

CCEE Commission for Family & Life  
Closing remarks, 10 May 2023  
Archbishop Leo Cushley

In these days, we have heard from countries in war; we have heard from countries where Christian marriage is still norm; we have heard from countries where it is now very rare, celebrated by young people who are now counter-cultural as they freely and willingly embrace a positive, faithful, authentic living of Catholic married life.

We are here to learn from each other, not to legislate for others. We are here to learn best practices – and worst! – from each other, and to take that home. We are here to be part of an exchange of view, to support and to encourage each other. And we bishops are here to confirm our brothers and sisters in their faith and, like St Augustine, to be confirmed as fellow Christians in our turn, going him with new ideas, new input, and new heart.

Some characterise the questions of family, marriage and life as the Church being in full retreat. Some see this whole area of activity as a battlefield and as a place where the Church is losing, or is yet to learn to address the present challenges, or is yet to reconcile itself to the reality that we have something to say that no one wants any more to hear. But I believe that, first, the Church has been here before; that the New Testament still has so much to teach us here, especially Acts and the letters of St Paul, if only we had the patience and the eyes to see it and learn its lessons again. Secondly, men and women have not changed biologically or anthropologically in any significant way for 100,000 years, and certainly not in the 2,000 years since God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as true God and true Man.

So, are we the voice of some arch-conservative theory, of an impossible ideal, of a difficult or hypocritical or unhealthy proposal that has been weighed and found wanting by a more enlightened age? Or are we the voice of reason, of common sense, of love, of an authentic anthropology that is good and wise and loving?

I believe that what we propose as Catholics, as Christians, as human beings, is sane, wise, reasonable, authentic, loving. I believe it is eminently desirable to embrace the Christian faith and its view of the human person and human sexuality. What we hold concerning the human person is based on our Catholic faith, but it also a rational, reasonable, medical, psychological, philosophical proposal that is not a threat or a criticism of any human being, but a proposal that safeguards and protects and promotes all human beings!

Let us therefore be of good cheer, support each other and learn from each other, in this Commission gathered in the name of over 300m Catholic Europeans.

The Church and her message may appear to be marginalised, silenced, humbled, ignored in our days, but our message remains one I am convinced that will continue to be relevant because its essential source is Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever.

Thank you again for joining us this week and I hope to see you all again soon. Thank you and God bless you!