

WELCOME SPEECH by ICCFM PRESIDENTS

Nop and Elma Muangkroot

Fatima, July 25, 2007

Four years ago at the Fourth CFM European Congress in Zagreb, a new couple caught the notice of the ICCFM Executive Secretariat because of their zest, eloquence and commitment to family service. Tony and Lily Gauci, CFM Europe Presidents at that time, informed us that they belonged to the *Cooperadoras de la Familia* and MLC Portugal, a new member of CFM Europe. Impressed by their dynamism and suddenly inspired with the desire to hold a World Assembly in a place made sacred by the apparition of our Blessed Mother, the ICCFM Executive Secretariat requested the couple to consider Fatima as the venue the Tenth ICCFM World Assembly. Antonio and Maria Celeste Moniz, the vibrant couple we are referring to, were astounded! Being very new CFM members, they felt they were totally unqualified to undertake such a tremendous responsibility as hosting an ICCFM World Assembly!

Each in our own way, Antonio and Maria and we in the ICCFM Executive Secretariat prayed for our related intentions. During the next few days in Zagreb, and later in Dubrovnik where we holidayed together, Nop and I attempted to give Antonio and Maria a kind of “crash course” on ICCFM World Assemblies, in order to calm their doubts about their ability to host such a meeting. Furthermore, to give them a first-hand experience of an ICCFM World Assembly, we invited them to the following year’s 9th World Assembly of Families in California. Through the grace of God, and no doubt, through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, Antonio and Maria felt confident enough that MLC Portugal could host the 10th ICCFM World Assembly in Fatima.

In July 2005 Tony and Lily Gauci and we came to Portugal to make initial plans for the World Assembly. We spent two days drawing the World Assembly agenda with Antonio and Maria, Maria de Fatima Castanheira and Alice Cardoso at the Home of the Cooperadoras de la Familia in Lisbon. We found it fitting to hearken to the call of Our Lady of Fatima towards Spirituality and Sacrifice in the context of the family. As CFM members we are called to a profound prayer life, and in the

service of others, we have to sacrifice part of ourselves. Thus our theme, “The Legacy of Fatima to the Family: Spirituality and Sacrifice.”

We also became acquainted with the life and works of Monsignor Joaquim Alves Bras, and since then we have not failed to pray for his intercession daily. On the third day of our planning meeting, we visited Monsignor Luciano Guerra, the Rector of the Fatima Sanctuary, who welcomed the news of hosting the next World Assembly with great joy and kindness, offering generous subsidies for simultaneous translation, World Assembly participation and other Conference expenses.

So here we are in July 2007, inaugurating the Tenth ICCFM World Assembly of Families. We are blessed to be in Fatima in 2007, a very special anniversary year. Fatima celebrates Centenary of Lucia, Fatima visionary, who was born in 1907; the 90th Anniversary of the First Apparition of Our Lady in 1917, and the Dedication of the New Church of the Holy Trinity to mark the special Jubilee. It is a very special privilege for us to be here, indeed.

“How can we thank God enough for you, for the joy we have in His presence because of you?”

We echo the sentiments of St. Paul in his first letter to his beloved Thessalonians, chapter 3 verse 9, to express the joy and gratitude that we feel now as we gather here for the Tenth ICCFM World Assembly.

In the preceding verse St. Paul had written, ***“It was your faith that encouraged us.”***

It is the unconditional faith of Antonio and Maria, of the Cooperadores de la Familia, of MLC Portugal, of all of the participants here that has made this World Assembly a reality. It is the faith of those CFM members who would have wanted to be here but could not. It is the faith of all CFM members who believe in the CFM mission and are praying for all of us.

We will work very hard in the next three days in order to do justice to the faith that God and his families have in us because we are gathered here for a divine purpose, directed by the Blessed Trinity and Jesus' own Holy Family through the loving care of His Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Fatima.

Thank you.