

VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
“THE FAMILY THROUGH THE EYES OF MARY”
SAN DIEGO, CA – SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am happy to see that you are gathering once again to celebrate the gift of family life, to grow in the wisdom that God offers through his Church, and to encourage one another in your shared mission of evangelization.

Please know that the Holy Father is spiritually close to you. He shares with you a desire to let Christ’s love shine through the family: not a false ideal of the “perfect” family, but your real human families, with all of your challenges, struggles, “messes”, and joys. You, Christian families, are communities where Christ is found. He lives his risen life in you, and through you he leads the human family on the journey of encounter with him.

At this year’s conference, you want to see the family “through the eyes of Mary”. This is beautiful. It is always good to look at reality through Mary’s gaze... especially the reality of the family. Mary is not only the mother of the holy family of Nazareth, she is also the Mother of all the faithful.

“Like Mary,” says Pope Francis, our families “are asked to face [their] challenges with courage and serenity, in good times and bad, and to keep in their heart the great things which God has done (cf. *Lk* 2:19, 51).” The Holy Father goes on to say: “The treasury of Mary’s heart also contains the experiences of every family, which she cherishes. For this reason, she can help us understand the meaning of these experiences and to hear the message God wishes to communicate through the life of our families.”¹

¹ Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation On Love in the Family *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016), 30.

The Pope is also fond of reminding us that the Church, too, is mother. A mother, he says, “does not play favorites among her children. She does not treat them with disparity; she gives each an equal dose of care, attention, and time.”² While much work is invested in programs of formation for priests and for religious, preparation for marriage has not always been sufficiently strengthened. For this reason, the Pope “expressed his desire for the Church to offer a better and more thorough preparation of young couples for marriage, insisting on the need for a relatively broad approach, inspired by the baptismal catechumenate, which would enable them to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage with greater awareness, beginning with an experience of faith and personal encounter with Jesus.”³

Your work as the Catholic Family Life Association can be a part of the Church’s ministry to those who are called to marriage. By experiencing Christ’s presence in your own marriages, you can help young couples believe that Christ is present in their marriages too. Remembering the comforting role that Mary played at the wedding feast in Cana, you can call upon the mother of Jesus to see that the “good wine” of God’s grace is always available to the married. And by persevering in love through the challenges that you experience, you can offer genuine support to other couples who are struggling.

I pray that this conference, while being the occasion of good learning, will also be a time for renewing friendships, building community, and growing in hope. By the daily faithfulness of marriage and family, you are a living Gospel for the world.

May God bless you!

² Pope Francis, Preface to *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral guidelines for local Churches*, a document of the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life (2022).

³ *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*, 1.