



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAMILIES
DURING THE YEAR OF FAITH**

*Saint Peter's Square
Saturday, 26 October 2013*

Dear Families!

Good evening and welcome to Rome!

You have come as pilgrims from many parts of the world to profess your faith before the tomb of Saint Peter. This Square welcomes you and embraces you: we are one people, with one heart and soul, gathered by the Lord who loves and sustains us. I also greet the families who have joined us through television and the internet: this Square has expanded in every direction!

You have given this meeting a title: *"Family, Live the Joy of Faith!"* I like that title. I have listened to your experiences and the stories you have shared. I have seen so many children, so many grandparents... I have felt the pain of families living in situations of poverty and war. I have listened to the young people who want to be married even though they face numerous difficulties. And so, let us ask ourselves: how is it possible to live the joy which comes from faith, in the family, today? But I ask you also: is it possible to live this joy or is it not possible?

1. A saying of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew speaks to us: *"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Mt 11:28). Life is often wearisome, and many times tragically so. We have heard this recently... Work is tiring; looking for work is exhausting. And finding work today requires much effort. But what is most burdensome in life is not this: what weighs more than all of these things is a lack of love. It weighs upon us never to receive a smile, not to be welcomed. Certain silences are oppressive, even at times within families, between husbands and wives, between parents and children, among siblings. Without love, the burden

becomes even heavier, intolerable. I think of elderly people living alone, and families who receive no help in caring for someone at home with special needs. *"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden"*, Jesus says.

Dear families, the Lord knows our struggles: he knows them. He knows the burdens we have in our lives. But the Lord also knows our great desire to find joy and rest! Do you remember? Jesus said, *"... that your joy may be complete"* (cf. *Jn 15:11*). Jesus wants our joy to be complete! He said this to the apostles and today he says it to us. Here, then, is the first thing I would like to share with you this evening, and it is a saying of Jesus: Come to me, families from around the world - Jesus says - and I will give you rest, so that your joy may be complete. Take home this Word of Jesus, carry it in your hearts, share it with the family. It invites us to come to Jesus so that he may give this joy to us and to everyone.

2. The second thing which I would share with you is an expression taken from the Rite of Marriage. Those who celebrate the sacrament say, *"I promise to be true to you, in joy and in sadness, in sickness and in health; I will love you and honour you all the days of my life"*. At that moment, the couple does not know what will happen, nor what joys and pains await them. They are setting out, like Abraham, on a journey together. And that is what marriage is! Setting out and walking together, hand in hand, putting yourselves in the Lord's powerful hands. Hand in hand, always and for the rest of your lives. And do not pay attention to this makeshift culture, which can shatter our lives.

With trust in God's faithfulness, everything can be faced responsibly and without fear. Christian spouses are not naïve; they know life's problems and temptations. But they are not afraid to be responsible before God and before society. They do not run away, they do not hide, they do not shirk the mission of forming a family and bringing children into the world. But today, Father, it is difficult... Of course it is difficult! That is why we need the grace, the grace that comes from the sacrament! The sacraments are not decorations in life – what a beautiful marriage, what a beautiful ceremony, what a beautiful banquet... But that is not the sacrament of marriage. That is a decoration! Grace is not given to decorate life but rather to make us strong in life, giving us courage to go forwards! And without isolating oneself but always staying together. Christians celebrate the sacrament of marriage because they know they need it! They need it to stay together and to carry out their mission as parents. *"In joy and in sadness, in sickness and in health"*. This is what the spouses say to one another during the celebration of the sacrament and in their marriage they pray with one another and with the community. Why? Because it is helpful to do so? No! They do so because they need to, for the long journey they are making together: it is a long journey, not for a brief spell but for an entire life! And they need Jesus' help to walk beside one another in trust, to accept one another each day, and daily to forgive one another. And this is important! To know how to forgive one another in families because we all make mistakes, all of us! Sometimes we do things which are not good and which harm others. It is important to have the courage to ask for forgiveness when we are at fault in the family. Some weeks ago, in

this very square, I said that in order to have a healthy family, three words need to be used. And I want to repeat these three words: please, thank you, sorry. Three essential words! We say please so as not to be forceful in family life: “May I please do this? Would you be happy if I did this?”. We do this with a language that seeks agreement. We say thank you, thank you for love! But be honest with me, how many times do you say thank you to your wife, and you to your husband? How many days go by without uttering this word, thanks! And the last word: sorry. We all make mistakes and on occasion someone gets offended in the marriage, in the family, and sometimes - I say - plates are smashed, harsh words are spoken but please listen to my advice: don’t ever let the sun set without reconciling. Peace is made each day in the family: “Please forgive me”, and then you start over. Please, thank you, sorry! Shall we say them together? [They reply “yes”] Please, thank you and sorry. Let us say these words in our families! To forgive one another each day!

The life of a family is filled with beautiful moments: rest, meals together, walks in the park or the countryside, visits to grandparents or to a sick person... But if love is missing, joy is missing, nothing is fun. Jesus gives always gives us that love: he is its endless source. In the sacrament he gives us his word and he gives us the bread of life, so that our joy may be complete.

3. Finally, here before us is the *icon of Jesus’ Presentation in the Temple*. It is a beautiful and meaningful picture. Let us contemplate it and let it help us. Like all of you, the persons depicted in this scene have a journey to make: Mary and Joseph have travelled as pilgrims to Jerusalem in obedience to the Law of the Lord; the aged Simeon and the elderly prophetess Anna have come to the Temple led by the Holy Spirit. In this scene three generations come together, the interweaving of three generations: Simeon holds in his arms the child Jesus, in whom he recognizes the Messiah, while Anna is shown praising God and proclaiming salvation to those awaiting the redemption of Israel. These two elderly persons represent faith as memory. But let me ask you: Do you listen to your grandparents? Do you open your hearts to the memories that your grandparents pass on? Grandparents are like the wisdom of the family, they are the wisdom of a people. And a people that does listen to grandparents is one that dies! Listen to your grandparents. Mary and Joseph are the family, sanctified by the presence of Jesus who is the fulfilment of all God’s promises. Like the Holy Family of Nazareth, every family is part of the history of a people; it cannot exist without the generations who have gone before it. Therefore, today we have grandparents and children. The children learn from their grandparents, from the previous generation.

Dear families, you, too, are a part of God’s people. Walk joyfully in the midst of this people. Remain ever close to Jesus and carry him to everyone by your witness. I thank you for having come here. Together, let us make our own the words of Saint Peter, words which strengthen us and which will confirm us in times of trial: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life*” (Jn 6:68). With the help of Christ’s grace, live the joy of faith! May the Lord bless you, and may Mary, our Mother, protect you and be ever at your side. Thank you!

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