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## **Press Conference to present the “Family Global Compact” and the Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the launch of the “Family Global Compact”**

At 11.30 this morning, a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office, Saint Pius X Hall, Via dell’Ospedale 1, to present the *Family Global Compact* and the Holy Father’s Message on the occasion of the launch of the *Family Global Compact*.

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life; the Reverend Helen Alford, O.P., president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; Professor Gabriella Gambino, under-secretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life; and Professor Pierpaolo Donati, sociologist and member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

In addition, Professor Stefano Zamagni, former president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and Dr. Francesco Belletti, director of the International Centre on Family Studies (ICFS), were present in the hall and available to speak to the press.

The following are the interventions:

### **Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell**

Good morning,

The *Family Global Compact* is an initiative promoted by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, along with the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, with the collaboration of the International Centre for Family Studies.

I will limit myself here to some brief considerations, starting from the Holy Father’s message for the launch of the Compact, to enable an understanding of the rationale underpinning this project.

The *Family Global Compact* is “a collaborative plan aimed at bringing the pastoral care of families into dialogue with centres of study and research on the family located in Catholic universities around the world” (Pope Francis, *Message for the Launch of the Family Global Compact*, 13 May 2023).

It stems from a serious consideration of the challenges the family is subject to today in every country in the world. Pope Francis spoke about it in the second chapter of *Amoris laetitia*, in which he invites us to pay attention to the concrete reality of the family, so that as a Church we are guided towards a deeper capacity for understanding it, and we can develop more effective ways of transmitting its beauty and its irreplaceable role in society.

In recent decades, close observation of the research work done by Catholic universities that have study centres and institutes for the family reveals a certain fatigue in working on these issues, as well as the need for greater collaboration between universities, and between universities and the Church. The greatest challenge for the Catholic-inspired academic world is to carry out the task of education on the family and the promotion of human life, in harmony with the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Therefore, the *Family Global Compact* is intended to promote collaboration between family pastoral care and centres for family studies, as called for by the Pope in his Message: “The goal is synergetic: to enable the pastoral care of families in the particular Churches to benefit from the research and the educational and training programmes in Catholic universities. Together, the universities and programmes of pastoral ministry can more effectively promote a culture of family and life. ... Such a culture would help new generations to appreciate marriage and family life with its resources and challenges and the beauty of generating and nurturing human life”. Therefore, the *Family Global Compact* entrusts to Catholic universities the task of developing deeper analyses of a theological, philosophical, legal, sociological and economic nature on marriage and the family to support it and to bring it to the heart of contemporary systems of thought and action.

Following up on this solicitation, the Family Global Compact offers a contribution to the formation of a global and integral thought on marriage and the family, which develops from today's reality, bearing in mind that in the Church's teaching the family is far more than an idea. According to Christian anthropology, in fact, the family is born from the “intimate partnership of married life and love” (*Gaudium et spes*, 48) and is the first place where the development of the person and interpersonal relationships, responsibility and solidarity takes place. It therefore consists of self-giving, mutual help, bringing up children, and the meeting of generations. The Family Global Compact seeks to approach this richness without proposing an idealistic reading of family life, rather highlighting the intertwining of the anthropological dimensions of the family and the economic and social conditions in which it finds itself today.

We are faced with serious cultural and social challenges: the fragility of family ties and the difficulty of perceiving the inviolable value of every human life. “We cannot resign ourselves to the decline of the family in the name of uncertainty, individualism and consumerism” the Holy Father explains. We cannot be indifferent to the future of the family, nor can we give up proposing clearly the Christian message on the family. However, we must know how to do this more effectively, with communication methods suited to our times and the new generations. Promoting the family in the private space, but also in the public space, can only have positive effects on the common good: when family relationships are good, they represent an asset for spouses, children and the entire civil and ecclesial community.

The involvement of Catholic universities also responds to the need to form and involve Christian laypeople in the Church's evangelizing mission: through scientific research and academic teaching, Catholic universities can in fact address a wide audience, even those far from Church structures, proposing in lay language the value of the family in the world.

We hope that this path may bear fruit and “help put the family once more at the heart of our pastoral and social commitment”, further implementing the indications of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, which inspired this project.

### Intervention of Reverend Helen Alford, O.P.

1. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis encourages us to look at the “concrete realities” of family life (AL, 31), and, in so doing, quotes from Pope St John Paul II’s encyclical, *Familiaris consortio*, for “the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history”. If we look at the current situation of the family, we see both light and dark, as emerged very clearly in the 2022 Plenary of the PASS which was focused on the family, looking at it as a “relational good”.

2. Among the signs of light, we see that, despite the sense of a crisis in the family, or even of the “death” of the family, it remains a central goal and value in people’s lives. As the final statement of last year’s PASS plenary put it, the contemporary world aspires to “create new ways of experiencing the family as a place of authentic love between the sexes and between the generations”, and, “[t]here is certainly no lack of new forms of family solidarity, both in internal relations and in the surrounding community, to give support to those in need”.

3. At the same time, we are witnessing a weakening of the family, thanks to “a series of interdependent causes that converge to foster a strongly individualistic culture in the conception of human and social rights, to the detriment of solidarity and reciprocity between the sexes and between generations”. Such a culture reduces the capacity of families to deal with the stresses of life, making them more fragile and more susceptible to “[f]ragmentation and internal conflict” through “aggravating their conditions of poverty, both material and relational”. As families weaken, so do social structures and “multiple social problems and pathologies are . . . accentuated”.

4. How to interpret the overall import of these two aspects of light and dark? If we look at the media, we mostly see the negative situations in families, with a focus on abuse, violence and discrimination. However, social science research, while giving due regard to these manifold problems, highlights “the persistence and vitality of families in which the challenge to love prevails and generates relational goods”. It was clear in the discussions during the plenary last year that the family remains a very resilient social structure, capable of absorbing shocks and of providing support and healing to people in many different circumstances. In a world that is looking for more resilience in the face of projected future crises, including those arising from climate change, investing in the family and in research into how families can face their challenges more effectively, would bring great returns for society as a whole.

5. One of the key elements for improving the resilience of families is a deeper “relational family culture”, allowing a search for happiness at a deeper, less superficial, level. In families, people need to find their first experience of men and women being treated equally, one where family members experience “growth in one’s own difference through reciprocity with others”. This is why the PASS focused the plenary on the idea of the family as a “relational good”, and, in doing so, wanted to call the academic world to give greater attention to understanding the family in this way.

6. As a relational good, the family is “the source of a good society, because it generates those fundamental social goods, such as trust, responsibility, collaboration, solidarity, and the whole ensemble of human virtues that are essential to an inclusive, sustainable social life”. Furthermore, we should recognize that the family finds itself “at the intersection of the private and public spheres”, and as a “social subject”. Indeed, in the final statement of the 2022 plenary, the PASS recommended that there should be “a *citizenship right for the family as such*, due to the unique mediation that families exercise between individuals and community”, and that society as a whole should pursue “family-friendly policies” across economic, social and cultural spheres, recognizing the fundamental contribution that the family makes in supporting society, especially thanks to its role in forming, maintaining and deepening the capacity to build relationships in a world that experiences so much loneliness and the suffering that comes from this.

7. What should we do? The Final Statement of the 2022 Plenary addressed international organizations, national governments and national authorities, civil society organizations, the business community, the Holy See, all the

world's religions and all people of goodwill with key actions to be carried forward to strengthen the family as a resilient, relational good. These actions included: Make the promotion of family wellbeing one of the new UN Global Development Goals (addressed to international organizations); Prepare *national action plans* to help families meet their basic needs and implement them by allocating a significant amount of their budget to them (addressed to national governments); Create working groups to address family-friendly employment contracts, focusing on concrete actions and preparing positions on key issues that could improve relations between families and businesses (addressed to the business community); Commit to collaborating with one another to build a global alliance for the protection and promotion of the family (addressed to all religions).

8. In this series of calls, the first suggested action to the Holy See was: "Propose a *family global compact*, understood as a global alliance for the family, in order to include the protection and promotion of the family based on marriage in the new Sustainable Development Goals". It is wonderful to see that today the Holy See is taking that suggested action forward.

### **Intervention of Professor Gabriella Gambino**

The *Family Global Compact* is not "a static programme aimed at crystallizing a few ideas", but a process proposed to Catholic universities to deepen and develop Christian anthropology and the message it conveys on marriage, the family and human life. As the Holy Father Francis explains in the Compact's launch message, it envisages four steps:

1. The first step is to activate a process of dialogue and greater collaboration between university study and research centres dealing with family issues, in order to make their activities more effective and fruitful, in particular by creating or relaunching networks of university institutes inspired by the Social Doctrine of the Church.
2. The second step is to create greater synergy between the Church and Catholic universities in the planning of content and objectives. On an ecclesial level too, pastoral action needs concrete support from the academic thought of Catholic-inspired university centres.
3. The third step is to restore strength to the culture of life and the family in society, so that it may give rise to proposals and strategic objectives for public policies.
4. The fourth step, once proposals have been identified, is to harmonize and support them, ensuring that Church and society move together to give a voice to an integral thought on family, that encompasses all its dimensions: spiritual, pastoral, cultural, legal, political, economic and social.

In particular, as stated in the first point, the *Compact* intends to develop and extend the already existing networks of institutes and centres for the family that are inspired by the Social Doctrine of the Church. These include REDIUF, the International Network of University Institutes for the Family, coordinated by our Dicastery and established in 2018 on the occasion of the Ninth World Meeting of Families in Dublin. Its aims include carrying out interdisciplinary and multi-centred research and studies; fostering the exchange of students and professors between the continents; promoting effective collaboration with the pastoral care of the universal Church and the particular Churches on family matters; and last but not least, stimulating the creation of new institutes for the family in Catholic universities that do not yet devote themselves to these issues in a structured manner. Placing the family - as the locus of bonds and relationships - at the centre of cultural commitment is, in fact, the prerequisite for putting it back at the centre of political, economic and social interest.

This afternoon, on the day of the launch of the Compact, a *webinar* will be held in the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, with the heads of over forty centres and institutes for the family around the world to begin the practical work of coordinating the efforts of Catholic universities to implement the Compact. In fact, it will involve

extending REDIUF to the centres that wish to participate in the Compact: through the network this coordination work will take place.

From today, a new website will also be available: [www.familyglobalcompact.org](http://www.familyglobalcompact.org), dedicated to the *Compact*, where you can find the full text of the *Compact* in three languages (Italian, English and Spanish), the summary version in the brochure (also in three languages), both downloadable and printable; the Holy Father's launch message, an explanation of the logo we have chosen, and an email address for information and to ask to join the *Compact*.

The Logo, in particular, is the graphic representation of the vision, mission and values that the Compact wants to express. It is composed of three elements: a net, a family and a cross.

The net is the global network that conceptually connects the universities and university centres to whom the global Pact is proposed, and which is inspired by the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church. At the same time, it represents the vision of a dynamic network between families – the subject, not the object of the Pact – and the various actors of civil society, the economy, law and culture, mobilized in favour of families.

The family, as the subject of the *Family Global Compact*, is at the centre of the logo. The people represent a family which is the source and origin of social life inspired by solidarity and the development of the person. Human life is instead represented by an expectant woman, to further the theme of nascent life and the care for every human life. Generativity is also the image of a new time that it is intended to promote through adhesion to the global Pact: a common commitment to favour the key role of the family in the economy, in society, and in the development of the person and of the common good.

The Christian cross is the representation of the values that inspire the *Compact*. It is the symbol of hope, love and the future. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, indicates the way: “The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church” (AL, 31).

## **Intervention of Professor Pierpaolo Donati**

### **1. The Motivation of the Family Global Compact (FGC)**

The idea that inspired the Family Global Compact (FGC) was to stimulate the application of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* in studies and research conducted in Catholic or Catholic-inspired Universities, through: (a) a reconnaissance of the research activities in the Centres or Institutes dedicated to family studies, in order to know the state of affairs; (b) to draw indications from the various Universities on the themes and initiatives underway and to receive proposals on the possible lines of development of research; (c) so as to be able to draw up a document, in the form of a “*global pact*”, which would be of help to the Universities to coordinate at an international level and reciprocally promote new horizons of knowledge on the phenomenon of the family and the implementation of good practices useful to society and the Church. It is worth remembering that this path is a way of updating and implementing the *Charter of the Rights of the Family* proposed by the Holy See as early as 1983, and it complements the *Global Compact on Education* (of the Dicastery for Culture and Education) launched by Pope Francis in 2019.

### **2. Stages of preparation**

The preparation of the Compact started from an analysis of the situation, in line with the approach indicated by Pope Francis, namely, in the light of the principle of reality correctly interpreted (“We do well to focus on concrete realities, since the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history”, AL 31).

Therefore, in November 2021, the International Centre on Family Studies (ICFS) was entrusted with a field

survey aimed at finding out about theoretical and applicative research activities in Catholic Universities, in particular taking its cue from the most operative part contained in *Amoris laetitia*, the points concerning *The Experiences and Challenges of Families* (nos. 31-57) along five main lines

- (a) socio-economic structural elements;
- b) some specific conditions of need/fragility;
- c) the value and spiritual horizon;
- d) the idea of couple and marriage;
- e) the weakness of public support interventions.

Since this work has never been done before, the ICFS first of all had to compile a list, as complete as possible, of Catholic universities, specifying those in which there is a Centre/Institute for Studies and Research devoted to the family. Initially, 373 universities were identified, to which a questionnaire was sent to find out whether or not a Family Research Centre existed in them, and 100 replies were received, of which only 73 with a positive response. These were then sent two questionnaires to find out in detail about their activities. The most complete information came from 30 universities. Three webinars were then organized with all the centres that declared themselves available (in fact, mainly from Europe and Central and South America, some from North America, and a couple from Africa). The ICFS has drafted a Report on these survey results that will be made available on its website shortly.

The main findings were: (i) the weakness of support (including financial) for research in this field in comparison with other fields; (ii) the relative isolation of each Centre (with the exception of the *Redifam* network of Latin American Centres) (iii) evident shortcomings in the multi-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity of research on the family, which, as a “multi-faceted object”, should be dealt with by linking together biological, social, legal, economic, cultural, service and social policy aspects, including pastoral aspects, while there is a largely prevailing interest in philosophical and value-based themes (iv) the need for greater creativity in research, having found little ability to anticipate the most relevant topics; (v) the need to link research, and studies in general, to the operational implications in terms of services, social policies, and pastoral activities, hence the need to link the universities to everyday practices by developing what is usually called the “Third Mission” of the Universities of service to civil society and the Church.

On the basis of these findings and the online consultations, a text has been prepared, which, through various elaborations, is being delivered to the press today.

### **3. Drafting the FGC**

The drafting of the text is the result of collaboration between the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life (DLFL) and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), with the collaboration of the ICFS. On the basis of the survey of the activities and proposals of the Centres and Institutes interviewed, a broader text and a more concise one have been drafted, setting out the main points of the FGC.

### **4. Contents of the FGC**

The document analyses the situation of the family, primarily in its relations with the socio-cultural context, to offer a focused reflection on the ways in which free family subjectivity is supported or hindered in the social organization, and to propose some operational guidelines for family empowerment. It is a choice that does not claim to exhaust the understanding of the family, which is a multidimensional (“polyhedral”, to use an expression dear to Pope Francis) and integral sphere *par excellence*.

The document is divided into four points, which concern: (I) the quality of family relations; (II) the promotion of the family as a social subject; (III) social and political challenges (work, poverty, public policies); and (IV) the family as a challenge for all actors in society (universities, politics, the world of work, the non-profit sector, the cultural system and the media).

Each point is subdivided into several dimensions. Each dimension is dealt with by specifying concrete challenges, proposals for addressing them, actions to be taken, and recommending to universities a relaunch of research in an authentically family-focused perspective.

In short, the FGC is a working agenda that identifies the most relevant challenges affecting the family today and proposes lines of innovation and project priorities for family research that are not only cognitive but also operational.

## **5. Expected operational effects**

The expected effects of the launch of the FGP can be summarized as follows: (i) first of all, the stimulus to Universities to invest more resources - human, organizational and financial - in family issues, compared to other research areas; (ii) support for the formation of networks between Research Centres/Institutes, starting from those already existing, in order to coordinate more effectively the activities of the individual sites (iii) encouragement of the complementarity and interdisciplinary nature of research; (iv) the creation and dissemination of good practices in services to families, both in the civil and pastoral spheres; and (v) making families protagonists in society by making the family a true social subject. In short, the “global pact” constitutes a working agenda for new social, economic and cultural policies, for new services throughout the territory and for linking pastoral activities to the daily life of families.

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