

“Love is our Mission: The Family Fully Alive.”

We see these words everywhere today, not only inside this Convention Center, but on every street lamp and every building here in Center City Philadelphia. And I venture to say that no other city would have been a better place to hold our Meeting than Philadelphia, whose very name recalls the love that is found in families.

For their warm and generous hospitality, and in the name of Pope Francis, who will be with us soon, I thank the whole Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and especially Archbishop Chaput. I thank Mayor Nutter and all the citizens of this wonderful city. And I thank Governor Wolfe, Governor of the State of Pennsylvania.

We have come to Philadelphia from all over the world—from more than a hundred countries—and each one of us has a different story, many different traditions, and situations of every different stripe and color. But all of us feel at home because we are united in our one heavenly Father, one Holy Spirit, the spirit of Love, one name, the name of Jesus our brother and Savior, and one passion—the family.

Yes, the family is our passion, and it is also our mission. Moreover, from the first moment that God created the family, it has been His passion as well. God created the world for the family of humanity, and for each human family. All creation was and is the family’s home, a home more beautiful than any architect could imagine. God commanded Adam and Eve, and all families, including those here today, to live in creation, to care for it, and to be fruitful and multiply. That is how Holy Scripture describes the vocation and the mission of the family. A great vocation and mission!—which means that no family can live for itself alone. The family must make the world a real home for all. Every family must dream of a better world for everyone, and particularly for the weakest among us: children, the sick, the elderly, all those in need. That’s why, for all the peoples of the earth, the family is our most valuable and most important resource.

The Church, the preeminent “expert in humanity,” knows well that if the family is fully alive, society is fully alive. Yes! If the family is strong, society itself is strong. The most thoughtful among us know this truth all too well.

My dear friends, our meeting will follow closely the path that our Popes have shown us since the Second Vatican Council. Here at our Meeting we represent millions of Christian families. And there is a grand dream that we must make come true: turn the whole world into one great family.

The Church is soon to begin a Synod of Bishops dealing with the family, and our meeting of families here in Philadelphia is one of the most important of the events that will influence the synodal discussions. I’ll even say that these our days of Meeting are like a dawn that will break into a new day. Yes, we are at the daybreak of the Synod, and from here in Philadelphia we call on the Lord to let the Synod in Rome shine, on all the world, the noonday light of the Gospel of the Family.

Dear friends, it is my great pleasure to tell you that Pope Francis has decreed that those who participate in this World Meeting of Families can gain a plenary indulgence, even before the Jubilee of Mercy begins.

Philadelphia has become the gateway through which to approach that great sea of mercy where the Lord Himself dwells. May it also become a haven of mercy for all those in need of love, of comfort, of friendship, support and healing.

My dear friends, your work awaits you!