



The Holy See

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION "AMORIS LAETITIA"**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!*

I cordially greet all of you who are taking part in the Third International Symposium on the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, convoked by the Italian Episcopal Conference's Office for the Pastoral Care of Families.

The theme you have chosen, "The Gospel of love, between conscience and rule", is of great relevance and can illuminate the path that the Churches in Italy are travelling, also in response to the *yearning for family* that arises in the hearts of the young generations. Love between man and woman is clearly one of the most *generative* human experiences; it is the leaven of the culture of *encounter* and brings an injection of *sociability* to today's world. Indeed, "the welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church".^[1] The family born of marriage engenders fruitful bonds, which prove to be the most effective antidote to unbridled individualism; however, on the path of conjugal love and family life situations arise which require difficult choices to be made with rectitude. At times, in the domestic reality untoward contrasts must be addressed with prudent conscience on each person's part. It is important that the spouses, the parents, not be left alone, but accompanied in their effort to apply the Gospel to the reality of life. On the other hand, we are well aware that "we have been called to form consciences, not to replace them".^[2]

The contemporary world risks confusing the primacy of the conscience, which is always to be respected, with the exclusive autonomy of the individual in regard to the relationships he or she experiences.

As I said recently to the Pontifical Academy for Life, "some have even spoken of an *egolatry*, a worship of the self, on whose altar everything is sacrificed, even the most cherished human affections. This approach is far from harmless, for it induces people to gaze constantly in the

mirror, to the point of being unable to turn their eyes away from themselves and towards others and the broader world. The spread of this approach has extremely grave effects on every affection and relationship in life”.^[3] And this is a form of “pollution” that corrodes souls and confounds minds and hearts, producing false illusions.

Romano Guardini, in one of his texts on the theme of conscience, indicates the path for seeking the true good. He writes, “From this imprisonment within myself I am free only if I find a point, which is not my ego, loftier than myself; something solid, working within me. And here we arrive at the crux of the matter ... that is, religious reality. That *goodness* ... is something living.... It is the fullness of worth, which belongs to the selfsame living God”.^[4]

In each of our hearts lies a place where the Mystery reveals itself and enlightens the person, making one the protagonist of his or her history. The conscience, Vatican Council II reminds us, “is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths”.^[5] It is up to the Christian to ensure that in this sort of tabernacle there is no lack of divine grace, which illuminates and strengthens conjugal love and the mission of parents. Grace fills the “amphorae” of the human heart with an extraordinary capacity for giving, renewing for today’s families the miracle of the wedding at Cana.

In commenting on this Gospel scene, I have said that “by transforming into wine the water of the jars used ‘for the Jewish rites of purification’ (Jn 2:6), Jesus performs an eloquent sign: he transforms the Law of Moses into the Gospel, bearer of joy”.^[6] Jesus indicates in particular the medicine of mercy, which heals hardness of the heart, restoring the relations between man and wife, and between parents and children.

Dear brothers and sisters, I wish all the best for your work in this Symposium. May it help the Church in Italy to assimilate and develop the content and style of *Amoris Laetitia*; may it contribute to the formation of those who guide family groups in parishes, in associations, in movements; may it sustain the journey of many families, helping them to live the joy of the Gospel and to be active cells in the community. I bless you wholeheartedly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 31.

[2] *Ibid.*, 37.

[3] *Address to Participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life, 5 October 2017.*

[4] *Conscience*, Brescia 1933, 32-33.

[5] Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

[6] *General Audience, 8 June 2016.*

