

the day of his death. And for the record, he sent his condolences in the following telegram to Mgr Javier Echevarría, then Vicar General of Opus Dei, now its new Prelate:

On hearing of the sudden death of Mgr Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, I would like to express to you and to all the members of the Prelature my heartfelt condolences. While gratefully recalling before our Lord the zealous priestly and episcopal life of the deceased, his constant example of fortitude and trust in divine providence, as well as his fidelity to the See of Peter, and his generous ecclesial service as a close collaborator and worthy successor of the Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, I offer my fervent prayers for his soul. May our Lord receive this good and faithful servant into his eternal bliss, and I impart a special heartfelt apostolic blessing on all those who have enjoyed the benefits of his pastoral devotion and lofty spiritual and intellectual endowments.

### In conclusion

Here may we extend our sympathy to all the members of Opus Dei in Ireland, who follow the dream and the counsel set out for them in modern times by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, and by their second caring pastor, the now lamented Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. After his faithful and dedicated life, may he savour the joys of heaven with his lifelong friend who is now named among the blessed.

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## 'THE GENUINE SCHOOL OF LOVE'

Mgr Alvaro del Portillo

As soon as the UN declared that 1994 would be the International Year of the Family, John Paul II voiced his desire that the Church too should play her part in this celebration. The Pope has reiterated this intention in a number of ways and now it finds expression in a Letter which he has addressed to the Families of the world.

This document, rich in content and sizeable in length, describes the fundamental features of the family as an institution. Any reader endowed with the deep wisdom which the experience of life provides will immediately recognize the accuracy of the description. The Holy Father's teachings on the family act as sources of light and can serve as directives for this International Year.

### Learning to love

'Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it,' the Pope wrote in *Redemptor hominis* (no. 10). Now he is pointing out that man only reaches his fullness through true love, whose essence lies in the sincere gift of oneself, because there is no love without sacrifice.

But, how are we to learn to love, to give ourselves generously? What most moves us to love, St Thomas used to say, is to know that we are loved. And it is precisely in the family—a communion of persons where gratuitous, disinterested and generous love reigns—that we learn how to love. The mutual love between the spouses is prolonged in their love for their children. The family is in fact—'more than any other human reality'—the place where man is loved for his own sake and where he learns to live 'a sincere gift of self' (no. 11).

The family is indeed a school of love, provided it remains true to its identity: a stable community of love between a man and a woman, built upon marriage, and open to life. When love, or faithfulness, or generosity regarding children fail, the family is disfigured. And the consequences are not long in coming: adults are left in loneliness; children are abandoned; for all, life becomes an inhospitable no man's land. So, John Paul II concludes, 'no human society can run the risk of permissiveness in fundamental questions regarding the nature of marriage and the family!' (no. 17). These words are not prophetic; they simply describe the facts.

### Fidelity based on prayer

The Holy Father is appealing to all families—including those in difficulties—to be faithful to their vocation to serve life and the full humanity of man, the foundation of a 'civilization of love'. To those



fearful of the demands of such a faithfulness, the Pope says: 'Do not be afraid of the risks! God's strength is always far more powerful than your difficulties! Immeasurably greater than the evil at work in the world is the power of the sacrament of Reconciliation!' (no. 18).

While the memory of the Day of prayer and fasting for peace in the former Yugoslavia is still fresh in our minds the Holy Father is once again referring to the need to pray, and specifically to pray in the family and for the family. The family is a praying community, a community which turns to God, in whom it finds its joy, its strength for difficult moments, the energy it requires to carry out the exalted and difficult mission of fatherhood and motherhood. It is touching to see how much the Pope expects from the prayer of families.

#### Women at home, unemployment, peace

The Holy Father refers as well to the need to recognize the irreplaceable value of woman's work in the home: 'The toil of a woman who, having given birth to a child, nourishes and cares for that child and devotes herself to its upbringing, particularly in the early years, is so great as to be comparable to any professional work' and 'should be recognized as giving the right to financial benefits' (no. 17). We all know that a mother's love in the home is a gift that cannot be repaid; it is a treasure we keep always in our hearts.

Reference is also made to the problem of unemployment, which is seen not simply as a statistic, but as a real threat to the stability of so many homes. The Pope's reflections are a call to responsibility for those who have charge of the economy and social development.

The Holy Father has often stated that he considers the family as 'principal protagonist in the building up of peace', peace for which Pope John Paul II is pleading ever more earnestly. Peace in the family will bring about peace in the world. In the St Peter's Basilica, before an image of the Blessed Virgin—Mother of Fair Love, Queen of Peace and Lady of Perpetual Succour—a candle burns symbolizing the prayers of Christians for peace. May this Letter of the Holy Father enkindle a light in the hearts of many men and women, and make them find in the family the happiness they so much long for.

## INFALLIBILITY AND LOGIC

Richard Fennessy, OFM

*'Jesus Christ, from whom derives the task proper to the pastors of teaching the Gospel to all his people and to the entire human family, wished to endow the pastors' Magisterium with a fitting charism of infallibility in matters regarding faith and morals. . . . In carrying out their task, the pastors of the Church enjoy the assistance of the Holy Spirit; this assistance reaches its highest point when they teach the People of God in such a manner that, through the promises of Christ made to Peter and the other Apostles, the doctrine they propose is necessarily immune from error (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The Mystery of the Church, 1973, no. 63).*

*Here Fr Fennessy gives us a brief analysis of the teaching of Vatican Council I on the infallibility which resides in the Church when she speaks through her ordinary or extraordinary Magisterium.*

It seems to me that an error in logic sometimes creeps into our discussions of papal infallibility. Very often the argument is put as follows:

'When the Pope speaks *ex cathedra* (in the sense of the First Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* 1870), he is infallible.

In Encyclical letters (such as *Humanae Vitae*) the Pope is not speaking *ex cathedra*.

Therefore, in Encyclical letters the Pope is not infallible.'

Because of its very structure and apart altogether from its subject-matter, this syllogism is invalid. You might as well argue as follows:

'If an animal is an elephant it has four legs.

This animal is not an elephant;

Therefore it does not have four legs.'

There are other reasons why a given animal might have four legs besides being an elephant. And there are other reasons why a Pope