

## PRAYER VIGIL FOR THE FESTIVAL OF FAMILIES

### *ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER*

*B. Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia  
Saturday, 26 September 2015*

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#### **Pope's Off-the-Cuff Address to Families**

"All of the love that God has in Himself, all of the beauty that God has in Himself, all of the truth that God has in Himself, He gives to the family"

Dear brothers and sisters, dear families,

Thank you to those who have given their testimonies. Thank you to those who have brought us joy with their art, with beauty, which is the path to reach God. Beauty brings us to God. And a true testimony brings us to God, because God also is the truth, He is beauty, He is goodness, and a testimony given to serve is good, it makes us good people, because God is good. It brings us to God. All that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful brings us to God. Because God is good, God is beautiful, God is the truth.

Thank you to everyone who gave us a message here and [thank you] for the presence of all of you, which is also a testimony, a true testimony that it is worthwhile to live as a family, that a society grows strong, grows in goodness, grows in beauty and truly grows if it is built on the foundation of the family.

Once, a boy asked me — you know that children ask hard questions — he asked me, "Father, what did God do before He created the world?" I can tell you that it was hard for me to come up with an answer. I told him what I'm saying now to you. Before creating the world, God loved, because God is love. But there was so much love that He had within Himself, this love between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, it was so great, so overflowing that — I don't know if this is very theological, but you'll understand what I mean — it was so great that He couldn't be egotistical. He had to come out of Himself so as to have that which He could love outside of Himself.

And there God created the world. There God made this marvel in which we live and, since we're a little mixed up, we are destroying it. But the most beautiful thing that God made, the Bible says, was the family. He created man and woman, and He gave them everything. He gave them the world! Grow, multiply, cultivate the earth, make it produce, make it grow. He presented to a family all of the love that He made in this marvelous creation.

Let's go back a bit. All of the love that God has in Himself, all of the beauty that God has in Himself, all of the truth that God has in Himself, He gives to the family. And a family is truly a family when it is able to open its arms and receive all of this love.

Obviously, earthly paradise is here no longer. Life has its problems. Men, because of the devil's astuteness, learned to have divisions among themselves. And all of this love that God had given was nearly lost. And shortly thereafter, the first crime, the first fratricide. A brother kills another brother: war. The love, the beauty, and the truth of God — and the destruction of war. And between these two poles, we walk today. We have to decide. We have to decide on which path to walk.

But let's go back. When the man and his wife made the mistake and distanced themselves from God, God did not leave them alone. There was so much love, so much love that He began to walk with humanity. He began to walk with His people, until the fullness of time arrived, and He gave the greatest sign of His love, His Son.

And His Son, where did He send Him? To a palace? To a city, to start a business? He sent Him to a family! God came into the world in a family.

And he was able to do this because this family was a family that had its heart open to love, that had the doors open to love. Let's think of Mary, this young woman. She couldn't believe it. "How can this be?" And when it was explained to her, she obeyed. Let's think of Joseph, full of dreams to form a household. He finds himself with this surprise that he doesn't understand. He accepts. He obeys. And in the obedience of love of this woman, Mary, and of this man, Joseph, a family is created into which comes God.

God always knocks at the door of hearts. He likes to do this. It comes from His heart. But, do you know what He likes best? To knock on the doors of families and find families that are united, to find families that love each other, to find the families that bring up their children and educate them and help them to keep going forward and that create a society of goodness, of truth, and of beauty.

We are in the Festival of Families. The family has a divine passport, is that clear? The passport that a family has is issued it by God, so that within its heart, truth, love, and beauty would grow more and more.

Sure, one of you could say to me, "Father, you speak this way because you're single." In families, there are difficulties. In families, we argue; in families, sometimes the plates fly; in families, the children give us headaches. And I'm not even going to mention the mother-in-law. But in families, there is always, always, the cross. Always. Because the love of God, of the Son of God, also opened for us this path. But, in families as well, after the cross, there is the resurrection. Because the Son of God opened for us this path. Because of this, the family is — forgive the term I'll use — it is a factory of hope, of hope of life and of resurrection. God was the one who opened this path.

And the children. The children make us work. We, too, as sons and daughters also created work.

Sometimes, at home, I see some of my collaborators who come into work with dark circles under their eyes. They have a baby who is a month old, or two months old, and I ask them, "You didn't sleep?" "Oh no, he cried all night long." In families, there are difficulties, but these difficulties are overcome with love. Hate doesn't overcome any difficulty. Division of hearts doesn't

overcome any difficulty. Only love is capable of overcoming difficulties. Love is a festival. Love is joy. Love is to keep moving forward.

And I don't want to continue talking, because this will get too long. But I would like to stress two points regarding the family which I would like you to pay special attention to. Not only would I like you to do this, but we must pay special attention to this: the children and the grandparents. Children and young people are the future, they are the strength, those who take us forward. They are the ones in which we place our hope. Grandparents are the memory of a family, they are the ones who gave us the faith, transmitted to us the faith.

To take care of the grandparents and to take care of the children is the sign of love — I don't know if it's the greatest but I would say the most promising [sign of love] of the family, because it promises the future. A people that does not know how to care for the children and a people that does not know how to care for the grandparents is a people without a future, because it doesn't have strength and it doesn't have the memory that will carry it forward.

And well, the family is beautiful, but it is costly. It brings problems. In the family, sometimes there is enmity. The husband fights with the wife or they give each other dirty looks, or the children with the parents ... I advise one thing: Never end the day without making peace in the family. In a family, a day cannot end at war.

May God bless you. May God give you strength. May God strengthen you to keep moving forward. Let us care for the family. Let us defend the family, because there, there, our future is in play. Thank you, may God bless you and pray for me, please.