

The World Meeting of Families a year on ...

... ten messages from Pope Francis during those days in Ireland

This very day last year, many of us made our way to the Phoenix Park to gather with Pope Francis at the Final Mass in his brief two day visit amongst us. Over the summer I took the opportunity to re-visit the addresses of Pope Francis during the World Meeting of Families. Mindful that the theme of our World Meeting of Families was ‘The Gospel of the Family, Joy for the World’, twelve months on from that gathering I’m going to simply offer key messages for me of that visit, messages coming from Dublin Castle, from the Pro-Cathedral, from Croke Park, from Knock Shrine, from the Phoenix Park and from the Dominican Convent in Cabra. These ten messages are little vignettes for me that tell us something of the man who is Pope Francis, something of his vision for family life and something of his aspiration and hope for us as an Irish Church.

Message 1: *“Families today face many challenges in their efforts to embody a faithful love, to raise children with healthy values and to be in the community at large, a leaven of goodness, love and mutual care”* - Video Message prior to the beginning of the visit: 21 August 2018

Message 2: *“It was in the family that each of us took his or her first steps in life. There we learned to live together in harmony, to master our selfish instincts and reconcile our differences, and above all to discern and seek those values that give authentic meaning and fulfilment to our lives”* - Address in Dublin Castle to Authorities, Civil Society and Diplomatic Corps: 25 August 2018

Message 3: *“We are living in a ‘culture of the provisional’, we are used to it. If I feel hungry or thirsty, I can eat; but my feeling of being full does not last even a day. If I have a job, I know I might lose it against my will, or I may have to choose a different career ... Is there anything precious that endures at all? ... Those words ‘all the days of my life’ are a commitment to make love grow, because love has nothing of the provisional. Call it excitement, call it, I don’t know, enchantment, but real love is definitive, a ‘you and I”* - Engagement with couples in Pro-Cathedral: 25 August 2018

Message 4: *“A few months ago, someone told me that we are losing our ability to love. Slowly but surely, we are forgetting the direct language of a caress, the strength of tenderness. There will be no revolution of love without a revolution of tenderness!”* - Engagement with couples in Pro-Cathedral: 25 August 2018

Message 5: “*You are especially attuned with people of God, and indeed, with the poor. You have the grace of contemplating the wounds of Jesus in those in need, those who suffer, those who are unfortunate or destitute, or full of vices and defects. For you this is the flesh of Christ. This is your witness and the Church needs it. Thank you*” – Visit to the Capuchin Day Centre for Homeless People: 25 August 2018

Message 6: “*God wants every family to be a beacon of the joy of his love in our world. What does this mean? It means that we, who have encountered God’s saving love, try, with or without words, to express it in little acts of kindness in our daily routine and in the most hidden moments of our day*” – Festival of Families, Croke Park: 25 August 2018

Message 7: “*Amid the storms and winds that buffet our times, may families be a bulwark of faith and goodness, resisting, in the best traditions of this nation, all that would diminish our dignity as men and women created in God’s image and called to the sublime destiny of eternal life*” – Angelus Address at Knock Shrine: 26 August 2018

Message 8: “*We ask forgiveness for all those times when, as a Church, we did not offer to the survivors of any type of abuse compassion and the pursuit of justice and truth by concrete actions*” – Penitential Act at the Mass in Phoenix Park: 26 August 2018

Message 9: “*The Church as a whole is called to ‘go forth’ to bring the words of eternal life to all the peripheries of the world. May our celebration today confirm each of you, parents and grandparents, children and young people, men and women, religious brothers and sisters, contemplatives and missionaries, deacons, priests and bishops, to share the joy of the Gospel! Share the Gospel of the family as joy for the world!*” – Homily at the Mass in Phoenix Park: 26 August 2018

Message 10: “*The wounds of Christ give us courage. I ask you, please, to be close – this is the word, ‘closeness’ – to the Lord and to God’s people. Closeness. Do not repeat the attitudes of aloofness and clericalism that at times in your history have given the real image of an authoritarian, harsh and autocratic Church*” – Meeting with the Bishops in the Dominican Convent, Cabra: 26 August 2018

During that weekend a year ago in Ireland, Pope Francis shared with us the challenges and the strengths of family life. There is no such thing as a perfect family, every family has its own tensions and issues. Forgiveness is at the heart

of all family relationships. A year on from the World Meeting of Families, my prayer for every family in Kildare & Leighlin this weekend is that you will be truly blessed, enriched and challenged by the words of Pope Francis then and now to be 'Joy for the World'. To all who assisted with preparatory programmes, enjoyed our Picnic and Fun Days in Punchestown and Carlow College, participated in the events a year ago, I once again say many thanks.

✠ Denis Nulty
Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin