

Deanery Conference, 3rd March, 1982

"FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO"

(CTS Publication 5357 - price £1.50)

The above Apostolic Exhortation on the role of the Christian family was published by Pope John Paul II on the 22nd November, 1981. In the document the Holy Father gathers up and develops the 43 final propositions, and takes up other suggestions made at the daily meetings of the Synod of Bishops which met in Rome from the 26th September to the 25th October, 1980. Recently the Pope described the document as " 'a summa' of the teaching of the Church on the life, tasks, responsibilities and mission of marriage and the family in the modern world" (cfr. Pope's Christmas Address to the Cardinals in the Vatican, 22nd December, 1981). A cursory glance through "The Contents" pages is sufficient to indicate its scope and depth. Although a papal document it is important to remember that it contains the teaching not only of the Pope himself but of the Episcopates of the whole world as expressed at the Synod.

The document requires careful reading, study and reflection. The PRINCIPAL AIM of this conference is to give the priests of the Deanery the opportunity of discussing it after careful reading, study and reflection. Its practical and pastoral importance and implications will need no emphasising.

In the course of one Deanery Conference it is obviously impossible to discuss the document in its entirety. On this occasion the Deanery is asked to consider only the following:-

- I. God's plan for marriage and the family (sections 11 to 16).  
What, according to the document, is 'God's plan'? How can we, as priests, best communicate this teaching to our people, especially our young people, in a way that they will understand and appreciate it?
- II. The transmission of life (sections 28 to 35). What is the Church's authentic teaching in this matter? What, in practice, is meant by "the law of gradualness" (section 34) ?

On the use of the infertile period by married couples, the document says (section 33) that "every effort must be made to render such knowledge (i.e. of the body's rhythms of fertility) accessible to all married people and also to young adults before marriage, through clear, timely and serious instruction and education given by married couples, doctors and experts". Can married and engaged couples get this information easily in your parish or deanery? If not, what steps can be taken to ensure that they will be able to do so in future?

III. What pastoral action is to be taken in the following situations:

- a) Trial marriages (section 80) ?
- b) De facto free unions (section 81) ?
- c) Catholics in civil marriages (section 82) ?
- d) Separation or divorced persons who have not remarried (section 83) ?
- e) Divorced persons who have remarried (section 84) ?