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Video Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Third International Symposium on the Apostolic Exhortation “*Amoris laetitia*”

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father to the participants in the Third International Symposium on the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, held today in Rome on the theme “The Gospel of love, between conscience and rule”, convoked by the Office for Pastoral Care of the Family of the Italian Episcopal Conference.

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I cordially greet all of you who are participating in the third international Symposium on the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, convoked by the Office for Pastoral Care of the Family of the Italian Episcopal Conference.

The theme you have proposed, “The Gospel of love, between conscience and rule”, is of great importance and may enlighten the path that the Churches in Italy are taking, also to respond to the *desire for family* that emerges in the heart of the young generations. Love between a man and a woman is evidently one of the most *generative* human experiences; it is the leaven of a culture of *encounter* and brings to today’s world an injection of *sociality*. Indeed, “the welfare of the family is decisive for the future of world and for that of the Church”.^[1] The family born of marriage generates fruitful bonds, which prove to be the most effective antidote to the current rampant individualism: however, on the path of conjugal love and family life there are situations that require difficult decisions to be made with rectitude. In domestic reality at times concrete problems present themselves that are to be addressed with prudent conscience on the part of each person. It is important that spouses and parents not be left alone, but accompanied in their effort to apply the Gospel to the reality of life. On the other hand, we are well aware that “we have been called to form consciences, not to replace them”.^[2]

The contemporary world risks confusing the primacy of conscience, which is always to be respected, with the exclusive autonomy of the individual with regard to the relations he or she experiences.

As I said recently to the Pontifical Academy for Life, “Some have even spoken of an *egolatry*, a worship of the self, on whose altar everything is sacrificed, even the most cherished human affections. This approach is far from harmless, for it induces people to gaze constantly in the mirror, to the point of being unable to turn their eyes away from themselves and towards others and the larger world. The spread of this approach has extremely grave effects on every affection and relationship in life”.^[3] And this is a form of “pollution” that erodes souls and confounds minds and hearts, producing false illusions.

Romano Guardini, in one of his texts on the theme of conscience, shows the way for the search of true goodness. He writes, “From this imprisonment in myself I am free only if I find a point, which is not my ego, higher than myself; something solid, working within me. And here we arrive at the heart of the matter ... that is, religious reality. That *goodness* is something living. It is the fullness of worth, which belongs to the selfsame living God”.^[4]

In the depths of each one of us there is a place wherein the Mystery reveals itself and enlightens the person, making him the protagonist of his history. Conscience, Vatican Council II reminds us, “is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths”.^[5] It is up to the Christian to be vigilant so that in this sort of Tabernacle there is no want of divine grace, which illuminates and strengthens conjugal love and the mission of parenting. Grace fills the “amphorae” of the human heart with an extraordinary capacity for giving, renewing for families of today the miracle of the wedding feast at Cana.

In commenting on this Gospel passage, I have said that “By transforming into wine the water of the jars used ‘for the Jewish rites of purification’ (*Jn 2:6*), Jesus performs an eloquent sign: He transforms the Law of Moses into the Gospel, bearer of joy”.^[6] Jesus recommends in particular the medicine of mercy, which cures hardness of heart, restoring the relations between man and wife, and between parents and children.

Dear brothers and sisters, I wish all the best for your work in this Symposium. May it help the Church in Italy to assimilate and develop the content and style of *Amoris laetitia*; may it contribute to the formation of animators of family groups in parishes, in associations, in movements; may it support the path of many families, helping them to live the joy of the Gospel and to be active cells in the community. I bless you heartily, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, 31.

[2] *Ibid.*, 37.

[3] *Address to participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life*, 5 October 2017.

[4] *Conscience*, Brescia 1933, 32-33.

[5] Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 16.

[6] *Catechesis* of the General Audience of 8 June 2016.
