



“In the family, three words need to be used. I want to repeat this! Three words: ‘Please,’ ‘Thank you,’ ‘Sorry.’ Three essential words!”<sup>(133)</sup>.

**Chapter Eight:** Pope Francis evokes the image of the Church as a field hospital, especially with regard to couples who are cohabiting or are divorced and remarried. Avoiding easy answers and general rules, he emphasizes the role of conscience and discernment on the part of the faithful and encourages pastors to look at each case individually. He cites the mercy of God and the “logic of the Gospel,” and recommends a process of accompaniment in which the pastor “guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God” (300).

**Chapter Nine:** Pope Francis concludes his discussion of marriage and family life by saying that God “dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes” (315). He encourages families to center themselves on Christ and recommends family prayer as a “special way of expressing and strengthening this paschal faith” (318).



**Chapter Four:** In perhaps the heart of the entire document, Pope Francis provides detailed commentary on each quality of love discussed in 1 Corinthians 13, applying each quality to the specific love of the family. In the final section of this chapter, Francis discusses the ways in which married love grows and changes over the life of a marriage, saying that with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we find the strength to “confirm, direct and transform our love in every new situation” (164).

**Chapter Five:** Pope Francis speaks of children as the fruit of love in marriage and provides words of encouragement for couples facing infertility as well as stressing the importance of extended families and the need to care for the elderly.

**Chapter Six:** Primarily talking to pastors, Pope Francis calls for greater attention to the preparation of couples for marriage, help for couples in crisis, and pastoral care of persons who are separated or divorced.

**Chapter Seven:** Pope Francis provides advice to parents regarding raising their children with strong morals and values. He also discusses the need for sex education, stating that it should be presented “within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving” (280).



**Prayer to the Holy Family**  
(from *Amoris Laetitia*)

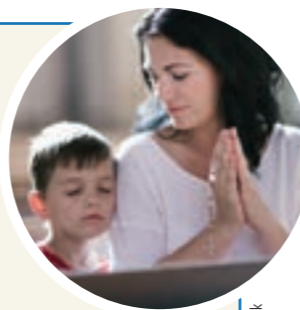
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division; may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God’s plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Graciously hear our prayer. Amen.



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**Additional Resources**

*Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis (Our Sunday Visitor, 2016).

*Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis (Our Sunday Visitor, 2015).

*Pope Francis and the Joy of Family Life*, Ed. Kevin Cotter (Our Sunday Visitor, 2015).

*A Year of Mercy with Pope Francis*, Ed. Kevin Cotter (Our Sunday Visitor, 2014).

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POPE FRANCIS  
*Amoris Laetitia*

ON LOVE IN  
THE FAMILY

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“The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.”

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In his recent apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Family*, Pope Francis offers the world an extended homily on marriage and family. His is an optimistic, yet realistic, view of marriage and family life in the modern world. The document examines a wide variety of issues facing families today, ranging from unwed mothers to lack of housing, from cohabitation to divorce, as well as discusses the elderly, widows, families with special needs, and more. While upholding the timeless doctrines and teachings of the faith, the Holy Father stresses the importance of tenderness, compassion, and gentle encouragement along the path to conversion.

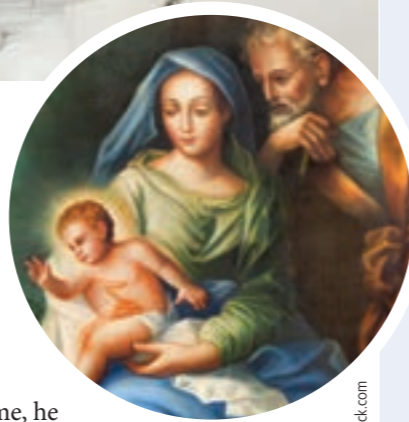
“Where love is concerned, silence is always more eloquent than words”<sup>(12)</sup>.

### What’s an Apostolic Exhortation?

An apostolic exhortation is a document from the pope. While not introducing new doctrine, it is meant to take a serious look at an important issue facing the Church. *Amoris Laetitia* presents the pope’s thoughts following the Synods (gatherings) of Bishops on the Family in 2014 and 2015.

### Good News for Families

Pope Francis has spoken about the family since the beginning of his pontificate. His inauguration in 2013 was on the feast day of St. Joseph, and he spoke about the Holy Family on that occasion. Since that time, he has continued to reflect on the family in his general audiences and at events such as the 2015 Meeting of Families in Santiago de Cuba and the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. He also called the Synods of Bishops on the Family in 2014 and 2015. *Amoris Laetitia* may be seen as the culmination of all of these efforts to focus the Church on what our faith tells us about family — a message that, quoting the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis says “is good news indeed.”



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“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”<sup>(57)</sup>.

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### Living Love in the Family

“No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love.... Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together” (325).

Pope Francis encourages all of us, regardless of our life situations, to grow in faith and love:

- Understand that love is more than a mere feeling, but “should be understood along the lines of ... ‘to do good’” (94).
- Reject the injustice of some possessing too much and others too little.
- Forgive and serve others from the heart.
- Heal pride and increase humility.
- Do not react immediately or harshly to the weaknesses and faults of those around us, but exercise patience and tenderness.
- Rejoice in the well-being of others.
- Do not try to control others, “to follow their every step lest they escape our grip” (115). Instead, trust and set free.
- Strive to discover your own road to happiness while allowing others to find theirs.
- Pray over past history and shortcomings.
- Accept ourselves, and our limitations, and even forgive ourselves “in order to have this same attitude towards others” (107).
- Every morning, reaffirm “to be faithful, come what may in the course of the day” (319).

“My advice is never to let the day end without making peace in the family. ‘And how am I going to make peace? By getting down on my knees? No! Just by a small gesture, a little something, and harmony within your family will be restored. Just a little caress, no words are necessary. But do not let the day end without making peace in your family’” (104).



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### A Summary of the Exhortation

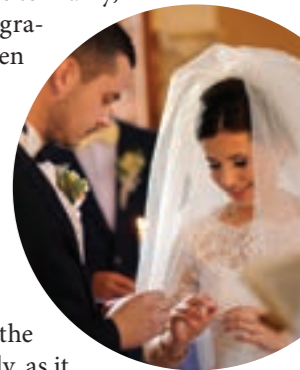
The exhortation is divided into an introduction and nine chapters.

**Introduction:** Calling for “broader vision and a renewed awareness of the importance of marriage and the family” but noting that “not all discussions ... need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium,” Pope Francis invites families to value the gifts of marriage and family and become a sign of mercy and closeness (2,3).

**Chapter One:** Pope Francis recounts the family in salvation history, observing that the family is present from the first page, in the story of Creation, to the last, in the marriage feast between the Bride and the Lamb. He points out that the Creation story presents the human couple in its deepest reality — God has created man and woman in his image. He then speaks of children and the family as “domestic church” and “the place where children are brought up in the faith” (16).

**Chapter Two:** Pope Francis outlines many of the challenges and struggles faced by families in the modern world including problems caused by materialism, the disincentivization of young people to marry, the lack of affordable housing, migration, and the exploitation of women and children.

**Chapter Three:** Pope Francis discusses marriage both as a vocation and as a gift, affirming prior papal teaching on love, marriage, and the family. He points to the kerygma — the proclamation of the Gospel — as the center of all teaching on the family, as it is the center of all evangelizing activity.



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