

“ THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY PASSES THROUGH THE FAMILY ” (POPE JOHN PAUL II)

Dear Member/Supporter,

Why does Cardinal Seán Brady place such emphasis on the family? This was the question asked by Irish journalist Emer McCarthy of Vatican Radio in the course of an interview which followed the cardinal's elevation on November 24. In response to the question, Dr Brady explained that at the recent meeting in Fatima, of the presidents of the Bishops' conferences of Europe, a depressing picture was painted of the state of the family. He then noted Pope Benedict's exhortation to be fishers of men in order to “*save people out of the seas of alienation*”; and, he concluded with this thought:

"Where do we learn love, where do we experience love, if not in the family, so that the crisis of the family really is one of the great crises of the present era, I think, especially here in Europe."

The Family and Media Association (FMA) is continuing to pursue the goal of supporting the family in the media through education in truth and beauty. In the words of Pope Benedict in *The Human Family — Community of Peace* (the Pope's message for World Peace Day, January 1)

"Everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman, everything that directly or indirectly stands in the way of its openness to the responsible acceptance of a new life, everything that obstructs its right to be primarily responsible for the education of its children, constitutes an objective obstacle on the road to peace"

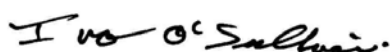
The social communications media," continued Pope Benedict, "in particular, because of their educational potential, have a special responsibility for promoting respect for the family, making clear its expectations and rights, and presenting all its beauty." Unfortunately, as this responsibility is all too seldom lived up to, FMA seeks to inform both the public and the media about the "beauty (of the family)"; and, it also tries to identify precisely where and how in the media this beauty is present or is lacking!

In this latest newsletter, FMA has again sought to shine a light of truth on several Family and Media issues: Among them, the way people's standards may be lowered through certain digital 'democratic' exercises, like online polls; the increasing opposition to pornography which is now far more broadly based than ever and is also strongly backed by the latest scientific research; and, the way unbalanced media reporting — although initially often aimed at the Church alone — can end up being quite indiscriminate in its victims (please see *when first we practice to deceive*, Page 2).

The Media is in crisis. It's not that long since comic movie villains were heard to issue orders like 'cancel Christmas'. Unfortunately, no one's laughing anymore. With RTÉ's banning of an ad for mentioning the word 'cribs' and with cribs themselves being opposed in some public places, we have gone from a situation where there is no room for Jesus at the inn to one where there is often simply no room for Jesus, period. And what or who has taken His place?, The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland, in the name of the modern god of 'diversity' has self consciously and ominously, avoided — in its new Code of Programme Standards — any measures which would hinder the establishment of home-grown pornographic television stations in Ireland. And then, of course, there's the new dishonest and offensively anti-Catholic 'fantasy' Golden Compass!

But while this *is* a critical time for society in Ireland, it is also a time of great hope (please see the back page which was inspired by the new Papal encyclical *Spe Salve* for some of the clerical 'lights of hope' who recently featured in the media). Hope is one of the meanings attaching to the colour purple, which you can see in abundance in the FMA logo on the front cover. Hope is the colour of Advent; and, there *is* much to be hopeful about. For example, there is an increasing body of scientific research which is supporting the Church's and FMA's understanding on issues such as violence in the media and the exploitation of children through pornography / sexualised media imagery (please see Pages 6 and 7). It is also true that notwithstanding the likes of *The Golden Compass*, thoughtful movies, about the deepest values of life, continue to be made — for example *Bella*, which, unfortunately, may not open in Ireland due to insufficient financial support here, and *Into the Wild*. Also, Channel 4's *Dispatches* documentary which shed a real light on the truth about abortion has been described as the media event of the year and it is remarkable that Hermann Kelly's book *Kathy's Real Story* shot to Number 2 in the Bestsellers list despite scant publicity. There are many other little lights of hope also. As well as the creation of Archbishop Seán Brady as Cardinal the appointment of Msgr Paul Tighe as secretary for Social Communications is highly significant and we wish him well in his new role..

Wishing you a very happy and a peaceful Christmas



Ivo O'Sullivan PhD
Chairman