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Press Conference for the presentation of the Holy Father Francis' Letter for the Ninth World Meeting of Families (Dublin, 21-26 August 2018)

Intervention of Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell

Intervention of His Excellency Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

At 11.00 this morning in the Holy See Press Office a press conference was held to present the Letter of the Holy Father Francis for the Ninth World Meeting of Families, to take place from 21 to 26 August 2018 in Dublin, Ireland, on the theme *The Gospel of the Family: joy for the world*.

The panel was composed of His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, and His Excellency Msgr. Diarmuid Martin, archbishop of Dublin, Ireland.

Intervention of Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell

The Ninth World Meeting of Families will be held in Dublin from 21 to 26 August 2018. The Holy Father's Letter, which will be made public, confirms the date and the theme "The Gospel of the Family: joy for the world". The first reference indicated to us by the Pope is that this meeting may offer to families all over the world the possibility of "deepening their reflection and their sharing of the content of the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*".

The Church of Dublin is already at work, as you will hear. I wish, however, to underline how the preparation for this great event is as important in all the individual dioceses and in the parishes as it is in the final celebration in Ireland. It is in this way, in fact, that the event can truly have an impact on family, ecclesial, social and cultural life, visibly demonstrating the intense communion of all the people of God and all Christian families around the Pope. In this preparation, a helpful tool is the catechesis of which we will speak shortly, as well as the outline of the programme for the Ninth Meeting and for the Theological Pastoral Congress in the first three days.

I would now like, however, to draw your attention to the content of the Holy Father's Letter. Pope Francis writes: "Does the Gospel continue to be a joy for the world? And also: does the family continue to be good news for today's world?". It is easy to see the mutual interpenetration between the Gospel, the family and today's world: the family draws strength and joy from the Gospel, and from the evangelized family the world in turn is reached by the good news of the merciful love of the Father. The Pope opens his heart and entrusts to us his universal pastor's dream: "an outbound Church, not a self-referential one, a Church that does not pass by far from man's wounds, a merciful Church that proclaims the heart of the revelation of God as Love, which is Mercy". And the Church will be thus, and will do this to the extent to which Christian families will be "places of mercy and witnesses of mercy".

Our Dicastery and the Archdiocese of Dublin encourage the active agency of all ecclesial communities and pastoral heads at various levels, so that every experience may be gathered and circulated, also via the media; this will increase the beauty and joy of the family in the hope that in Dublin God's plan for the family may be made manifest to today's world for what it truly is: a great "'Yes' to all creation, and at the heart of this latter is man. It is God's 'yes' to the union between man and woman, in openness and service to life in all its phases" (from the Pope's Letter).

Intervention of His Excellency Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

People of all backgrounds are fascinated by Pope Francis. Even those who do not belong to the Church understand that he wishes to set in place a real renewal of the Church and they wish him well.

What inspires Pope Francis in his desire for renewal? There is a danger that each person would try to impose their own idea which may well be other than the Pope's vision of authentic renewal.

In his Letter of Convocation of the World Meeting of Families, which is published today, Pope Francis explains what his dream of the Church is:

"I dream of a Church which reaches out, not a Church which is self-referential, a Church which does not pass by at a distance the hurts of humankind, a merciful Church which announces what is at the heart of the revelation of divine love, and that is mercy".

Pope Francis has expressed these ideas on many other occasions. They were evident in the short speech he gave to the Cardinals on the days prior to the Conclave which elected him. What is innovative in the Letter of Convocation is the emphasis on the central place that the family is called to play in realizing this great dream of renewal of the Pope.

The family is called to be a place of encounter with that divine mercy which heals and liberates. The family is called to be the place where spouses love each other not in vague romantic terms but in terms of their everyday realities and difficulties. Living love in the family involves family members knowing how to generously give of themselves, involves knowing how to forgive, knowing never to lose patience, but rather to reach out to understand and to respect each other.

The Pope's vision of the mission of the family does not attempt to hide the fact that families experience challenges, weakness, fragility and even breakdown. Families need a Church which is with them, accompanying them in a process of discernment and integration though helping them to respond with a 'yes' to the Divine love.

The World Meeting of Families 2018 in Dublin sets out to be not just a passing even or a fleeting celebration of the ideals of family life. It is a moment in which the entire Church can deepen its reflection on the teaching of *Amoris Laetitia*; it is a moment in which the daily love of husbands and wives and the daily love of parents for their children can be recognized as a fundamental resource for the renewal of the Church and of society. The

Church must be a place where those who have failed can experience not harsh judgement but the strong embrace of the Lord which can lift them up to begin again to realize their own dream even if only imperfectly.

The celebration in Dublin in August 2018 will be prepared by an extensive catechesis on the meaning of conjugal and family love and on the role of the family in society. It will be a moment of renewal for the Church in Ireland with wide involvement of lay faithful. It will be a moment in which the role of the family can be understood in greater depth. It will be a moment in which families can regain confidence in carrying out their mission in the context of a Church which is merciful and which accompanies them in the ups and downs of their lives.

The Church in Ireland – and especially my Archdiocese of Dublin – is aware of the privilege that Pope Francis has assigned to it but is also aware of the challenge that the Pope has placed on its shoulders. The challenge is not just of organizing a large world event, but of recalling for a modern society such as that of Ireland, with its complex mix of secularization and faith, how important the family is for the future of Ireland and of the wider society especially in Europe.
