



The Holy See

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 8th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

[PHILADELPHIA, 22-27 SEPTEMBER 2015]

[Multimedia]

*To my Venerable Brother
Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia
President of the Pontifical Council for the Family*

At the end of the Seventh World Meeting of Families, Pope Benedict XVI announced that the city of Philadelphia, in the United States of America, would host the following gathering. On many occasions I have confirmed this decision, looking with trust and hope to this event of grace at which, please God, I will take part. It will take place from the 22 to 27 September 2015 and will have as its theme “Love is our mission. The family fully alive”.

The mission of the Christian family, today as yesterday, is that of proclaiming to the world, by the power of the Sacrament of Marriage, the love of God. From this very proclamation a living family is born and built, one which sets the hearth of love at the centre of its human and spiritual dynamism. If, as St Irenaeus said “*Gloria Dei vivens homo*” (*Adv. Haer.*, IV, 20, 7), then so a family, which, by the grace of the Lord, lives to the full its vocation and mission glorifies Him.

We recently celebrated the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on: “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization”. In the sign of synodality we identified the most urgent themes confronting the family in our pluralistic society. In reality, “we cannot qualify the family with ideological concepts, we cannot speak of a conservative family or a progressive family: family is family!” (*Address to participants in the International Colloquium on the complementarity of man and woman*, 17 November 2014). The values and virtues of the family, its essential truths, are the strengths on which the family nucleus rests and cannot be called into question. We are called, rather, to review our own lifestyle which is always exposed to the risk of being “contaminated” by a worldly mentality — individualist, consumerist, hedonist — and to rediscover ever again the royal road, in order to live and proclaim the grandeur and beauty of

marriage and the joy of being and making a family.

The indications of the Final Report of the recent Synod, and the guidelines of the upcoming Ordinary Assembly of October 2015, invite people to fulfil in their commitment to proclaim the Gospel of marriage and of the family and to experience the pastoral proposals in the social and cultural context in which we live. The challenges of this context should stimulate us to enlarge the space afforded to faithful love open to life, to communion, to mercy, to sharing and to solidarity. I urge all married couples, therefore, priests and parish communities, as well as movements and associations to let themselves be led by the Word of God, on which rests the foundation of the holy edifice of the family, the domestic Church and the family of God (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 6 and 11).

I express my appreciation to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for its generous availability and organizational commitment put at the service of the universal Church and of families across the different continents. I ask the Lord to reward even now this beloved particular Church with abundant heavenly graces.

Meanwhile I invoke the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe and of Aparecida. From my heart I impart to you, dear Brother, and to the collaborators of your Dicastery the Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to all those who are cooperating in the preparations for the Meeting, and I ask you please to pray for me.

Fraternally,

From the Vatican, 9 December 2014

FRANCIS