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Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 14th National Pilgrimage of Families for Families

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the 14th National Pilgrimage of Families for the Family, promoted by the National Office for the Pastoral Care of the Family of the Italian Episcopal Conference, by the Renewal in the Spirit and by the National Forum of Family Associations, taking place today in twenty Marian shrines on the theme “*In communion... joy!*”:

Message of the Holy Father

Dear families, dear married couples, parents, grandparents and children!

I warmly greet you who are participating in the 14th National Pilgrimage of Families for the Family, both in your presence and through the media. I greet the promoters of this moment of prayer: Renewal in the Spirit, the National Office for the Pastoral Care of the Family of the Italian Episcopal Conference, the National Forum of Family Associations. Thank you for the witness of communion and joy with which you say in unison that “the family is alive”!

I know that you are gathered under the gaze of Mary in twenty Marian shrines in nineteen regions of Italy, and also in Switzerland. Thousands of families, in prayer, today show the luminous face of faith in Jesus Christ, at a time overwhelmed by so many difficulties, sufferings and new poverties. I appreciate your efforts to reach out to as many people as possible, so as to become a living sign of the *amoris laetitia* that flows from the Gospel of the family.

“*In communion... joy!*” This is the theme of the pilgrimage, which clearly expresses an underlying decision: to seek not the “consumerist and individualistic” joy that “bloats the heart”, but “a joy lived in communion, which shares and is shared, since ‘there is more happiness in giving than in receiving’ (*Acts 20: 35*) and ‘God loves a cheerful giver’ (*2 Cor 9: 7*)”. Indeed, “fraternal love increases our capacity for joy, since it makes us capable of rejoicing in the good of others” (Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, 128).

Dear friends, the family is alive if it is united in prayer. The family is strong, if it rediscovers the Word of God and the providential value of all its promises. The family is generous and builds history if it remains open to life, if it does not discriminate and serves the weakest and most in need, if it does not stop offering the world the bread of charity and the wine of fraternity.

I encourage you to walk together along this path, and thus to cooperate in preparing, first and foremost with prayer, for the Tenth World Meeting of Families, to be held in Rome from 22 to 26 June 2022, but at the same time also in diocesan communities throughout the world.

I therefore invite you to pray from now on with the official prayer for that meeting:

Holy Father,

we are here before You

to praise and thank You

for the great gift of the family.

We pray to you for the families consecrated in the sacrament of matrimony,

that they may rediscover every day the grace they have received

and, as little domestic Churches

know how to bear witness to your Presence

and the love with which Christ loves the Church.

We pray to you for families

beset by difficulties and sufferings

by sickness, or travails that You alone know:

support them and make them aware

of the path of sanctification to which You are calling them,

that they may experience Your infinite mercy

and find new ways to grow in love.

*We pray to you for children and young people
that they may encounter you
and respond joyfully to the vocation you have planned for them;
for parents and grandparents
that they may be aware
of their being a sign of the fatherhood and motherhood of God
in the care of the children whom, in flesh and in spirit,
You entrust to them;
for the experience of fraternity
that the family can give to the world.*

*Lord, grant that every family
may live their vocation to holiness in the Church
as a call to be a protagonist of evangelisation,
in the service of life and peace,
in communion with priests and every state of life.*

Bless the World Meeting of Families.

Amen.

I entrust your efforts to God so that He may sustain them and make them fruitful. And I ask you all to pray for me. I wish you a happy pilgrimage!

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 9 September 2021

FRANCIS
