

Introductory remarks

Anne L. Berger, Chair ICCFR

Good evening everyone and welcome to the 63rd annual ICCFR Conference. This year the ICCFR has the distinct pleasure of organizing this conference in collaboration with AICCeF, Cisf, and Agenzia Famiglia e Forum.

The idea for this conference was actually born on a small boat touring the river in Ghent, Belgium in 2011. Rita Roberto and her husband, Maurizio Qualiano had come to Ghent for an ICCFR conference (their first, I believe) and we were chatting about the fact that ICCFR had not had a conference in Italy in many years. Rita immediately said “well then, I would like to try to organize one in Italy” – the rest is history. Our 3 Italian co-hosts have worked tirelessly to put together what I believe will be a fabulous – no, more than fabulous – conference for you this year. The energy and warmth with which our co-hosts have tackled this project is five-star in every respect. Please give them a warm and enthusiastic hand of applause.

Trento, the site of this year’s conference, aside from its natural beauty and welcoming atmosphere is particularly apt. Our Italian participants no doubt know about the connection, but for the benefit of those who do not, Trento was the location of one of the most important ecumenical councils in European history. Between the years 1545 and 1563, responding to emergent Protestantism in the north, the Council of Trent (convened just before Luther’s death) was at the heart and soul of Roman Catholicism’s counter-reformation. There is much too much history for me to recount in these opening remarks, but let me just point out that the 24th session of the Council produced the Catholic Church’s first definitive statement concerning divorce. Up to that time if a marital partner had committed adultery the law generally permitted the innocent spouse to remarry. Roman Catholic doctrine was ambiguous on that point. The council decrees on marriage definitively denied the right of either spouse who had had Roman Catholic marriage ceremony to remarry if the other spouse was still alive. So, who knows, perhaps this marks the inception of professionals

working with couples and families. It has certainly created a lot of thoughtful discussion over the last 500 years.

Finally, for those of you who have never attended an ICCFR conference before, you are in for a surprise. Our conferences have a unique element – our discussion groups. Each of you has been assigned to a discussion group. You are not limited to discussing what went on in the workshops you have chosen to attend, or what you heard in the keynotes. You are free to discuss any subject that the group finds interesting and stimulating. The discussion groups are an opportunity for a truly free-flowing exchange of ideas and professional insights. I think you will find them to be one of the best parts of the conference.

So now go out, enjoy the wonderful social programs that have been organized for you, profit from the superb quality of our keynote presenters and workshop presenters, share your ideas with your co-professionals, and drink in the beauty of Trent.