**FAMILY**

Conference for August of the Jubilee Year 2020

1.- The "Triennium of the family" that promoted the Church in the years 2014-2016 confirmed that a " ***renewed desire of the family*** " [[1]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn1" \o ") covers the entire planet and that, far from catastrophic fears, it leads to "glimpse ***a new spring for the family*** " [[2]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn2" \o ") .

Pope Francis notes that the family has an incredible humanization potential: “ ***It is impossible to quantify the strength and depth of humanity contained in a family****: mutual help, educational support, relationships developing as family members mature, the sharing of joys and difficulties*... " [[3]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn3" \o ") . And so it is because men and women, in our deepest reality "***are created to love***" [[4]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn4" \o ") ."***We were created to give love*** , to make it the source of what we do and the most lasting our lives", says Benedict XVI [[5]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn5" \o "). "*Families are the first place in which we are formed as people, and at the same time, they are the ‘decorations’ for the construction of society*". The Pope continues "And the deeper its roots, the more possible it is **in life to go out and go far**, without getting lost or feeling a stranger in a foreign land" [[6]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn6" \o ") .

This explains why the family is a constant in every inhabited place on the planet and that in every moment people ***try to be and create a family***. Even in the most individualistic times - like ours - this inexhaustible desire "***to weave and to share the story of life***" persists [[7]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftn7" \o ") .

***Humanity and every human being want to be a family***. "*At the Synod, the fundamental desire of forming loving relationships, which are sound and inter-generational in the family, was significantly discussed, even beyond cultural and religious lines and the changes in society*", says the 2015 Synod.

It is humanity itself as a whole and the humanity of each person which asks to be a family. The family is affirmed as guardian of all human dignity. John Paul II, the Pope of the Family, would say **that the family is the heart, the future and the school of the civilization of love and the culture of life**.

The family plays a fundamental role, in that it is the deepest, most intimate and essential human relationship for all that is human. For this reason, it is necessary to create a framework of encounter and reflection on the family and humanization from the different visions of the world, traditions and religions, making our civilization move towards the horizon of what Cardinal Kasper calls "the culture of the heart". We must try to make the family appear to everyone with greater simplicity, clarity and strength, as the most original, universal and essential institution of Humanity.

2.- Attention to families. **Amoris Laetitia** is the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis which collects the contributions of the two Synods of the Family: the extraordinary one of 2014 and the ordinary one of 2015. From all that has been said, it is clear that our missionary ministry must have **the family as a transversal dimension in our pastoral activity***.* I want to present here the ideas of Amoris Laetitia which seem important to us in our pastoral work. The Church, he says, must be guided to a deeper understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family.

Pope Francis considers **the current situation of families**, not idealizing them, but putting their feet on the ground, to go out to meet the family where they are. There are so many challenges it faces! The culture of temporary, exaggerated individualism, lack of work, migration ... To say that the family is going through a great crisis in our world is not new: there are many divorces, children who suffer, unstructured families, unmarried couples, homosexual couples ... to whom civil legislation is equivalent to marriage. In Spain, civil marriages have far outstripped Church marriages lately. There are, of course, **excellent families** who live the sacrament of conjugal love in an exemplary way and who are living the testimony of the Christian vision of the family.

The apostolic exhortation warns us that, given **the diversity of cultures**, the ministry of the family must seek inculturated solutions attentive to local traditions and challenges.

**The family is an artisan work**. Marriage does not take place once and for all, but it is a dynamic path of growth and realization that we must **accompany**. Hence the importance of careful and good preparation for marriage and accompaniment in the early years of married life, as well as the delicate situations of "imperfect families".

The Holy Father stresses that **ordained ministers** often do not have adequate training to deal with the complex current problems of families. This should lead us to have the gaze of Jesus who, although he proposed a demanding ideal, never lost his close compassion for the most fragile people, such as the Samaritan woman or the adulteress.

For the sake of truth, pastors are required to discern situations well, clearly expressing the doctrine; avoid judgments and be attentive to the way people live and suffer because of their conditions. In this sense, it is very important to emphasize their openness to God's grace and mercy.

The Pope shows particular interest in situations of fragility: in which he recommends ***accompanying, discerning and integrating***, for which he proposes the logic of pastoral mercy. The goal is integration into the ecclesial community. But more than a pastoral ministry of failures, what is important is the pastoral effort to consolidate Christian marriages and thus prevent breakdowns.

**The logic of mercy** should lead us to be open and willing to welcome and listen to these people with affection, helping them to discern their situation. In these situations, we cannot forget that **families** are not only the object of pastoral care but the **subjects of it**. They do not only carry out an "ad intra" task, but also an "ad extra" task, for which it is advisable to carry out an outgoing mission, approaching these frail families and showing them what the Church offers in their situation (procedures of annulment) and accompany them in their process of peaceful and sincere discernment, being able to even present a pastoral relationship to the canonical process.

Finally, **conjugal and family spirituality** is also addressed in Amoris Laetitia. The importance of impregnating, in the domestic Church, the daily life of gestures of love which are strengthened by listening to the Word and prayer, in order to be able to contemplate each loved one with the eyes of God and recognize Christ in him. "*No family is a perfect reality created once and for all, but it requires a progressive maturation of its ability to love*".

It would be very nice to end the reflection with the prayer to the Holy Family that Pope Francis proposes at the end of the Exhortation:

***Prayer to the Holy Family***

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,*

*in you we contemplate*

*the splendour of true love;*

*to you we turn with trust.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,*

*grant that our families too*

*may be places of communion and prayer,*

*authentic schools of the Gospel*

*and small domestic churches.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,*

*may families never again experience*

*violence, rejection and division;*

*may all who have been hurt or scandalized*

*find ready comfort and healing.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,*

*make us once more mindful*

*of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,*

*and its beauty in God’s plan.*

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,*

*Graciously hear our prayer.*

*Amen.*

**Notes**

[[1]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref1" \o ") Instrumentum Laboris 2014

[[2]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref2" \o ") Instrumentum Laboris 2014

[[3]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref3" \o ") Francis: Homily on matrimony, Basilic St Peter 09.14.2014

[[4]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref4" \o ") Francisco: Audiencia General 04.02.2014

[[5]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref5" \o ") 09.18.2010 Cathedral de Westminster

[[6]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref6" \o ") Francis 10.04.2014

[[7]](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/" \l "m_995313719389865036__ftnref7" \o ") Francis 10.04.2014

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