



Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis
Consilium Internationale
FAMILY COMMISSION

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World Meeting of Families in Ireland 2018

“The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the world”

The Pope chooses the theme for each World Meeting of Families. With the selection of the “Gospel of the Family: Joy for the world” as the theme of the ninth World Meeting of Families in Dublin, Ireland, the Pope invited us to reflect on a theme that was central to the synodal process that caused him to write the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*: On the Love of the Family.

“The Church and the Gospel of the Family” was a key topic in the preparatory document for the III Extraordinary Assembly of Bishops in October 2014, a document that was the subject of unprecedented consultation among the faithful around the world. While the preparatory document does not give an exact definition of the term, 'The Gospel of the Family,' it does convey at least three ways in which this relatively new expression can be understood in the tradition of the Church:

- The family, which is based on the marriage between a man and a woman, is part of God’s plan from the beginning. The 'good news' of the family is, therefore, an indispensable part of the joyful message of the Gospel proclaimed by the Church.
- The family is the principle agent of the evangelization of its members. As the first school of faith and love, it is often in the Christian family that we first meet Jesus and his love.
- The family proclaims the Gospel to the World. The Christian family, by its testimony of the life and love of Jesus, is the principle agent of evangelization in the world.

As Pope Francis explains in the introductory words of his *Amoris Laetitia*, “the Christian proclamation of the family is, in truth, good news” (AL 1). The Christian proclamation of the family is an indispensable part of the ‘good news’ of the Gospel. God’s plan for the family, revealed from the beginning of Sacred Scriptures, is joy for the world!

The 2018 World Meeting of Families explored each of these dimensions of the theme of the “Gospel of the family: Joy for the world” and what it means for families and the Church today.

Testimony from Liam and Mary, OFS Ireland:

The Rule and Life of the OFS is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people; Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the Way to Him, the Truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us and the Life which He has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves to careful reading of the Gospel, going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel.

As members of the OFS, my wife Mary and I were chosen as a result of a draw which included other members, to represent the OFS at the World Meeting of Families (WMOF). Our preparation began on Tuesday, 21st August, by attending the Opening Mass for the WMOF at Christ the King Cathedral, in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, which is located in our diocese of Meath. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Michael Smith. A large crowd was present with many international pilgrims also attending.

On 22nd of August, we traveled to the RDS in Dublin where the three day Pastoral Congress was held. There was a large exhibition hall in the arena where a great number of stands were displaying various aspects of our Catholic faith. We were impressed with the wide range of displays, in particular one which displayed hand-carved religious crosses made from olive trees in Bethlehem and embedded in them were stones taken from the Garden of Gethsemane. The Franciscan Order had a stand too, displaying information regarding the Franciscan way of life and vocation.

In his opening address, Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland welcomed all to the World Meeting of Families and stated that it is not just a passing event or fleeting celebration of the ideals of family life. It is a moment in which the entire Church can deepen its reflection on the teaching of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation 'Amoris Laetitia' (The Joy of Love). There were also a great number of young speakers who spoke about marriage in the third millennium whose talks we found very inspiring. There were a large number of young religious men and women in attendance which was most encouraging for the future of our Church. The choirs were outstanding with very uplifting music and song which greatly enhanced the celebrations.

On Saturday, we attended the Festival of Families in Croke Park. On arrival we were impressed to see families of so many different nationalities at this joyous event. We were entertained by various artists until the arrival of His Holiness, Pope Francis.

On his arrival Pope Francis was greeted with a huge Irish "Cead Mile Failte," a hundred thousand welcomes and applause from all present. Testimonies were given by various groups of families, some who had overcome huge challenges in their lives such as physical and mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse.

Talks were centered around key aspects of the family including faith, parenthood and marriage. The speakers gave an informative, joyful insight into the daily life of a Catholic family. Pope Francis greeted all the families who gave testimonies and one young lady even got a selfie taken with His Holiness!

We are deeply grateful to all the volunteers who were in attendance and who came to our assistance many times during the days we were at the the WMOF. There were so many young and more mature volunteers who gave so much of their time. They are to be commended!

Over the course of the few days we met and chatted to various groups of people which was very inspiring and encouraging, to know that we are all on the one path in life.

On Sunday, we attended Mass which was celebrated in the open air in the Phoenix Park. We met up with some of our own family members too. The celebration of the Eucharist was the pinnacle of the entire experience. Thousands joined together in communion with Pope Francis, which was encouraging for the Pope and for ourselves.

On departure, a thought came to mind for the man who started the World Meeting of Families, St. John Paul II, and his great love for Ireland, he who is now in Heaven and interceding for our beloved country.

Yours in St. Francis.

To share in fraternity:

- Are you familiar with the World Meetings of Families?
- Has your fraternity reflected on the themes proposed during the last two meetings? In 2015 in Philadelphia in the United States, the theme was “Love is our mission” and in 2018 in Ireland, the theme was “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World.”
- What are the moments of joy that we live as a family based on our Gospel life?
- What are the challenges that we encounter as a family in the year 2019?

The Family Commission is thankful for the participation of our brother and sister Liam and Mary, for their service and availability, and their representing us at the World Meeting of Families in 2018.

- We share the prayer from the last Meeting.

December 2018



DUBLIN, IRELAND

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

AUGUST 22-26, 2018

OFFICIAL PRAYER FOR THE 2018 WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

God, our Father,
We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus, your Son,
One family in the Spirit of your love.

Bless us with the Joy of love.

Make us patient and kind; Loving and generous,
Welcoming to those who need us.
Help us to forgive as you do and to live your peace.

Protect all families with your loving care,
Especially those for whom we now pray:
*(Let us pause and remember the members of our family
and other people by their names)*

Increase our faith, Strengthen our hope,
Protect us with your love. Let us always be thankful for the
gift of life that we share.

We ask You this through our Lord, Jesus Christ

Amen.

Mary, mother and guide, pray for us.
St. Joseph, father and protector, pray for us.
St. Joaquin and St. Ann, pray for us.
St. Louis and St. Celia Martin, pray for us.