

Most Holy Father,

The music we have just heard makes us realize that being here today in St. Peter's Square is itself a symphony.

At first, we were going to have this meeting in the Paul VI Audience Hall, but so many engaged couples asked to participate that here we are now, all of us, in St. Peter's Square—a continuation, in a sense, of your meeting with families here last October.

More than 25,000 of us are in the Square, and we come from 30 different countries.

Today is the feast of St. Valentine who was Bishop of Terni in the Third Century and who, on a February 14, was martyred in Rome for the sake of the Gospel. He became the patron of engaged couples because he helped a young Christian girl marry a young pagan soldier (even in those days weddings had their problems!). This episode became so well known that many couples came to rely on the holy Bishop for help in realizing their dream of love.

Today is a little bit like that, Holy Father. All these young people are here just to be with you and, with you, to ask the Lord to bless their love. They are not yet married, but they want their love to last forever. They understand what true love is. Swimming against the tide of popular culture, they're not afraid to marry, even in a world that believes less and less in unions that last forever. They are not afraid to create a family even though the world thinks it's better for everyone to worry just about him or her self, even in a relationship. They entrust their love to the strong tide of human history set in motion by God Himself when He said, "It is not good for man to be alone." (Gen. 2:18).

Yes, my dear young couples, today from St. Peter's you say to the whole world, "It is not good to live alone. Thinking only about ourselves will never bring happiness." Thank you for your witness! You deserve to give each other a hand! [applause]

The Church and the Pope rejoice to see you here. They embrace each one of you, just like the colonnade around this Square embraces you. And their embrace is not a weak one; it is hearty, it is firm.

Today, the world looks at you in amazement. The prospect of this meeting between you and the Pope has puzzled them for some time. What we are doing has even convinced the sun to show up! Seeing your joy, he's chased away the rain of these past weeks and is giving you his most affectionate smile!

All of us, all of us, can see that you are refusing to build your home on the quicksands of egocentric "feelings" that come and go, that are all too often mistaken for love but that just turn people in upon themselves and sometimes lead to violence. We remember and pray for the girl in the Rome beaten by her boyfriend, for all young women degraded by men who pass off their own selfishness as love.

We must say "No More" to violence against women, against children. [Applause]

Holy Father, this throng of engaged couples participating in marriage preparation courses is not putting off their weddings until their separate situations are, as people say, “settled.” No, their future is something they want to build together, together they want to create a home for themselves and their children, to face the challenges great and small of life.

To help them, public officials need to be much more concerned about their situations, and must implement much more effective policies with respect to families and jobs. Too many young people are out of work. Conditions today are difficult we know, but for all of society young people building families is a treasure unlike any other.

Holy Father, these young people know well that marriage is a noble vocation, and they know that Jesus is with them, as He was at the wedding feast of Cana; and they are sure that on their wedding day he will “provide wine” for them, a better wine than they have ever had.

Dear engaged couples, on your wedding day when before Jesus you exchange your “I do” forever, the Pope wants to be close to you. You have received a gift today, a little wedding ring pillow. On your wedding day, think of that pillow as a caress from the Pope.

These couples, Holy Father, are already answering the questions that will be raised at next October’s Extraordinary Synod on the Family. Today, they are telling you that they welcome with enthusiasm the beauty of the family, the Christian family. That’s why they have come here today.

They have some questions to ask you. They will listen to your answers, they will keep your blessing in their hearts and they will pray for you.

Thank you, Holy Father, for this unforgettable day!