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Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis in Ireland for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin (25-26 August 2018) – Holy Mass in Phoenix Park, Dublin

Homily of the Holy Father

Message of thanks of the Holy Father

This afternoon, at 14.30 local time (15.30 in Rome), the Holy Father Francis arrived at Phoenix Park in Dublin to celebrate the concluding Holy Mass of the Ninth World Meeting of Families.

Upon arrival, the Pope was received by the Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, H.E. Msgr. Diarmuid Martin, who accompanied him in the popemobile for a tour among the faithful.

Immediately afterwards the Holy Mass of the 21st Sunday of Ordinary Time began, and after the proclamation of the Gospel, the Holy Father pronounced his homily.

Before the final blessing, His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, in his greeting to conclude the Meeting, announced the Holy Father's decision to hold the Tenth World Meeting of Families in Rome in 2021, on the fifth anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

Finally, the Pope addressed a Message of thanks to all the faithful present, and imparted the final blessing.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, the Pope returned to the sacristy, where he greeted ten people from the Organizing Committee.

He transferred straight afterwards to the Convent of the Dominican Sisters for the meeting with the bishops.

The following are the Holy Father's homily and message of thanks, addressed to those present at the end of the Mass:

Homily of the Holy Father

“You have the words of eternal life!” (*Jn* 6:68)

At the end of this World Meeting of Families, we gather as a family around the table of the Lord. We thank God for the many blessings we have received in our families. And we want to commit ourselves to living fully our vocation to be, in the touching words of Saint Therese, “love in the heart of the Church”.

In this precious moment of communion with one another and with the Lord, it is good to pause and consider the source of all the good things we have received. Jesus reveals the origin of these blessings in today’s Gospel, when he speaks to his disciples. Many of them were upset, confused or even angry, struggling to accept his “hard sayings”, so contrary to the wisdom of this world. In response, the Lord tells them directly: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (*Jn* 6:63).

These words, with their promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, are teeming with life for us who accept them in faith. They point to the ultimate source of all the good that we have experienced and celebrated here in these past few days: the Spirit of God, who constantly breathes new life into our world, into our hearts, into our families, into our homes and parishes. Each new day in the life of our families, and each new generation, brings the promise of a new Pentecost, a *domestic Pentecost*, a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, the *Paraclete*, whom Jesus sends as our Advocate, our Consoler and indeed our *Encourager*.

How much our world needs this encouragement that is God’s gift and promise! As one of the fruits of this celebration of family life, may you go back to your homes and become a source of encouragement to others, to share with them Jesus’ “words of eternal life”. For your families are both a privileged place for, and an important means of, spreading those words as “Good News” for everyone, especially those who long to leave behind the desert and the “house of bondage” (cf. *Jos* 24:17) for the promised land of hope and freedom.

In today’s second reading, Saint Paul tells us that marriage is a sharing in the mystery of Christ’s undying fidelity to his bride, the Church (cf. *Eph* 5:32). Yet this teaching, as magnificent as it is, can appear to some as a “hard saying”. Because living in love, even as Christ loved us (cf. *Eph* 5:2), entails imitating his own self-sacrifice, dying to ourselves in order to be reborn to a greater and more enduring love. The love that alone can save our world from its bondage to sin, selfishness, greed and indifference to the needs of the less fortunate. That is the love we have come to know in Christ Jesus. It became incarnate in our world through a family, and through the witness of Christian families in every age it has the power to break down every barrier in order to reconcile the world to God and to make us what we were always meant to be: a single human family dwelling together in justice, holiness and peace.

The task of bearing witness to this Good News is not easy. Yet the challenges that Christians face today are, in their own way, no less difficult than those faced by the earliest Irish missionaries. I think of Saint Columbanus, who with his small band of companions brought the light of the Gospel to the lands of Europe in an age of darkness and cultural dissolution. Their extraordinary missionary success was not based on tactical methods or strategic plans, no, but on a humble and liberating docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It was their daily witness of fidelity to Christ and to each other that won hearts yearning for a word of grace and helped give birth to the culture of Europe. That witness remains a perennial source of spiritual and missionary renewal for God’s holy and faithful people.

Of course, there will always be people who resist the Good News, who “murmur” at its “hard words”. Yet like Saint Columbanus and his companions, who faced icy waters and stormy seas to follow Jesus, may we never be swayed or discouraged by the icy stare of indifference or the stormy winds of hostility.

But let us also humbly acknowledge that, if we are honest with ourselves, we too can find the teachings of Jesus

hard. How difficult it is always to forgive those who hurt us; how challenging always to welcome the migrant and the stranger; how painful joyfully to bear disappointment, rejection, betrayal; how inconvenient to protect the rights of the most vulnerable, the unborn or the elderly, who seem to impinge upon our own sense of freedom.

Yet it is precisely at those times that the Lord asks us: “What about you, do you want to go away too?” (*Jn* 6:67). With the strength of the Spirit to “encourage” us and with the Lord always at our side, we can answer: “We believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God” (v. 69). With the people of Israel, we can repeat: “We too will serve the Lord, for he is our God” (*Jos* 24:18).

Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, each Christian is sent forth to be a missionary, “a missionary disciple” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120). The Church as a whole is called to “go forth” to bring the words of eternal life to all the peripheries of our world. May our celebration today confirm each of you, parents and grandparents, children and young people, men and women, religious brothers and sisters, contemplatives and missionaries, deacons, priests and bishops, to share the joy of the Gospel! Share the Gospel of the family as joy for the world!

As we now prepare to go our separate ways, let us renew our fidelity to the Lord and to the vocation he has given to each of us. Taking up the prayer of Saint Patrick, let each of us repeat with joy: “Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me” [repeated in Irish]. With the joy and strength given by the Holy Spirit, let us say to him with confidence: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (*Jn* 6:68).

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Message of thanks of the Holy Father

At the conclusion of this Eucharistic celebration and this marvellous World Meeting of Families, which has been a gift of God to us and to the whole Church, I would like to say a heartfelt “thank you” to all those who contributed in any way to its realization. I thank Archbishop Martin and the Archdiocese of Dublin for their work of preparation and organization, and in a particular way, I express my gratitude for the support and assistance provided by the government, the civil authorities and the many volunteers from Ireland and other countries, who gave so generously of their time and effort. I want to say a special word of thanks to all those who prayed for this Meeting: the elderly, children, men and women religious, the infirm and those in prison... I am sure that the success of this Meeting is due to their quiet and persevering prayers. Thank you everyone! May the Lord repay you!
