

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/08/europe/vatican-pope-family/index.html>

2 minute video overview of Pope Francis brand new document – “Love in the Family”

First Communion Parents: This Sunday April 10th we will host a First Communion preparation meeting for parents and students during the regularly scheduled Sunday class time. It will follow the same format as our Reconciliation preparation meeting. We will have a series of activities for you to coach/guide your children through. We will start in the cafeteria at 10:30 AM. Feel free to bring a snack or refreshment to share!

...your kids can do random acts of mercy any time; and would like to be encouraged by your example – so share some experiences with them!
Challenge them to do things for others because of the dignity of each person – and not for a new toy they really don’t need!

Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible continues this Sunday at 10:45 in the Gym: All parents are welcome!

Dear Parents:

Pope Francis just wrote you, I, the priests and bishops a letter called “Love in the Family” (full text link in English is "[On Love in the Family](#)"). Below you will find the opening title page and the first three paragraphs, plus an article from CNN. Please take a look and I will be happy to receive any questions/observations/comments you may have. The media is already trying to move it in a certain direction; however this is a 265 page document backed up by a lot of research and consultations with bishops, priests and families from all over the world. A typical media headline looks like this: Pope Francis says Church and priests should treat divorced and remarried Catholics and homosexuals better. I hope that as a Church and as individuals that we are already doing this. We are called to treat all people with dignity. This document is about much more than this. It’s about the most basic cell needed to foster a stable, loving family environment that provides hope, love, a sense of meaning and stability for people, a parish, a town, a city and a country. Without this transcendent organization (even if we include the daily family squabbles/disagreements) each person, parish, town, city or country will have a much more difficult time in building strong/vibrant communities and loving relationships!

Here is the title page and the first three paragraphs:

POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION AMORIS LÆTITIA OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS TO BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS CONSECRATED PERSONS CHRISTIAN MARRIED COUPLES AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL ON LOVE IN THE FAMILY

1. The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church. As the Synod Fathers noted, for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, “the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people, and this is an inspiration to the Church”.¹ As a response to that desire, “the Christian proclamation on the family is good news indeed”.²
2. The Synod process allowed for an examination of the situation of families in today’s world, and thus for a broader vision and a renewed awareness of the importance of marriage and the family. The complexity of the issues that arose revealed the need for continued open discussion of a number of doctrinal, moral, spiritual, and pastoral questions. The thinking of pastors and theologians, if faithful to the Church, honest, realistic and creative, will help us to achieve greater clarity. The debates carried on in the media, in certain publications and even among the Church’s ministers, range from an

immoderate desire for total change without sufficient reflection or grounding, to an attitude that would solve everything by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations.

3. Since "time is greater than space", I would make it clear that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium. Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it. This will always be the case as the Spirit guides us towards the entire truth (cf. Jn 16:13), until he leads us fully into the mystery of Christ and enables us to see all things as he does. Each country or region, moreover, can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs. For "cultures are in fact quite diverse and every general principle... needs to be inculturated, if it is to be respected and applied".

Highlights from CNN include:

- Francis calls for church to be more tolerant in practice while not changing official doctrine
- He urges priests to be more accepting of gays, divorced Catholics, "irregular" situations
- Pope: "The divorced who have entered a new union should be made to feel part" of church

(CNN)Pope Francis put his shoulder to the doors of the Catholic Church and shoved them open a little wider Friday, calling for the church to be more tolerant in practice while not changing any official doctrines.

He urged priests around the world to be more accepting of gays and lesbians, divorced Catholics and other people living in what the church considers "irregular" situations.

"A pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws ... as if they were stones to throw at people's lives," Francis writes in a sweeping paper outlining his stance on family matters. He urges more common sense and less unthinking following of rules.

"By thinking that everything is black and white, we sometimes close off the way of grace and growth," he writes.

He emphasizes that "unjust discrimination" against gays and lesbians is unacceptable, downplays the idea of "living in sin" and suggests that priests should use their own discretion on whether divorced Catholics in new marriages can take Communion.

[Bernie Sanders to visit Vatican City before New York primary](#)

Path of Jesus

The paper has much to please both liberals and conservatives, though it is unlikely to go far enough for either group within the church.

"I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion. But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness," he writes.

The statements appear in a highly anticipated paper called "[On Love in the Family](#)" in English and "Amoris Laetitia" in Latin. Running more than 260 pages, it comes after Francis summoned the world's Catholic bishops twice to discuss the issues in conferences known as synods.

The first was in October 2014, and [the second](#) was a year later. Francis has been working on the document since then.

The October 2015 synod in particular was reported to have been contentious, with Cardinal George Pell -- who is close to Pope Francis -- telling a Catholic newspaper that [some of the debates were "spicy."](#)

But Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington [wrote Friday](#) that "Amoris Laetitia" "reflects the consensus of those meetings and many voices."

A 'groundbreaking new document'

For those paying attention to Francis since he became Pope three years ago, the opinions in the paper are unlikely to come as a surprise.

This is, after all, the Pope who said, "Who am I to judge?" when asked about homosexuality.

[The Pope said what?!?](#)

But Friday's paper is not simply a remark made in an interview.

It's what's called an "apostolic exhortation."

That means it is an official statement from the Pope on how Catholics should live their lives. It's the second exhortation Francis has issued since taking the throne of St. Peter, and the first based entirely on synods he summoned himself.

His aim "is to help families -- in fact, everyone -- experience God's love and know that they are welcome members of the church," said the Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest and writer who called the paper a "groundbreaking new document."

On divorced Catholics, whose religious lives Francis has made it a priority to ease, the Pope writes: "The divorced who have entered a new union should be made to feel part of the Church."

"It can no longer simply be said that all those living in any 'irregular situation' are living in a state of mortal sin."

Shift on divorce

Francis has pushed to make it easier for Catholic couples to get an annulment of their marriages. That allows them to continue to participate fully in church life if they remarry, including taking the sacrament of Communion.

He does not say explicitly in Friday's paper that divorced Catholics should be allowed to take Communion, Martin observed.

"The reception of Communion is not spelled out here, but that is a traditional aspect of 'participation' in church life," Martin said.

The Pope does not change Catholic doctrine on homosexuality, marriage, birth control or abortion in the paper.

In fact, he reiterates that marriage between a man and a woman remains the Catholic ideal, superior to other forms of union.

"In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full idea of marriage," he writes.

A "great variety of family situations ... can offer a certain stability, but de facto or same-sex unions, for example, may not simply be equated with marriage," he says. And he holds the line against artificial birth control, rejecting the phrase "safe sex."

The very wording, he says, operates as if "an eventual child were an enemy to be protected against."

More tolerance, less judgment

But he calls much more for tolerance and mercy than for judgment in the paper.

"There is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems," he writes.

"Every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration."

There are about 1.2 billion Roman Catholics around the world, the Vatican calculates. That's a little more than half the world's Christians, according to the Pew Research Center, a think tank in Washington.

The Catholic population in the so-called global South is growing in influence. [Pope Francis](#) is a reflection of that trend -- he's from Argentina, making him the first Pope from the region. The Pope tells priests that they should make decisions appropriate to their local conditions.

"Each country or region ... can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs," he writes in a possible effort to satisfy both liberals and conservatives by decentralizing authority.

He tries to take the heat out of the culture wars by admitting a measure of Catholic responsibility for them.

"At times the way we present our Christian beliefs and treat other people has helped to contribute to today's problematic situation," he writes.

In addition to the many sections of the paper that will be seen as statements of [Vatican](#) policy, it also explores the practical problems that married couples face and advises them to work through them together.

And Francis allows a little poetry to seep into the document, too, writing: "Young love needs to keep dancing towards the future with immense hope."

[It's hard to change the Catholic Church, even if you're the Pope](#)

See you on Sunday!

God bless,

Tony

Discipleship

Last Fall I introduced the concept of the Year of Mercy convoked by Pope Francis. He called for this special moment of grace because he believes that we, the Church and society need to be more open to mercy and that we need to share this aspect of faith with others.

<https://youtu.be/ZcXX9A2W3jQ>

Two 3 minute videos on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

<https://youtu.be/IYv4BUwytA0>

In order to bring to your child more of an awareness of the importance of the daily practice of mercy we will give each child a wrist band this Sunday that will say on it "Random Acts of Mercy" – in other words this will serve as a reminder that they should be merciful towards others at various times of the day, week and month and throughout this special Jubilee Year.

Above is a list of the traditional Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Obviously some are more accessible than others for your children. Try and encourage what seems reasonable. They don't have to do all of them. We are just trying to raise the consciousness in our Parish family in this area of faith development!

God bless,

Tony MacDonnell
Religious Education Director
(914) 668-9815
amacdonnell@arcol.org

Areas of Interest and Upcoming Events

<http://aleteia.org/2016/03/30/watch-pope-francis-if-you-fall-get-up-get-up/>

Pope Francis' 44 second video – If you fall get up, get up!!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liWjpDmpAgM&ebc=ANyPxKr8ouO7he22d83ZyvIRJoeKQDCzq9op63gs1oKO4cePdzySiC71n366lwgSKXhx-Zrn_DVSxTVckPHQZBG-PjkERXIFCg

Divine Mercy is always celebrated the first Sunday after Easter. Here is a short explanation of this new devotion that has grown dramatically in the Church in recent times!

<http://petersboat.net/2016/03/17/march-madness-spiritual-and-religious-2/>

Short 3 minute video by a young New York priest on how spirituality and religion work together

- Here is a good Lenten reflection link from a friend of mine who is a seminarian in the Archdiocese of New York: Eric Wandrey: <http://godlights.me/2016/02/04/an-idea-for-lent-more-leisure/>

Video about Lent in two minutes <http://bustedhalo.com/video/ash-wednesday-in-two-minutes>

<http://godlights.me/2016/01/13/david-bowie-shakespeare-death-and-hope/>.

The Holy Doors associated with the Jubilee Year of Mercy officially opened in our Archdiocese on Sunday Dec. 13th at St Patrick's Cathedral and at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral in Lower East Manhattan.

<http://archny.org/mercy>

<https://youtu.be/ZcXX9A2W3jQ>

Two 3 minute videos on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

<https://youtu.be/IYv4BUwytA0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtBsI3j0YRQ>

David Steindl-Rast: Want to be happy? Be grateful

Published on Nov 27, 2013

The one thing all humans have in common is that each of us wants to be happy, says Brother David Steindl-Rast, a monk and interfaith scholar. And happiness, he suggests, is born from gratitude.

An inspiring lesson in slowing down, looking where you're going, and above all, being grateful.

Catholic Underground in Manhattan, <http://catholicunderground.net/> (First Saturday of month)

Children's Choir sign up - please reach out to me if you have any questions (amacdonnell@arcol.org) meets at 8:50 am in the choir loft.

Pflaum Publishing is the main program our teachers use for your child's Sunday lesson.

The two exceptions are the classes on the Sacraments: First Communion and Confirmation.

All parents, no matter the grade will find that the link below is a complimentary resource for

the work we do with all of the parish children.

http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/new_page/parent_guide.php

http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/new_page/index.php

This part of the Pflaum website also gives you access to more resources to reinforce the weekly lessons done by the Catechist.

<https://youtu.be/ZcXX9A2W3jQ>

Two 3 minute videos on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

<https://youtu.be/IYv4BUwytA0>

<http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2015/11/05/kids-technology-addiction/>

Short Article: My kid, the Ipad Junkie

<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/>

All of Pope Francis' US talks are found on this website with YouTube channel links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jx447QYpwF8>

(4 minute video about how to be aware of the reality that God is acting in your life... so that you can hear his voice)

Fr. Albert Haase's short video link will give you some insight about how we can become aware of God's presence in our daily life.

<http://www.aleteia.org/en/religion/article/afraid-to-celebrate-halloween-dont-worry-its-very-christian-5862367938215936>

Short article on some Christian links with Halloween

<http://www.aleteia.org/en/religion/video/video-jesuit-priest-talks-about-real-life-exorcism-5832751722790912>

A Jesuit priest reflects (3minutes & 45 seconds) on the actual person possessed in the movie the Exorcist

Reminder about a basic "God Plan" for the New Year:

So what's your plan for the New Year? It's that time of year when we make new diet plans, exercise plans, spring vacation plans and maybe a new house budget. How about a God plan? I know you are intentional about all of the areas above, otherwise nothing new would ever happen in your family. I would like to invite you to consider putting some New Year's energy into a God plan. God waits patiently for us to take steps towards Him in response to the many graces he presents to us in our daily lives. Grace is all around us; assuring us that one of the characteristics of God is his omnipresence(He is everywhere). In other words we are never not in the presence of God. The challenge to each of us is to recognize these ongoing daily encounters and their meaning for our lives and families!

Here are a few simple steps I personally use each day. They may help you and your children become

more aware of God's presence in your daily life:

1. Morning: when you get up encourage yourself and your children to say hello to God and to be grateful for something or someone! Encourage yourself and children to say something complimentary to others before they go to school – build up a habit of thinking positively of others!
2. Gospel for the day: Usccb.org it takes a minute to read the daily Gospel. Here's an online link. <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/011716.cfm>
3. At night thank God again for your day, food, good results at work, a moment of fellowship etc. Review your various encounters with others and any insights you had during the day. Take a look at the next day's Gospel passage (will just take a minute). This could be done on your own and/or with your children.
4. Next day – Repeat.
5. Bonus points: consider reading a Catholic book (a little at a time) or joining or beginning a discussion group focused on some aspect of the faith or spirituality. I am happy to offer suggestions for resources. I am just an email away: amacdonnell@arcol.org

The fruit of regular daily reflection is: "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness" **Galatians 5:22**