

FAMILY



Declan O'Brien reports on preparations for the World Meeting of Families, to be hosted in Dublin in August this year.

In Ireland the excitement is growing as many families eagerly prepare with the whole Church for the visit of thousands of families and even of Pope Francis himself.

The World Meeting of Families 2018 will be hosted by the Archdiocese of Dublin in August, and it is expected that Pope Francis will participate in two of these days.

The World Meeting of Families takes place every three years, having been hosted by Philadelphia in 2015, but this meeting will be quite unique due to the publication in 2016 of an exhortation on the family by Pope Francis called *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). This work forms the basis of the Lenten preparation by families in every parish in Ireland who will all be invited to take part in a six-week programme called 'Let's Talk Family'.

The 'Amoris' team, after Easter, will also have a series of online chat-shows on various themes relating to family life that can be followed by families from all over the world, as they prepare to come to Dublin in August. There will also be a set of short digital animations based on key themes from *Amoris Laetitia*, aimed at a general audience including children.

The whole family is welcome to this event from August 21st-26th 2018. Fun-packed faith activities, shows and workshops will involve and entertain the children while helping them reflect on the importance of the family. A special children's programme for those aged 4-12 will run concurrent to the programmes for adults and young people, while the whole

The gospel of the family

– joy for the world



family will gather together for the Festival of Families with Pope Francis on Sat 25th August and for the final Mass on Sunday 26th.

Families of the Focolare Movement in Ireland have been helping locally in their parishes and dioceses and also nationally in preparing for the biggest family event to ever hit Ireland.

The Focolare in Ireland also took on its own initiative in launching The Family Cube, based on the six points of Chiara Lubich's 'Art of Loving' and using six phrases from Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*.

Those behind the World Meeting of Families are fully aware of the great challenges of family life today. In fact Pope Francis devotes a whole chapter of 'The Joy of Love' to these challenges and refers to them throughout the exhortation. Pope Francis has a deep knowledge and understanding of families who live in poverty and in situations which are difficult, and so he has no trouble in

many times along the way' (AL 57).

This 'starting again' is a vital part of family life and an essential tool to help us to 'keep walking together'.

He encourages us all to 'open our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society' (AL 312).

Families have this wonderful possibility, not only of looking after its own members but also of supporting and accompanying those families around them who are suffering because of crises within their family. It is often those families who themselves have experienced real difficulties who can offer themselves as a resource for others.

Carole, for example, realised that other families struggled with the same problems she faced in caring for her severely disabled son David. She organised a series of activities bringing young disabled people together, engaging many families from her part of the town and involving the town council, which was subsequently awarded a prize for social development.



Photo: Pixabay

encouraging the Christian ideal of marriage and family while also being full of compassion and encouragement for families who may find themselves in what seems to be impossible situations.

He thanks God *'that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfil their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall*

It is by trying to live the gospel of the family, with all our imperfections, limitations and weaknesses, that our families can be a light and a joy for all the world. 

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For further information:
www.focolare.org/ireland