



DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

**ADDRESS OF HIS EMINENCE CARD. KEVIN FARRELL
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE
“2026 MARRIAGE CATECHUMENATE SUMMIT”
March 16, 2026**

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to send you this message on the occasion of the *Fourth Marriage Catechumenate Summit*. I thank you for the valuable reflection that you are carrying out in a spirit of communion and ecclesial co-responsibility, as bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful, engaged in the pastoral care of preparation for married life.

Marriage is a vocation, just like the vocation to the priesthood. Like every vocation, the vocation to married life can only arise from a personal encounter with Christ, who calls young people to walk this path of self-giving, love, and openness to others: a path that captivates them and sets them on their way. Such an encounter and the opportunity to hear Christ's call are only possible where authentic experiences of faith are lived, through which God can reach people, speak to their hearts, and enlighten them with his light. As Pope Leo said, faith is a matter that touches the heart and the whole person: “*We are not born Christians, we become Christians when we are touched by God's grace*”¹. Faith, as the Holy Father reminds us, “is primarily a response to God's love”²; for this reason, today we must together find paths to “experiment with other ways of transmitting the faith”³, which are not limited to intellectual knowledge but lead to experiencing the warmth and tenderness of Jesus' loving gaze. This is the most effective preparation for future married life, because only the discovery of Jesus' loving gaze helps young people to have a positive outlook on life, on the future, and on human love itself, which draws strength and stability from the love of Christ. Those who have known the love of Christ also value human love! Those who have not known the love of Christ, on the other hand, often harbor a reservation, a doubt in their hearts: “human love does not last,” “it is not authentic,” “it does not make others or oneself happy.” This is why many marriages fail. Because the

¹ LEO XIV, *Address to French neophytes and catechumens on a jubilee pilgrimage to Rome*, 29 July 2025.

² LEO XIV, *Message to participants in the seminar “Evangelizing with the families of today and tomorrow. Ecclesiological and Pastoral Challenges,” organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life*, [2-3 June 2025], 28 May 2025.

³ LEO XIV, *Address to the clergy of the Diocese of Rome*, 19 February 2026.

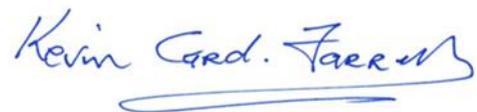
spouses have never had an experience of encountering Christ, neither before nor after marriage; they have never known the power of his love, which heals, which consoles, and which never fails.

The Church has two precious tools that can assist her in this great work of transmitting the faith: the community of believers and the power of witness. It is important to rediscover the “we” of faith. Even if the community sometimes appears fragmented or weakened, it can always return to being a welcoming place where faith can grow, because it is shared among couples and families. Together, we can help one another live a Christian way of life amid the challenges of daily life. Couples need to be accompanied by other married couples, other families, and the entire community. It is in this space that we can undertake - as Pope Leo says - “joyful paths of communion”, sharing our difficulties and experiencing the knowledge that we are not alone and that faith can offer us a new perspective on reality. Alongside the community, another source of strength is provided by *witnesses*, who - especially when they are married - make Christ’s love visible and attractive: “loving disciples who bear witness to the Kingdom of God in all places”⁴. There are many such witnesses among families as well. Their lives become a credible and contagious proclamation. As Pope Leo suggested: “Perhaps many young people today who choose cohabitation instead of Christian marriage, in reality need someone to show them in a concrete and clear way - especially by the example of their life - what the gift of sacramental grace is and what strength derives from it”⁵.

Cultivating the proclamation of the faith, fostering the involvement in the community of those who approach the Church before and after marriage, and offering “joyful” and “contagious” witnesses to family life, these are the first steps that can help us create together a favorable environment for the marriage catechumenate.

I therefore thank each one of you for the contribution you will offer to the Church. May the work accomplished not remain merely a collection of ideas, but become a fruitful seed in your communities.

I entrust the journey of the marriage catechumenate to the Lord so that, through your service, many couples may discover the grace of the sacrament of marriage. May the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of communion and love who unites the Father and the Son and sustains the love of spouses, also accompany your commitment and make fruitful your apostolate.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Card. Farrell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Kevin Card. Farrell
Prefect

⁴ LEO XIV, *Angelus*, 6 July 2025.

⁵ LEO XIV, *Message to the Participants in the Seminar “Evangelizing with the Families of Today and Tomorrow. Ecclesiological and Pastoral Challenges,” organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life*, [June 2–3, 2025], 28 May 2025.