



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

St Peter's Square

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[Multimedia]

Apostolic Visit to Ireland

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Last weekend I travelled to Ireland to take part in the World Meeting of Families: I am sure you have seen it on television. My presence was meant above all to confirm Christian families in their vocation and mission. Thousands of families — spouses, grandparents, children — gathered in Dublin; the whole variety of their languages, cultures and experiences were an eloquent sign of the beauty of God's dream for the entire human family. And we know it: God's dream is unity, harmony and peace, in families and in the world, fruit of the fidelity, of the forgiveness and of the reconciliation that he has given us in Christ. He calls families to participate in this dream and to make of the world a home where no one is alone, no one is unwanted, no one is excluded. Think carefully about this: what God wants is that no one be alone, no one be unwanted, no one be excluded. For this reason the theme of this World Meeting was most appropriate. This is what it was called: *'The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World'*.

I am grateful to the President of Ireland, to the Prime Minister, to the various government, civil and religious authorities, and to the many people at every level who helped to organize and realize the events of the Meeting. And many thanks to the Bishops, who worked very hard. Addressing the Authorities at Dublin Castle, I emphasized that the Church is a family of families, and that, like a body, it supports its cells in their indispensable role for the development of a fraternal and inclusive society.

The witness to conjugal love given by couples of all ages were the veritable "points of light" of these days. Their stories reminded us that marital love is a special gift from God, to cultivate each

day in the “domestic church” that is the family. How much the world needs a revolution of love, a revolution of tenderness, that can save us from the current culture of the provisional! And this revolution begins in the heart of the family.

In the Pro-Cathedral of Dublin I met spouses active in the Church and many young married couples, and many small children. I then met several families who are facing particular challenges and difficulties. Thanks to the Capuchin Fathers — who are always close to the people — and to the broader ecclesial family, they are shown the solidarity and support that are the fruit of charity.

The culminating moment of my visit was the great Festival of Families on Saturday evening, in the stadium of Dublin, followed by the Mass in Phoenix Park on Sunday. At the Vigil we listened to the very touching witness of families who have suffered a great deal due to war, families renewed by forgiveness, families whom love has saved from the spiral of addiction, families who have learned to use mobile phones and tablets properly and to give priority to time spent together. The value of intergenerational communication and the specific role of grandparents in strengthening family ties and passing on the treasure of faith stood out. Today — it is hard to say it — but it seems that grandparents are bothersome. In this throw-away culture, grandparents are ‘thrown away’; they are pushed aside. But grandparents are wisdom, they are the memory of the people, the memory of families! And grandparents must pass on this memory to the grandchildren. Young people and children must talk to their grandparents in order to continue history. Please: do not discard grandparents. May they be close to your children, to the grandchildren.

On Sunday morning I made a pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine in Knock, so dear to the Irish people. There, in the chapel built on the site of an apparition of the Virgin, I entrusted all families, in particular those of Ireland, to her maternal protection. And although my journey did not include a visit to Northern Ireland, I addressed a cordial greeting to its people and encouraged the process of reconciliation, peacemaking, friendship and ecumenical cooperation.

Apart from the great joy, this visit of mine to Ireland also had to take on the pain and bitterness for the suffering caused in that country by various forms of abuse, also by members of the Church, and the fact that in the past, ecclesial authorities did not always know how to address these crimes in an appropriate way. The meeting with several survivors — there were eight — left a profound mark; and several times I asked the Lord for forgiveness for these sins, for the scandal and the sense of betrayal they have caused. The Irish Bishops have undertaken a serious journey of purification and reconciliation with those who have suffered abuse, and with the help of the national authorities they have established a stringent set of norms to guarantee the safety of young people. And then, in my meeting with the Bishops, I encouraged them in their effort to remedy past failings with honesty and courage, trusting in the Lord’s promises and counting on the deep faith of the Irish people, in order to begin a season of renewal in the Church in Ireland. In Ireland there is faith, there is the people of faith: a faith with great roots. But do you know something? There are few vocations to the priesthood. Why does this faith not succeed? Because

of these problems, the scandals, many things.... We must pray that the Lord send holy priests to Ireland, send new vocations. And let us pray together, reciting a 'Hail Mary' to Our Lady of Knock.

[*Hail Mary....*]

Lord Jesus, send us holy priests.

Dear brothers and sisters, the World Meeting of Families in Dublin was a prophetic, comforting experience, shared by many families committed to the Gospel way of marriage and to family life; disciple and missionary families, leaven of goodness, holiness, justice and peace. We forget so many families — so many! — who bring up their family, their children, with trust, asking forgiveness when there are difficulties. We forget because today it is the fashion for magazines, for newspapers, to speak like this: "This man is divorced from this woman.... That woman from that man.... And separation...". But please: this is bad. It is true: I respect each one; we have to respect people, but the ideal is not divorce. The ideal is not separation. The ideal is not the breakup of the family. The ideal is the united family. May it succeed: this is the ideal!

The next World Meeting of Families will be held in Rome in 2021. Let us entrust them all to the protection of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, that in their homes, parishes and communities they may truly be "joy for the world".

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from Ghana, South Africa, Korea and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

I offer a particular thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today the liturgical memorial of the Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist is being observed. May the heroic sacrifice of the Forerunner teach you to understand what a Christian's supreme value is: to witness to the Lordship of Christ, living and working among us, not only through words but through the gift of his own life. May God bless you all!

Appeal

Next Saturday, 1 September, will be the Fourth World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, which we shall celebrate in union with Orthodox brothers and sisters and with the participation of other Churches and Christian Communities.

In this year's Message I wish to call attention to the issue of water, a primary good to protect and to make available to all.

I am grateful for the various initiatives that in different places the particular Churches, the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the ecclesial groups have organized. I invite everyone to join in prayer on Saturday for our common home, for the care of our common home.