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World Meeting of Families in Spain

Every three years, the Pope convenes this large gathering for the purpose of celebrating God's gift of the family. The current meeting, which Pope Benedict XVI expects to attend, is taking place between July 1 and 9 in Valencia.

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What is the 2006 World Meeting of Families?

Hundreds of thousands of families from every country in the world have come together to pray, converse, learn, exchange, and deepen their understanding of the role Christian families play as "domestic churches" united in their task of spreading the Gospel. Each meeting is organized by the Pontifical Council for the Family in cooperation with the host diocese. When he inaugurated these gatherings in the year 2000, John Paul II proclaimed that "the future of humanity depends upon the family."

Passages from Pope Benedict's message for the 2006 meeting

"In order to give society a truly human face, people everywhere cannot fail to realize what a precious good the family is, and its matrimonial foundation....The marriage contract is the foundation of the family, the legacy and the

common good of all mankind. And so the Church cannot fail to proclaim that in accord with God's plan, there are no substitutes for marriage and the family and no alternatives....

"Today, more than ever, the Christian family has a most noble and ineffable mission within the ecclesial community to transmit faith in the death and resurrection of

Jesus....Parents are the primary catechists of children, precious gifts of the Creator, beginning with their first prayers. This is how moral norms rooted in the will of God are built into each child's life as he grows up with the human and Christian values that give full meaning to life...."

Program of the world meeting and the Holy Father's discourses

July 1-9: International week of families.

July 4-7: International congress of pastoral theology.

July 7: Family Rosary.

July 8 (evening): Festive celebration with the Holy Father--testimonials, prayer, singing, and fireworks, followed by the Holy Father's discourse to close the meeting.

July 9 (morning): Holy Mass concelebrated by the Pope in Valencia's City of the Arts and Sciences. More than a million persons are expected to take part.

Documentation

The Holy See is providing daily dispatches through the usual wire services.

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