

# IN DEFENCE OF THE FAMILY

By Fr. **FRANCESCO D. COLACELLI**

**I**n Europe an abortion takes place every 25 seconds, weddings are always less and divorces continually on the increase: one in every 30 seconds. Every year, moreover, in the countries of the Old World two million children are born outside wedlock: one child in every three. Lastly, it has been calculated that in the European Union there are more elderly over the age of 65 than young under the age of 14. And the forecast for the future is anything but rosy because always less children are born.

This is the sad picture that comes to light on the family from the "Report on the Evolution of the Family in Europe 2007", presented by the European Network of the Institute for Family Policies (IPF) in the European Parliament.

The statistics concerning population, births, matrimony and the break-up of families, has worsened substantially in the last 25 years. So the recently recorded increase in the European population should be seen as determined almost wholly by the factor of immigration.

This situation that is not very consoling has its definite causes. Lola Velarde, President of the

European Network of IPF, blames *"the different nations that allocate a very small amount of economical assistance towards the family"*, and from which one can only ascertain *"the lack of sensibility that exists in Europe for the family"*.

And this political indifference is now accompanied in different States with legalisation, formulated in diverse juridical ways, for homosexual unions. Even in Catholic Italy the government has submitted a bill for the Parliament's approval to guarantee the rights and duties of couples who live together, including homosexuals. The scheme was contested by the public in a massive demonstration last 12 May outside the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome in which more than one million people took part.

*"Cohabitation placed on the same level as matrimony; gay unions regarded as a married state... all this for the Pope is not to be seen as 'civil progress', but as 'a decline in human dignity'"*. This is how Orazio Petrosillo the Vatican correspondent described in "The Voice of Padre Pio" of February 2005 (Italian edition) the reaction of John Paul II before what he described *"attacks on matrimony and the family that everyday become more intense and*

*extreme"*. Two months later John Paul II ended his earthly pilgrimage leaving to his successor the task of continuing the work. And Benedict XVI has not absolved himself from this task. Even during his visit to Brazil he denounced that the family *"is currently suffering a degree of adversity caused by secularism and by ethical relativism, by movements of population internally and externally, by poverty, by social instability and by civil legislation opposed to marriage"*.

Last 23 July, Orazio Petrosillo had to put down his pen because of an ictus that struck him while he was covering the Pope's holidays in the alps. His immediate and prolonged treatment kept hopes alive until 11 May, when his large heart ceased to beat. To his family we express our heartfelt condolences and to his wife Claudia our great esteem for a gesture more valuable than many words. On the last day of the Pope's holiday, while Orazio was in the hospital of Aosta, she was given permission to pray with Benedict XVI, and she took the opportunity to ask him to bless, for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their wedding, their wedding rings. ■