

## Amoris Laetitia: Apostolic Exhortation

Pope Francis

The same mercy and patience that are essential for building a strong family must be shown to those whose families are in trouble or have broken up, Pope Francis said in his highly anticipated postsynodal apostolic exhortation. The document, "Amoris Laetitia" (The Joy of Love), released April 8, encourages careful review of everything related to family ministry and, particularly, much greater attention to the language and attitude used when explaining church teaching and ministering to those who do not fully live that teaching. "No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love," Pope

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Francis wrote. People grow in holiness, he said, and the church must be there to give them a helping hand rather than turn them away because they have not attained some degree of perfection. The exhortation was Pope Francis' reflection on the discussion, debate and suggestions raised during the 2014 and 2015 meetings of the Synod of Bishops on the family. As synod members did, the pope insisted that God's plan for the family is that it be built on the lifelong union of one man and one woman open to having children. Pope Francis' document touches on many of the issues raised at the synods and gives practical advice on raising children and decries the many ways the "disposable culture" has infiltrated family life and sexuality to the point that many people feel free to use and then walk away from others. The exhortation follows, copyright © 2016 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

**1** The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the church. As the synod fathers noted, for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, "the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people, and this is an inspiration to the church."<sup>1</sup> As a response to that desire, "the Christian proclamation on the family is good news indeed."<sup>2</sup>

2. The synod process allowed for an examination of the situation of families in today's world and thus for a broader vision and a renewed awareness of the importance of marriage and the family. The complex-

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