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Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the online meeting “Our daily Love”, for the opening of the “Amoris Laetitia Family” Year

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father to the participants in the online meeting “Our daily Love”, promoted by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, the diocese of Roma and the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute on the fifth anniversary of the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, on the occasion of the opening of the “Amoris Laetitia Family” Year, announced by the Pope 27 December last, and which will conclude on 26 June 2022 with the Tenth World Meeting of Families in Rome:

Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

I greet all of you who are taking part in the Study Conference on “Our daily Love”. My thoughts go in particular to Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, to Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, vicar for the diocese of Rome, and to Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Science.

Five years ago, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* on the beauty and joy of conjugal and family love was promulgated. On this anniversary I have invited you to spend a year re-reading the document and reflecting on the theme, until the celebration of the Tenth World Day of Families which, God willing, will take place in Rome on 26 June 2022. I am grateful to you for the initiatives you have undertaken for this purpose and for the contribution that each of you makes in your own sphere of work.

In these five years, *Amoris laetitia* has outlined the beginning of a journey, endeavouring to encourage a new pastoral approach to the family situation. The main intention of the document was to communicate, in a time and in a profoundly changed culture, that today there is a need for a new outlook on the family on the part of the Church: it is not enough to reiterate the value and importance of doctrine, if we do not become protectors of the beauty of the family and if we do not take compassionate care of its frailties and its wounds.

These two aspects are at the heart of all family pastoral care: the directness of the proclamation of the Gospel and the tenderness of accompaniment.

Indeed, on the one hand we announce to couples, spouses and families a Word that helps them to grasp the authentic meaning of their union and of their love, a sign and image of Trinitarian love and of the alliance between Christ and the Church. It is the ever-new Word of the Gospel, from which all doctrine, even that on the family, can take shape. And it is a demanding Word, which seeks to free human relationships from the slavery that often disfigure them and render them unstable: the dictatorship of emotions, the exaltation of the temporary that discourages lifelong commitment, the predominance of individualism, fear of the future. In the face of these difficulties, the Church reiterates to Christian spouses the value of marriage as God's plan, as a fruit of his Grace, and as a call to live fidelity and gratuitousness to the fullest. This is the way for relationships, though they may cross a path marked by failures, falls and changes, to open up to the fullness of joy and human realisation, and become a haven for fraternity and love in society.

On the other hand, this proclamation cannot and must never be given from above and from the outside. The Church is embodied in historical reality, as was her Master, and even when she announces the Gospel of the family, she does so immersing herself in real life, knowing at first hand the daily struggles of spouses and parents, their problems, their sufferings, all those situations, small and large, that weigh down and sometimes hinder their journey. This is the real context in which daily love is lived. This is the title of your conference: "Our daily love". This is a meaningful choice. It is about the love generated by the simplicity and the silent work of life as a couple, by that daily and sometimes tiring commitment carried out by spouses, mothers, fathers and children. If the Gospel were to be presented as a doctrine dropped from on high, and did not enter into the "flesh" of this daily life, it would risk remaining a fine theory and, at times, being experienced as a moral obligation. We are called to accompany, to listen, to bless the journey of families; not only to set out the direction, but to make the journey with them; to enter the home with discretion and love, to say to the couple: the Church is with you, the Lord is close to you, we want to help you safeguard the gift you have received.

Proclaiming the Gospel by accompanying people and placing ourselves at the service of their happiness: in this way, we can help families to journey in a way that responds to their vocation and mission, aware of the beauty of the bonds and their foundation in the love of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When the family lives under the sign of this divine Communion, which I wished to make explicit in its existential aspects in *Amoris laetitia*, then it becomes a living word of God-Love, spoken to the world and for the world. Indeed, the grammar of family relationships - that is, of conjugality, motherhood, fatherhood, filiality and fraternity - is the way through which the language of love is transmitted, which gives meaning to life and human quality to every relationship. It is a language made up not only of words, but also of ways of being, of the way we speak, of the looks, gestures, times and spaces of our relationship with others. Married couples know this well, parents and children learn it daily in this school of love that is the family. This is also where the transmission of faith between generations takes place: it passes through the language of the good and healthy relationships that are lived out in the family every day, especially when facing conflicts and difficulties together.

In this time of pandemic, amidst so many psychological, economic and health-related difficulties, all this has become evident: family ties have been and are still being severely tested, but at the same time they remain the firmest point of reference, the strongest support, the irreplaceable guardian of the whole human and social community.

So let us support the family! Let us defend it from that which compromises its beauty. Let us approach this mystery of love with wonder, discretion and tenderness. And let us commit ourselves to safeguarding its precious and delicate bonds: children, parents, grandparents... We need these bonds to live and to live well, to make humanity more fraternal.

Therefore, the year dedicated to the family, which begins today, will be a propitious time to continue our reflection on *Amoris laetitia*. And for this I thank you from the bottom of my heart, knowing that the John Paul II Institute can contribute in many ways, in dialogue with other academic and pastoral institutions, to the

development of human, spiritual and pastoral attention in support of the family. I entrust you and your work to the Holy Family of Nazareth; and I ask you to do the same for me and my ministry.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 19 March 2021

Solemnity of St Joseph, beginning of the *Amoris laetitia* Family Year

FRANCIS
