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Address of the Holy Father to the participants in the second edition of the General States of Natality

The following are the words of greeting sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the second edition of the General States of Natality, taking place on 12 and 13 May at the Auditorium of Conciliation in Rome, where it was read at the inauguration of the event:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I greet you affectionately, and am sorry I am unable to be with you physically this year. But I will follow your work closely, because the theme of birthrate represents a real social emergency. It is not immediately perceptible, like other issues that occupy the news, but it is very urgent: fewer and fewer children are being born, and this means impoverishing everyone's future; Italy, Europe, and the West are impoverishing their future.

There is an existential periphery in the West, inconspicuous, that is not immediately noticed. It is that of women and men who wish to have a child, but are unable to do so. Many young people fail to realize their dream of raising a family. And so, they lower the bar of their desire, and content themselves with mediocre substitutes, such as business, the car, travel, jealously guarding their free time ... The beauty of a family with many children risks becoming a utopia, a dream that it is difficult to realize.

This is a new poverty that alarms me. It is the generative poverty of those who discount the desire for happiness in their hearts, of those who resign themselves to watering down their greatest aspirations, of those who are content with little and stop hoping on a bigger scale. Yes, it is a tragic poverty, because it affects human beings in their greatest wealth: bringing lives into the world to care for them, passing on to others with love the existence they have received.

Failing to see the problem of the declining birthrate is a short-sighted attitude; it means ceasing to look ahead,

further forward. It means turning the other way, thinking that the problems are always too complex and that nothing can be done. It means, in other words, giving up. This is why I like the title of your event, organized by the *Fondazione per la Natalità* and promoted by the Forum of Families. “It can be done”. It is the title of those who do not resign themselves. It is the title of those who hope against all hope, against numbers that worsen inexorably year by year. *It can be done* means not passively accepting that things cannot change.

Dear friends, things can change if, without fear, going beyond partisan interests and ideological barriers, we commit *together*. Therefore, I hope that at all levels – institutional, media, cultural, economic and social – we will foster, improve and implement concrete policies aimed at revitalizing birth and family. I think of you and I like to see how the issue of birthrate is able to unite, not divide. Businesses, banks, associations, unions, sportsmen, actors, writers, politicians, all together to think about how to start hoping for life again.

The data, the forecasts and the numbers are by now known to all: action is needed. It is the moment to give real answers to families and young people: hope cannot and must not die waiting. I ask God to bless your efforts. I am close to you and am rooting for you, so that together we can reverse the course of this cold demographic winter. Thank you. It can be done!
