



Prayer Changes Things

Cherish & Proclaim the Family – God’s Masterpiece

On this Feast of the Holy Family, I would like to recall a great champion of marriage and the family.

I am talking about the late Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, who died on Sept. 6, 2017. He was the best teacher I ever had, and a man of great courage.

In 1981, Pope St. John Paul II appointed then-Monsignor Caffarra president of his newly founded Institute for Marriage and the Family in Rome, where I would go on to study from 1986 to 1988. Msgr. Caffarra was brilliant, with a twinkle in his eye, a professor who loved his students and who taught with energy and enthusiasm. We were especially struck by his passion for the truth. He would remind us often: “Our task is not to *invent* the truth, but to *discover* the truth and then venerate it.”

When it came to bearing witness to the truth, Cardinal Caffarra was a lion. In the spring of 2017, four months before he died, he gave a talk in which he identified two truths that form the pillars of God’s creation:

- Every human person, from the moment of conception, is God’s “dwelling place in creation,” created in His image;
- God’s design for marriage is the faithful covenant of one man

with one woman, and God “celebrates the liturgy of his creative act in the holy temple of conjugal love,” bringing new life into the world.

Cardinal Caffarra went on to say that the mission of Satan is to fabricate an “anti-creation,” destroying these two pillars. He does so by proclaiming abortion not only permissible, but a fundamental human right, and by ennobling same-sex unions as equivalent to God’s plan for marriage. Caffarra cited Jesus’ words about Satan: “He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

Satan is a murderer, said Caffarra, especially in trying to kill the Truth in man’s heart, in offering man an “alternative creation” in which he has the right to destroy the life of the innocent and to mock God’s plan for man, woman and marriage.

Cardinal Caffarra went on to say that Satan is exerting his power over our world today in this ongoing destruction of the two pillars of God’s creation, but in the end he will not triumph over Jesus, who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life.” Caffarra recalled Jesus’ words to Pilate when the governor asks Him if He is a king.

“You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice” (John 18, 37).

At the conclusion of his talk, Cardinal Caffarra tells his audience that in the midst of the battle between the murderous lies of Satan and the life-giving Truth of Christ, we have only one option – to bear witness to the truth, even if we are persecuted for it. The alternative, says Caffarra is to be “like the soldier who flees from battle at the decisive moment. We are no longer witnesses, but deserters, if we do not speak openly and publicly.”

In defending the splendor of the Truth, the sacred dignity and beauty of human life and God’s plan for marriage, we must be ready to be disliked and denounced. Jesus told us to expect it: “If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first” (John 15:18).

In this New Year, then, let us resolve to be courageous witnesses, testifying to the sanctity of human life and the truth and beauty of God’s plan for marriage and the family. With God’s help, motivated by love – and recognizing that the devil and his lies are the enemy of love – let us stand up for God’s Truth, bearing witness with our words and with the example of our lives.

By Chris Ruff, Director for Ministries and Social Concerns