

DICASTERY FOR THE LAITY, FAMILY AND LIFE

Webinar

“Where are we with *Amoris Laetitia*? Strategies for the pastoral application of Pope Francis’ exhortation”

June 12, 2021

Conclusions of His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell

Dear brothers and sisters,

We’ve been on an intense journey together. I would like once again to express my gratitude for the time that you have all dedicated and for the rich content that you’ve shared in a deep spirit of communion. I would particularly like to thank the speakers and married couples who have graced us with their thoughtful reflections, witnessing to us thereby an “incarnate” magisterium that shines forth in their lives through their spousal love and in their apostolic endeavours.

Thanks also must go to the movements and groups who have generously sent us video submissions, enabling us to pray together online, in spite of the intercontinental distances which separate us. These videos have certainly set the tone of this meeting, which has been one of openness of heart and mind to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

We have sought in these days to listen to each other, in order to follow up on the third phase of the Synodal Assembly, which led to the publication of *Amoris Laetitia* in 2016. The precise scope of this pastoral year dedicated to the family is a more incisive actualisation of this third phase of *implementation* of the works of the synod. I am certain that these days have borne great fruit in shaping our understanding of how the “missionary conversion” to which we are all called in our family pastoral ministry can be concretely realised in our own specific realities. (AL 201)

Amoris Laetitia is a text that is truly rich in its practical directives, but is rich above all in its theological, ecclesiological and pastoral suggestions, which is not only able to stimulate initiative in areas in which family pastoral care has hitherto been fragmented, but is also able to help us



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understand in which of these areas there is a need for greater commitment in order to address with families the more complex challenges they face.

To make the text known is already an important service in itself, which we need to offer in order to accompany and give spiritual content to families. Families must be shown that the Church is made up of all of us together, members of one Body, and that each of us as individuals and as individual families, is called to a vigorous apostolic effort to evangelise the new generations with a living and incarnate witness of the love of Christ. The Church has to be able to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and seek to bring a "high" ideal of Christian living into family relations while simultaneously having "its feet firmly on the ground", always being aware of the concrete difficulties in which families live.

Nothing can be taken for granted in family pastoral ministry. We need rather to think, to plan and to act together as lay people and pastors in the realisation of that *synodal path* of which Pope Francis has spoken since the beginning of his pontificate. This will soon take shape in the itinerary that will start next October to lead the Church to the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The theme that the Holy Father has chosen is: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*. Pope Francis affirmed on the occasion of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops on October 17, 2015 that "The path of synodality is the path that God expects from the Church in the third millennium... To walk together – as laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome – is an easy concept to express in words, but not so easy to put into practice.

This is the *modus operandi* of the Church, the form and substance of the thought that must animate us and of the action that we must undertake in order to continually return to the essence of the Church and orient ourselves toward an evangelisation that is adequate for our times.

These four days that we have spent together can be considered the beginning of this synodal process in the specific ambit of family pastoral ministry which, in light of all of the stimuli that we have had in these days, must gradually lead us to that *urgent ecclesial renewal* of which Pope Francis speaks in *Evangelii Gaudium* (cf. 27-33). The Synod will not be an event, but a process of discernment which calls all of us, as of now, to commit ourselves to listening to the Spirit, in order to understand how we might live "communion, participation and mission" with the families in the world.

Those more tangible challenges need not frighten us or make us "concerned", but they should certainly make us "concern ourselves" with the pursuit of a few concrete objectives which



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we are invited to introduce on the pastoral plane with regard to methodology as well as certain criteria that we should adopt.

With this in mind, I would like to share with you a few points that might help us to synthesise these days, which in turn should help us all to continue on with this process of synodal discernment and the actualisation of the directives contained within *Amoris Laetitia*. The sixth chapter of the apostolic exhortation in particular contains some criteria that might be of some use.

1. We need to insist on the pastoral subjectivity of the family (AL 200). Our task as a Church is to "cooperate in the sowing: the rest is God's work." To do this, one needs "evangelising and catechetical efforts within the family" that makes the family aware of the mission that has been entrusted to it. Families today need discover that, together with the sacrament of marriage, they have received a mission, for which they are indispensable in the building up of the Church, hand in hand with pastors.

2. "The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish, which is the family of families, where small communities, ecclesial movements and associations live in harmony." (AL 202)

3. Together with pastoral care that is specifically dedicated to families, there is need for "a more adequate formation for priests, deacons, religious, catechists and other agents of pastoral care". Ordained ministers often lack a formation that has properly prepared them to deal with the many complex issues that families now face (AL 202). The presence of lay people, of women and married couples in priestly formation "favours the complementarity of the various vocations within the Church". "It is therefore important that families accompany the whole process of seminary and the priesthood, so that they might help to fortify it in a realistic way." (AL 203)

4. A good pastoral preparation is important also with regard to particular crisis situations, for example those which involve domestic violence or sexual abuse. (AL 204)

5. The formation of persons who will accompany couples in preparation for marriage must be a priority: to which end "a greater effort of the whole Christian community" is needed (AL 206), in particular of spouses who, once formed, can provide for the formation of other families. The objective here is to create a chain of formators who, in agreement with their pastors, can launch branching processes of formation that extend to a number of growing families. To limit ourselves to a small, stagnant group of couples who collaborate with the parish closes our pastoral care to dynamic and efficacious action, which requires constant renewal. New spouses that are ready to be formed and collaborate with the parish can always be found, even if via associations, movements and new communities (AL 223). Only by forming families and young people can we try to renew family pastoral care and make sure that young people are able to live out their desire for family that we so often hear about.



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6. "Nowadays, pastoral care for families has to be fundamentally missionary, going out to where people are. We can no longer be like a factory, churning out courses that for the most part are poorly attended." (AL 230)

7. Particular attention must be given to families in marital crises or other kinds of difficulty: "what is urgently needed today is a ministry which cares for those whose marital relationship has broken down" (AL 238). "Special discernment is indispensable for the pastoral care of those who are separated, divorced or abandoned... Pastoral care must necessarily include efforts at reconciliation and mediation, through the establishment of specialized counselling centres in dioceses", especially when children are involved, ensuring that every action is taken in the best interest of minors. "At the same time, divorced people who have not remarried, and often bear witness to marital fidelity, ought to be encouraged... the local community and pastors should accompany these people with solicitude, particularly when children are involved or when they are in serious financial difficulty" (AL 242). Particular attention should also be given to divorced parents who live in new unions, in order to accompany them in their educational role (AL 246). It is not only the couple aspect that needs to be taken care of, but in these cases the educational relationship with the children, which can become quite problematic.

8. Being aware of each area that we've looked at together in these days, which are all real priorities, we need a pastoral care that tries to reach even those families who are far from the Church: which is realised in a spirit of communion between parishes, religious institutes, associations and movements, which concerns all and does not limit itself to a particular group, which is aware of the real situations in which families live, even those situations that are not found to be in full conformity with the directives of catholic moral teaching or which might experience the difficult realities of any kind of division or misfortune.

Here today, a representation of the universal Church is present, and this representation can continue to move forward, working in a constant and united way. To this end, we would like to call for the development of stable relationships between us as the Holy See, and you as episcopal conferences, movements and associations, but also among yourselves, in a spirit of authentic communion and reciprocal esteem.

What this means practically is working together, sharing ideas and projects, and being more effective together on a practical and capillary level in order to get to real heart of this whole enterprise, that is, families.

The desire, need and gratitude for direct contact between those in charge of family pastoral care has already emerged in the encounters that have already had with episcopal conferences. These relationships will also help us also to circulate information and to not feel alone in times of difficulty, which will inevitably occur.



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I thank you all again, then, and invite you all to continue this synodal process with families on a local level, with the next World Meeting of Families ever in sight, to better understand how to realise and receive the many treasures that have emerged in these days that each of you have picked up on in different ways, adapting them to your own geographic and cultural realities.

The Amoris Laetitia Family Year will continue, but it is in your hands.

We entrust the fruits of this meeting to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, so that it might generate within us the desire to journey on together as a Church in the renewal of family pastoral care and to involve many other brothers and sisters in this extraordinary task of the evangelisation of families that the Lord entrusts to us.



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BIOGRAPHY

Cardinal Kevin Farrell was born on 2 September 1947 in Dublin (Ireland) and was ordained a priest on 24 December 1978.

After serving as chaplain at the University of Monterrey in Mexico, in 1983 he was assigned to the parish of St Bartholomew in Bethesda in the United States of America. He served as curate in various parishes in the Archdiocese of Washington, as director of the Spanish Catholic Center, as acting executive

director of Catholic charitable organizations, as secretary for financial affairs of the Archdiocese and as parish priest of the church of the Annunciation.

In 2001 he was assigned the offices of Vicar General for Administration and Moderator of the Curia. On 28 December of the same year he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Washington by John Paul II and received episcopal consecration on 11 February 2002.

On 6 March 2007 Benedict XVI called him to lead the diocese of Dallas. In the course of his episcopal ministry he assumed various positions that include Chancellor of the University of Dallas and member of the board of directors of the Catholic University of America, the Papal Foundation, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and the Saint Luke Institute in Washington. He was president of the New Evangelization of America, national delegate for international Eucharistic Congresses and episcopal moderator of the council for diocesan financial management.

He served the U.S. Bishops' Conference as treasurer, president of the Budget and Finance Committee, president of the National Collections Committee, member of the Committee for Divine Worship, consultant to the Immigration Committee and member of the Working Group for the Promotion of Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life.

On 15 August 2016, Pope Francis appointed him Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

He was made cardinal by Pope Francis in the ordinary public consistory of 19 November 2016, and given the diaconate church of San Giuliano Martire.

He is a member of the following:

– the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See;



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- the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State;
 - the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.
- On 14 February 2019 Pope Francis appointed him as Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church.



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