

Intervention of H.E. Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia

President of the Pontifical Council for the Family

The Family at the Center

The celebration of the VIII World Meeting of Families is a precious opportunity to put the families at the center of the Church and of civil society. Let us put the families at the center: It's a duty! It's beneficial!

In Philadelphia, on the days of the conference, during the festival on Saturday evening, in the many meetings and events that enrich those intense days, we can and must firstly listen to their authentic and real stories. Their testimony will be a valuable opportunity to enjoy the spectacle of the beauty of love that grows in fidelity and generates life, and to thank the Lord for everything. This sincere and ardent listening will also give us opportunities to share the hardships and suffering of today's families: this is what the Church, disciple of a Master who has compassion (that is: who suffers with), must always do, and especially on special days like those in Philadelphia.

Let us put the families in the center; this meeting is theirs and it is for them: they are the protagonists, and they are the main recipients. The family builds the Church together and sustains society. With respect to this, I would like to announce that, during the days of the conference, we will present the results of some international research that has scientifically studied this positive influence. The family constantly asks for help and support in the entire ecclesial community (in the next few days I will write to all the monasteries of the world to ask them to accompany these very important days with their prayers) and from whole civil society, which cannot remain indifferent to such beauty and goodness that is so effective and viable.

The World in Philadelphia

The meeting that we are presenting in detail today is global; we want to be global, we want it to be seen and reported on worldwide.

The family is the heritage of all humanity, at every latitude, in every culture; it is blessed by all religions. That is why we wanted a significant presence of other Christian denominations and of major world religious traditions, as Msgr. McIntyre will soon explain in detail.

This event should help all, especially the West, to keep looking with a gaze full of awe and welcome toward the entire world; too often we live locked up in our problems, running the risk of becoming old and sterile. Thanks to the joint effort of the Pontifical Council and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, we are working so that delegations truly from around the globe and especially from the world's poorest local Churches will be present.

Philadelphia will be a great worldwide celebration of families: in the spectacle, we will be able to get a glimpse, we will have to show the beauty and the possibility of all humanity becoming a single family of peoples. It is the dream of peace; it is God's dream.

This universality will be enshrined in the final gesture of the whole meeting: at the end of the Mass on Sunday, 27 September, Pope Francis will give the Gospel of Luke, the Good News of God's mercy, which is

Jesus, to families from big cities on the 5 continents: Kinshasa (Africa), Havana (America), Hanoi (Asia), Sydney (Australia) and Marseille (Europe). This is a symbolic gesture that will announce the sending of a million copies of this book to the five cities involved: we want the Gospel of Mercy to be announced in the great cities of the world, especially in poorer and peripheral neighborhoods. We want to provide the nourishment of the Gospel to the families of the world so that they may build bonds of love between them, in the Church and in society. On this occasion, I cannot omit thanking the American Bible Society for making this highly significant gesture possible.

From Philadelphia to Rome

With the testimony of the families and looking toward the entire world, laden with their anxieties and expectations, we can face October's Synod, whose Instrumentum Laboris was officially promulgated two days ago. The intimate connection between these two events is clearly not only chronological.

It is hoped that the meeting in Philadelphia and the Synod in October will truly form a social and ecclesial season, characterized by the renewed role of the family. We want to work towards this objective.