

'What is being proposed is not marriage' – Pope calls for defense of family

By [Elise Harris](#)

Vatican City, Oct 26, 2014 / 12:52 pm (CNA/EWTN News).- In an audience with members of an international Marian movement, Pope Francis warned that the sacrament of marriage has been reduced to a mere association, and urged participants to be witnesses in a secular world.



Pope Francis at an Oct. 25, 2014 audience with Schoenstatt movement. Credit: Photo Credit: Daniel Ibáñez/CNA

"The family is being hit, the family is being struck and the

family is being bastardized," the Pope told those in attendance at the Oct. 25 audience.

He warned against the common view in society that "you can call everything family, right?"

"What is being proposed is not marriage, it's an association. But it's not marriage! It's necessary to say these things very clearly and we have to say it!" Pope Francis stressed.

He lamented that there are so many "new forms" of unions which are "totally destructive and limiting the greatness of the love of marriage."

Noting that there are many who cohabit, or are separated or divorced, he explained that the "key" to helping is a pastoral care of "close combat" that assists and patiently accompanies the couple.

Pope Francis offered his words in a question-and-answer format during his audience with members of the Schoenstatt movement, held in celebration of the 100th anniversary of its founding in Germany.

Roughly 7,500 members of the international Marian and apostolic organization, both lay and clerics from dozens of nations around the world, were present in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall for the audience.

In his answers to questions regarding marriage, Pope Francis explained that contemporary society has "devalued" the sacrament by turning it into a social rite, removing the most essential element, which is union with God.

"So many families are divided, so many marriages broken, (there is) such relativism in the concept of the Sacrament of Marriage," he said, noting that from a sociological and Christian point of view "there is a crisis in the family because it's beat up from all sides and left very wounded!"

In regard to Mary, the Roman Pontiff said that her visit to her cousin Elizabeth is a strong symbol for the movement's mission, and emphasized how no Christians can call themselves orphans because they have a mother who continues to give them life.

Pope Francis recalled this history of the movement's foundation, noting how it was started by Fr. Joseph Kntenich during the First World War. It was after his time in a concentration camp during World War II, the Pope noted, that the priest traveled to the peripheries of the world in order to preach the Gospel.

Witness is key to spreading the Gospel, he said, explaining that true witness means living "in such a way that the will to live as we live is born in the heart of others...Living in a way (so that) others are interested and ask: 'why?'"

However, the Bishop of Rome emphasized that although we are called to give this witness, "we are not the saviors of anyone," but rather are the transmitters of Jesus, who is the one that already saved us all.

True witness propels us out of ourselves and into the streets of the world, the Pope continued, repeating his common declaration that a Church, movement or community that doesn't go out of itself "becomes sick."

"A movement, a Church or a community that doesn't go out, is mistaken," he said. "Don't be afraid! Go out in mission, go out on the road. We are walkers."

In answer to questions regarding how he can be defined as "reckless," the Roman Pontiff admitted that although he can be considered "a little reckless," he still surrenders himself to prayer, saying that it helps him to place Jesus at the center, rather than himself.

"There is only one center: Jesus Christ – who rather looks at things from the periphery, no? Where he sees things more clearly," the Pope observed, saying that when closed inside the small worlds of a parish, a community and even the Roman Curia, "then you do not grasp the truth."

He explained how reality is always seen better from the peripheries rather than the center, and noted how he has seen some episcopal conferences who charge for almost every small thing, where "nothing escapes."

"Everything is working well, everything is well organized," the pontiff observed, but they could do with less "functionalism and more apostolic zeal, more interior freedom, more prayer, (and) this interior freedom is the courage to go out."

When asked about his process of reforming the Roman Curia, Pope Francis explained that often renewal is understood as making small changes here or there, or even making changes out of the necessity of adapting to the times.

But this isn't true renewal, he said, noting that while there are people every day who say that he needs to renew the Vatican Bank or the Curia, "It's strange (that) no one speaks of the reform of the heart."

"They don't understand anything of what the renewal of the heart means: which is holiness, renewing one's (own) heart," the Pope observed, saying that a renewed heart is able of going beyond disagreements such as family conflicts, war and those that arise out of the "culture of the provisional."

He concluded by blessing the missionary crosses of those present, who are called to missionaries in the five continents of the world, and recalled how some time ago he was given an image of the Mother of Schoenstatt, who prays and is always present.

The movement's encounter with Pope Francis came on the second day of their visit to Rome, which culminated with a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica presided over by Cardinal Francisco Javier Errazuriz.