

Diocese of Cork and Ross

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September 12th, 2017.

Very Reverend and Reverend Father,

In 1994, Pope John Paul established the World Meeting of Families as an international event for prayer, catechesis and celebration of family. These meetings are held every three years and they bring together families from across the world to reflect on the importance of marriage and the family as the cornerstone of society and of the church. Ireland was personally chosen by Pope Francis to hold the next World Meeting of Families in Dublin next year.

As a diocese, we are contributing, pro-rata, to the cost of hosting this international event in Ireland. We thank the people of Cork and Ross for their generosity. I am aware of the many contributions that parishioners are already making to both parish and diocese but I hope that the benefit to the church in Ireland to the World Meeting of Families and the potential papal visit will be an encouragement. The Pope has repeatedly indicated his desire to attend but we must await a formal announcement and that is not expected until at least early next year.

The World Meeting of Families will take up the themes which Pope Francis outlined in his apostolic letter *Amoris Laetitia* (the joy of love). It will also be looking at practical issues like the impact of technology on families today. The World Meeting of Families will run from Wednesday, August 23rd to Friday, August 25th. On Saturday evening, August 26th, there will be a festival of families in Croke Park which, it is hoped, the Holy Father will be present.

Societies the world over appreciate the importance of the family. Pope Francis has described the family as **“the nearest hospital, the first school for the young, the best home for the elderly”**. The bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises. Pope John Paul made history in 2002 when he fulfilled a personal wish and beatified a married couple, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux. Every generation gets the saints it needs.

I was present in Knock recently for the official launch of the year of preparation for the World Meeting of Families. Thousands of families representing dioceses across Ireland gathered at the Knock Shrine. The blessing of the beautiful icon of the Holy Family took place on that day and we will welcome it to our Diocese in February 2018.

In May of this year, in conjunction with the Diocesan Pastoral Development Office, I launched our Diocesan preparation programme for the coming year which will begin in each parish on Sunday, October 1st. I am asking you to co-operate with the Pastoral Development Office and to participate in the various events that are being organised.

With prayerful regards to you and all in your care,
Yours sincerely in Christ,

+John Buckley,
Bishop of Cork and Ross.