, finances, support from family... It was abundantly clear to me that God’s will was to have me in Austria studying theology. My family was always poor by American standards, but I knew that if God wanted me to do this, He would provide me with everything I needed.

I spent three of some of the best years of my life at the ITI, first doing a propaedeutic year, followed by two years in the STM program. I was finally in a place where I no longer had to defend my faith. I was given a respite by God so that my faith could not only grow, but flourish. I was surrounded by people from around the world that I grew so close

to that they were like my family. I cherish all of them in my heart to this day.

I was exposed to the Byzantine Rite, which I am still involved with today at my parish in Colorado. The best times were spent on the school pilgrimages, in the common rooms of the Kartause having a community meal, and studying with my classmates. After the move to Trumau, we spent the year that I was there redeveloping the social structure and grew even closer as a student body.

My education at the ITI truly prepared me for the academic and intellectual portion of my job today. I am so thankful that I received a solid and faithful education at the ITI, since so many people are able to benefit from it now.

Through my work, the other members of the ministry staff and I have been able to reach college students and adults in the community and give them the necessary tools to truly build a deep and meaningful relationship with God and His Church. I have personally mentored over eighty people to help them become Catholic in the last three years. Other parishes in the community have reached out to me to have me give guest lectures, and I have been interviewed by the local newspaper and the regional Catholic newspaper because of the success of our parish as a whole in reaching people and evangelizing. ✂



Jessica Harris (STM 2010) is a Director of Evangelization at St. John XXIII Catholic Church, which deals with campus ministry for Colorado State University, which is the second largest university in Colorado with over 30,000 students. She is actively involved in teaching several classes for the university students and for adults in the community, especially those looking to convert to Catholicism. She also designed the children’s education program for the parish.

“Preach the word” 2 Timothy 4:2

Being a Mouthpiece for the Church

It was a time when I was ready and open for some changes in my life. I wanted to change the field of my studies from social area to something new. I was not determined to go to study in Austria, but I applied to the ITI with an open heart, telling God: “I will do everything what is needed from my side and you do with my life anything you want.” I left my home for two years in peace and a great joy, having a feeling, deep in my heart, that the time in Austria will be a life-changing experience.

What made this school so special for me is the vision that it has. It includes everything: the Church, God’s plan for us, the society we live in, the education of a person, community life and many other things. This school unites students, professors, staff members, and many different people who share that vision and are willing to live their lives following it. At the core of that vision I saw a humble, praying, studying person, who develops his intellectual potential, grows in virtue and shares his life and himself with others, his family and friends, this school, the Church, our society.

My time at the ITI was a two-year retreat, where I learned, prayed, developed friendships, lived in a community, had fun, enjoyed nature, culture and life in general. It was a safe place to experience life from the very positive side, although, of course, there were many challenges, but that is a part of learning and living.



I left the school more mature as a person, a Christian, and a member of society. Because of the studies and connections that I had after the studies, I was better equipped and I had more courage to initiate and take responsibility for different projects.

Studying theology as well as our society gave me a broader perspective on what can be done in a particular situation,

so that the message of the Church can be heard. In this school, I learned what it means to work, study, and search for the truth together with others. Most



important, the ITI helped me to discover the beauty of the Catholic Church, Her teaching, liturgical, and community life. That discovery is the foundation and the greatest motivation of my work and service in the Church, because it is a beauty that I want to share with others.

I will continue working in the Church, because I believe our society desperately needs that hope and wisdom that the Church has. Very often the voice of the Church or Catholics that work in different areas is not heard, because we do not know anymore how to talk with a modern society. My dream is to serve the Church by helping Her to find ways to show those who live in this contemporary culture the beauty of a Christian life. ✂

Toma Bruzaite (MTS 2009) coordinates an initiative called “Catholic Voices” in Lithuania. Its goal is to represent the Catholic voice in public. She is one of the founders and board members of “Free Society Institute”, an organization that was founded to promote and support political agenda which does not contradict but implement Christian values in society. She is involved in a project of translating and promoting St. John Paul II’s teaching on the Theology of the Body.

The Cardinal Newman Society Again Recommends the ITI

The International Theological Institute (ITI) is recommended in the 2016-2017 edition of *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*, a resource published by The Cardinal Newman Society recommending 29 Catholic colleges, universities, and higher education programs for their strong Catholic identity.

At *TheNewmanGuide.com* visitors can read the Guide for free, order a copy, view its companion magazine *My Future, My Faith*, or take advantage of “Recruit Me”—an innovative program for students to sign up to get recruited by the recommended Catholic colleges.

The Newman Guide says of the International Theological Institute:

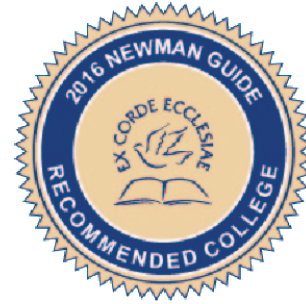
ITI is an attractive option for mature high school graduates wanting to study abroad in a wholesome Catholic environment. The very competitive cost of attendance is hard to overlook. It is an enticing opportunity for a student looking to study near a European cultural hub in a largely Catholic, English-speaking community.

First published in 2007, *The Newman Guide* recommends twenty Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and nine international and online programs for their faithful Catholic identity. Its companion, full-color magazine, *My Future, My Faith*, helps students navigate the transition from high school to college with advice on important topics like how to know which college is right for you, tips for getting accepted, writing the best application essay, keeping your faith in college, and even rules for campus dating.

The 2016-2017 book version of the *Guide* features a completely new layout with in-depth narratives exploring the uniqueness of each institution, popular sports, majors, and activities,

sample questions to help Catholic families evaluate Catholic colleges, and much more. The free online version at *TheNewmanGuide.com* includes all the content from the book plus the equivalent of more than 400 pages of additional information, videos, social media links, photographs, and the ability to sort colleges by major and athletic offerings.

The online version also makes it easier than

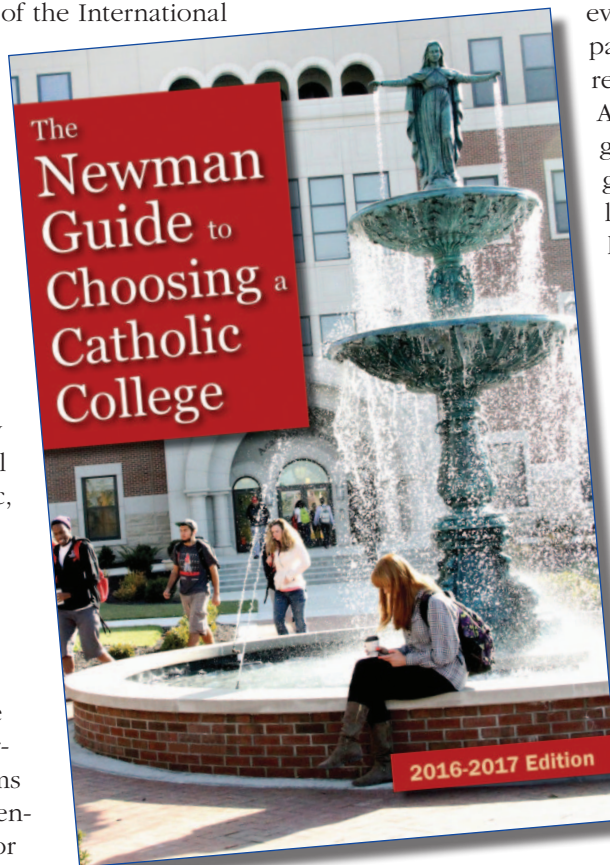


ever for families to compare and contrast the recommended colleges. A chart on the website gives readers a quick glance at crucial facts like percentage of Catholic students, number of majors, availability of Confession, opposite sex visiting hours in dorms, and other important information for each recommended institution. Also, a global map now shows the location of each recommended institution.

Founded in 1993, the mission of The Cardinal Newman Society is to promote and defend faithful Catholic education.

The Society seeks to fulfill its mission in

numerous ways, including supporting education that is faithful to the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church; producing and disseminating research and publications on developments and best practices in Catholic education; and keeping Catholic leaders and families informed. The Society is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit organization supported by individuals, businesses, and foundations. ✂



Successful Symposium on the Family and the Synods

More than 140 participants gathered at the international symposium titled *"And God Saw That It Was Very Good: Re-invigorating the Sacrament of Marriage and the Christian Family in Light of the 2014 and 2015 Synods"* held in Trumau.

Married couples, renowned theologians and synod fathers, and participants from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa spoke at the international symposium in Trumau that sought to find answers to the questions raised in the synod process and also provide first impressions of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*.

Participants came from all over the world, as far away as Australia and the United States, and included Catholics and other Christians from all walks of life, including bishops and priests, politicians, teachers and professors, and of course many married couples. The entire ITI student body also participated in the symposium.



At the center of the symposium stood the teaching of St. John Paul II on marriage and the family and how this teaching continues throughout the papacies of Pope Benedict and

Pope Francis.

The symposium also concluded with a number of concrete proposals to support and promote sacramental marriage and the Christian family.

Considering the great importance of the Holy Father's Exhortation on the family, students and faculty of the ITI will now start the process of carefully reading and discussing the document, leading to a follow-up symposium in April 2017.

All the video and audio of the Symposium is available through our website

www.iti.ac.at and the ITI's YouTube Channel. ✂



ITI Graduate and Visiting Professor Sworn in as Member of the Vienna Parliament

On November 24, 2015, Dr. Gudrun Kugler, MMF began her work as member of the Vienna Regional Parliament after a successful election campaign that resulted in an impressive tally of preferential votes.

Before completing her doctorate in international law, Gudrun Kugler - married to Martin Kugler and the mother of four children - studied at the ITI in the Marriage and Family Studies' Masters program. In the Vienna parliament, her portfolio will include

human rights, education and family agendas. Gudrun will continue in her role as a visiting professor at the International Theological Institute. ✂



Make Straight in the Desert a Highway for the Lord!

Twenty-three graduates received their ITI diplomas on June 11, 2016 during the annual commencement exercises, presided over by His Eminence Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Grand Chancellor; and Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau, President and Rector.



The President's Commencement Speech

Your Eminence, dear guests, dear students – dear graduates!

One of my most favorite works of music is *The Messiah* by George Friedrich Händel. I also have sweet memories of this masterpiece, since my father would always put it on when we came back from the Christmas vigil and Easter vigil.

Right at the start, after the Overture, there is this beautiful *Accompagnimento* – Tenor, which ends with the eternally powerful words from the Prophet Isaiah (Chapter 40, 3): “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” The Gospel of Mark starts with quoting these words of Isaiah: “A voice of one crying out in the desert: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

We are of course speaking here about John the Baptist. As of today, you, dear graduates, have this as your primary task: to make straight in the desert a highway for the Lord!

How to do this? You did not come here to get a degree in engineering and construction, did you?

That is to say, not in the commonly understood sense of the words – however, you have just obtained a degree or diploma in engineering and constructing the further spread of God's Kingdom on earth, and for that, the highway in the desert needs to be extended even further by you! You have to build it!

If you came here for another reason, you will

probably have been disappointed in your studies here, unless of course, your time at the ITI – as happens to so many – actually allowed you to see this and refocus.

So how to build this highway in the desert, a road, a way, that is accessible and visible for all who are searching? Because a highway has to connect the world – and you have to connect the world to Christ.

As a good engineer, even before drawing up your plans, you however first have to study the soil, the land – and the local climate. This is the foundation of reality you have to build on.

So as you return home, or wherever you are called to go from here: study the soil first, assess the climate and discern its implications – as Jesus tells us in the Gospel, never build your house on mere sand, but on a rock, lest the first storm will tear it down and wash it away. The desert has rock too.

Only once this is done, you can draw up your plans, and for that you need vision and daring – there is no easy way or shortcut to build a highway in the desert, especially when the highway is for the Lord.

Thus designing and building it is going to cost you blood, sweat and tears. The cross. On his way to, and on the cross, Christ himself went through blood, sweat and tears to build the Father's Kingdom. He expects the same from you – from all

of us – to give all, including oneself, as our Patroness St. Thérèse of Lisieux reminds us: “To love is to





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give everything, including oneself.”

So when you design and build your highway for the Lord, don't forget the main reason why you are doing this: love – like Jesus, as Christians we are called to love and give in all, even if it hurts, even – when called to do so – until death. Doesn't Christ himself tell us in the Gospel, “There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.” (John 15, 13)?

And mind you, this is no mere theory – it happens daily, especially today to the countless Christian brothers and sisters of ours in Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, North Korea and so many other countries, who lay down their lives for Christ – and for their family and friends, because they are faithful. Lately, we hear increasingly of Christian refugees from these countries that are also being violently attacked in Germany, and here in Austria, for their love of Christ, especially those that are converts. Are you ready?

I said earlier that vision and daring are needed to build in the desert – and this is also required from you in a world that in many respects is a desert, a dangerous one, but also a beautiful one, from where you are called to bring people onto the highway of the Lord, to the living source of water – *sicut cervus ad fontes*.

When you design the road, don't only think of placing the road signs depicting the rules and interdictions, but focus even more on planning for water stations (it is a desert after all!), petrol stations, restaurants and very importantly: field hospitals as our Holy Father would say. There will be many sick people and the weak to tend to with love and patience, and even more people needing replenishment. Don't expect too many well-dressed, well-behaved and healthy or well-fed travelers on your road – expect the needy, the outcast and those that do not know Christ – you need to bring them onto the highway for our God. As Jesus tells us, I have not come for the healthy, but for the sick.

Now, dear graduates, you can start building your road.

The building process is going to take time, and patience, and challenges, but that will not be a problem as long as you do not forget that you are building a highway for the Lord, not your career path, or your success story. As Mother Theresa used to say, and which is my motto in life, “God does not call me to be successful, he calls me to be faithful.” Remember that.

Pope Benedict XVI expresses this very well in his book: *Salt of the Earth*: “Whoever lives the faith in real patience and lets himself be formed by it, is purified through many setbacks and weaknesses.”

So in building your section of the highway for the Lord, you are going to need courage and faithfulness, because your ultimate goal is clear, in the words of Isaiah sung in Händel's *Messiah*: “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. And the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed...”

So there is success after all – but it is obviously not ours, but God's.

Into the world you go dear graduates, spreading the Gospel, through the roads you build, and the field hospitals you man. Be brave! ✂

You can listen to the audio of the Commencement exercises, including the speeches on www.iti.ac.at



Save the Date for the ITI's 20th!

On October 1, 2016, it will be twenty years since the ITI was founded by decree of Pope Saint John Paul II. To celebrate the twentieth birthday of the ITI and to look back in gratitude on twenty years of many blessings, a series of festive events is being organized. On 30 September, the new Byzantine Chapel in the Schloss will be consecrated. On October 1, we will celebrate our *Dies natalis* in proper academic setting, starting with a Holy Mass celebrated by our Grand Chancellor Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, followed by the blessing of the newly renovated *Allan and Radwan Riley Hall*, an auditorium in the campus main building that can house up to 300 people. The blessing will then be followed by an academic ceremony and lunch. ✂

