



DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS FAMILIA ET VITA

*Message from
His Eminence
Kevin Cardinal Farrell
To the African Family Life Congress
Entitled
From Humane Vitae to Amoris Laetitia: an evangelization of human love
Mauritius
November 10-15, 2018*

Your Eminences and Excellencies from the various Family Episcopal Commissions, dear friends and episcopal as well as diocesan personnel from the thirty one African countries here present dedicated to the pastoral care of the family, it is with sense of fraternal encouragement that our Dicastery offers you some reflections as we celebrate within the context of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the 50th anniversary of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

Among the aims of your African Family Life Congress, you are indeed, hoping that the fruits of your continental gathering will further help develop your various family and life apostolates in the context of the ever-changing challenges to each and every one of our faithful.

As we seek always relevant answers to the changing needs of the People of God, the Church today can most certainly and providentially find sure guidance in *Amoris Laetitia*'s clear logic of pastoral mercy that is aimed at serving, not the collective, but each individual in their unique and concrete reality in life.

It is from this perspective that Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation calls us to rediscover the life message of Saint Paul VI's celebrated Encyclical (cf. *AL*, 222), so that our care of couples should encourage them towards a natural and mutual respect in bestowing life, as well as seeking to integrate them into a fuller life of communion with God, Who reveals Himself in the sanctuary of their individual consciences so that they may become responsible and loving parents (cf. *AL* 37), not by force or replacement, but in true liberating freedom.

Additionally, in preparing ourselves to renew our pastoral vision of life and the family, the experiences of our lay faithful -particularly of the various generations of our married couples whom the Holy Spirit often inspires to become "Christian apostles" in this apostolate- are essential for pastoral success in this present time ((cf. *HV* 26).

It is important to acknowledge that by virtue of their vocation, and of their baptismal calling, no one better than our Christian families can talk to others of their life experience and of their gradual path in embracing the Church's teaching of generating and caring for life and marriage as enshrined in all the relevant documents from *Humanae Vitae* to *Amoris Laetitia*. By anchoring their vision on these two documents, our married couples, can aid our pastoral care programs so that our couples may gradually grow and embrace the clear evolution of the Church's teaching found in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (cf. *AL* 222); in Saint John Paul II's catechesis on the theology of the body; in the Instruction *Donum Vitae*'s call for an informed and authentic regard towards procreation and human life; in the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*'s insights into the wonder of human life, and on the family's call to teach and respect life and "our common home", in Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si*.

Amoris Laetitia invites us, with great pastoral uniqueness, to assist our Christian families by never ignoring the fact that each person, each couple, each family has concrete needs for the fulfillment of their vocation which we must discern and serve. We must, concentrate our pastoral efforts not on the basis of abstract theological ideals which can often seem "far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families", but upon what each family member experiences in his or her unique domestic setting (cf. *AL* 31).

In proposing the Church's teachings from *Humane Vitae* to *Amoris Laetitia*, we are reminded by Pope Francis to serve the individual person as Jesus Christ Himself did in his earthly life.

Our vision must be Christ's and His loving concern for each individual person; our language the language of the Holy Spirit, which reaches out to each person, not with fancy words, but with simplicity and appealing to their own personal lives, needs and culture. We are called to imitate the Incarnate Word in reaching out to people as He Himself did with Zacchaeus, with the Samaritan woman, with individual sinners; with the woman caught in adultery, so that accompanying them in their response to God, His grace in them may "well up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14).

In conclusion, our Dicastery looks forward to receiving news of your own pastoral reflections, which, while attentive to the needs of your territories (*AL* 3), they, in turn, will help enrich our own understanding of the pastoral care of the family, as well as aid us in offering assistance to other particular churches and episcopal conference seeking to expand and develop their own apostolic work

With assurances of our fullest support and fraternal regards,



Kevin Card. Farrell
Prefect

November 1st, Solemnity of All Saints