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## **"Witnesses to the beauty of life"**

On June 15, Pope Francis spoke to families from Rome about the mystery and beauty of being parents in God's creative plan, "based on the diversity of being man and woman, the 'first' and most fundamental difference, constitutive of the human being."

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(From Vatican News Service)

Vatican City, 15 June 2015 (VIS) – Yesterday afternoon in St. Peter's Square Pope Francis inaugurated the ecclesial Congress of the diocese of Rome, whose theme this year is: "For what I received I passed on to you – we parents, witnesses to the beauty of life". The meeting began with greetings from Cardinal Agostino Vallini, vicar of His Holiness for the diocese of Rome, and a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit. The Holy Father went on to address some off-the-cuff remarks to the families, catechists, priests and pastoral workers present, extensive extracts of which are given below.

"Our city must be reborn, morally and spiritually, as it seems as if everything is the same, that everything is relative; that the Gospel is a beautiful story about good things, pleasant to read, but which remains simply an idea. It does not touch the heart! Our city needs this rebirth.

And this commitment is so important when we talk about educating children and young people, for which you as parents are responsible."

"This evening I would like to reflect with you on a few simple words that express the mystery of being parents. I do not know if I will manage to say all I want to say, but I would at least like to speak about vocation, communion and mission."

"The first word is mission. St. Paul wrote that all paternity derives from God, and we can also add all maternity. We are all sons and daughters, but becoming a father or mother is a calling from God! It is a calling from God: it is a vocation. God is eternal love, which gives ceaselessly and calls us to existence. It is a mystery that, however, Providence wished to entrust in particular to man and woman, called

upon to love each other entirely and without reserve, cooperating with God in this love and in transmitting life to their children. The Lord has chosen you to love each other and to transmit life. Your children, dear parents, need to discover, looking at your life, that loving each other is good. Never forget that your children are always watching you. Children, before living in a house made of bricks, inhabit another house, even more essential: they live in the mutual love of their parents."

"The second word, the second thought on which I would like to reflect is communion. Being parents is based on the diversity of being male and female, as the Bible reminds us. This is the 'first' and most fundamental difference, constitutive of the human being. It is a wealth. Differences are wealth. ... We men learn to recognize, through the female figures we encounter in

life, the extraordinary beauty that women bear. And women follow a similar path, learning from male figures that the man is different and has his own way of feeling, understanding and living. And this communion in difference is very important also in the education of children."

"It is very painful when a family lives in a state of tension that cannot be resolved, when there is a fracture that cannot be healed. It is painful. When there are the first signs of this, a father and a mother are duty bound, for themselves and for their children, to ask for help, to seek support.... And even when by now separation – we must also speak of this – seems inevitable, know that the Church carries you in her heart. And that your educative task is not interrupted: you are and will always be father and mother, who cannot live together because there are

wounds and problems. Please, always seek understanding, collaboration, harmony for the good and the happiness of your children."

"And the gift of marriage, which is so beautiful, also has a mission. A mission that is very important. You are collaborators of the Holy Spirit Who whispers the words of Jesus! Be this way for your children. Be missionaries of your children! They will learn from your words and your life that to follow the Lord brings enthusiasm, the wish to give oneself to others, always to give hope, even when faced with difficulties and pain, because we are never alone, but always with the Lord and with our brethren."

"I would not like to finish without offering a word to grandparents, who are the wisdom of the people, who are the memory of the people, who are the wisdom of the family.

The grandparents who saved the faith in many countries where it was forbidden to practice religion and took children to be secretly baptised; and the grandparents who taught them how to pray."

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