



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING MEETING OF THE 3rd EDITION
OF THE FAMILY FESTIVAL IN RIVA DEL GARDA**

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the occasion of the *Festival of the Family* scheduled in Riva del Garda on the theme “The Ecosystem Life and Work. Women’s Employment and Fertility, Prosperity and Economic Growth”, I would like to greet and express my appreciation to the organizers, the relators and to all the participants for their commitment to promoting the family. In these days, as citizens, as Christians, as families and associations of families, coming from different professions and backgrounds, you sharing your experiences, concerns and plans. I wish you a successful meeting!

The theme being addressed, which continues and concludes a series of reflections on other aspects that you have discussed in previous sessions, is very important. You aim to provide points for reflection and operational paths in order that the family may play an increasingly active role in the social, cultural and political contexts of the country. Indeed, you are well aware of the irreplaceable and fundamental position that the family holds, both in civil society and in the ecclesial community. The future of humanity passes through the family, and for this reason it necessary to allow it is to play its proper role. However, it does not suffice to re-emphasize the importance of the family and affirm its rights: it is necessary to consider in a practical way how the duties of the family and those of society can be articulated, especially with respect to the relationship between professional and family life.

The family has its own mission, at the service of its members, of its own development, of life; the family has rights and thus needs support and guarantees that enable it to exercise them. On the other hand, the family also has duties to society; in other words, the family must offer its cooperation in service to the community. This is a privileged sphere in which to practice harmonious solidarity and subsidiarity, that is to say synergy between public and private, between business and family. Precisely because of the commitment and responsibility which having and educating children requires, families need appropriate assistance from public bodies and from

businesses, from the standpoint of mutual cooperation. The troubling demographic trend requires, an extraordinary and courageous policy to promote the family by all the interested parties. The country's economic recovery can also begin here. The scourge of unemployment, especially of young people, should also be considered and resolved in this perspective. The shortage of employment disheartens the person, who feels worthless in his own eyes, and impoverishes society, which lacks the contribution of a viable and willing work force.

I am thinking of the development of family policies, of all that concerns the legal and social status of families in general and the assistance that must be offered to those who are materially and morally disadvantaged. In particular, attention must be given to women's employment. Many women feel the need to be better recognized with respect to their rights, to the value of the tasks they normally carry out in the various sectors of social and professional life, and with respect to their aspirations within the family and within receiving society. Some of them are weary and nearly crushed by the volume of duties and tasks, without sufficient help and understanding. Provision must be made to ensure that no woman, due to economic need, not be forced into a job that is too hard with hours that are overly burdensome, on top of all adds to all her responsibilities as homemaker and educator of the children. But above all, it must be considered that the woman's commitments, on all levels of family life, also constitute an incomparable contribution to the life and future of society.

Dear friends, I hope that the *Festival of the Family* bears the hoped-for fruit and, while I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I willingly impart the Apostolic Blessing, in support of every proposal and project for good in support of family institutions, which has always been and continues to be the living cell of society.

From the Vatican, 2 December 2014

FRANCIS