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"Synod on the Family needs your prayers"

In his March 25 general audience, Pope Francis spoke about the feast of the Annunciation and recalled that 20 years ago today Pope John Paul II issued his Encyclical "Evangelium vitae." He also asked that everyone pray for the Synod of the Family.

03/25/2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

A good morning... but it's not a pretty day. Today the Audience is in two different places, as we do when it rains: you here in the Square, and many sick people in the Paul VI Hall, who are following the audience on the big screens. Now, as a gesture of brotherly courtesy, let us greet them with a round of applause. [Applause] It's not easy to applaud with an umbrella in hand.

In our course of catecheses on the family, today is a rather special stage – it will be *a pause for prayer*.

On March 25, in fact, we celebrate solemnly in the Church the Annunciation, the beginning of the Mystery of the Incarnation. The Archangel Gabriel visits the humble Maiden of Nazareth and announces that she will conceive and give birth to the Son of God. With this Announcement, the Lord enlightens and reinforces Mary's faith, as He

will later do also for her husband Joseph, so that Jesus can be born in a human family.

This is very beautiful: it shows us how profoundly the Mystery of the Incarnation, as God willed it, includes not only the conception in the mother's womb but also the reception in a true family. Today I would like to contemplate with you the beauty of this bond, the beauty of this condescension of God; and we can do so reciting together the Hail Mary, which in the first part takes up, precisely, the words of the Angel, those which he addresses to the Virgin. Let us pray together:

Hail Mary...

And now a second aspect: On March 25, Solemnity of the Annunciation, many countries celebrate the Day for Life. Therefore, 20 years ago, on this date, Saint John Paul II signed the Encyclical *Evangelium vitae*. To recall

this anniversary, present today in the Square are many followers of the Pro-Life Movement. In *Evangelium vitae* the family occupies a central place, in as much as it is the womb of human life. The words of my venerable Predecessor remind us that the human couple is blessed by God from the beginning to form a community of love and of life, to which is entrusted the mission of procreation. Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage, Christian spouses render themselves available to honor this blessing, with Christ's grace, for their whole life. On her part, the Church commits herself solemnly to take care of the family that is born, as God's gift for her very life, in good times and in bad: the bond between the Church and the family is sacred and inviolable. The Church, as Mother, never abandons the family, even when it is humiliated, wounded and mortified in so many ways. Not even when it

falls into sin, or distances itself from the Church; she will always do everything to try to take care of it and heal it, to invite it to conversion and to reconcile it with the Lord.

Well, if this is the task, it is clear how much prayer the Church needs to be able, at all times, to fulfil this mission! A prayer full of love for the family and for life, a prayer that is able to rejoice with those who rejoice and suffer with those who suffer.

So together with my collaborators, we have decided today to suggest a renewal of our *prayer for the Synod of Bishops on the Family*. We re-launch this commitment until next October, when the Ordinary Synodal Assembly will take place, dedicated to the family. I would like this prayer, as the whole Synodal course, to be animated by the compassion of the Good Shepherd for his flock, especially for the persons and

families that, for different reasons, are “tired and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd” (see *Matthew* 9:36).

Thus, sustained and animated by God's grace, the Church will be able to be committed again, and still more united, in the testimony of the truth of the love of God and of his mercy for the families of the world, none excluded, be it inside or outside the sheepfold.

I ask you, please, that your prayer not be lacking. All of us – Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, priests, men and women religious, lay faithful – we are all called to pray for the Synod. This is what we need, not gossip! I also invite you to pray for those who feel far away, or who are no longer accustomed to doing so. This prayer for the Synod on the Family is for the good of all. I know that this morning you were given a little prayer card

and that you have it in your hands.
(Perhaps it's a bit wet). I invite you to
keep it and to carry it with you, so
that in the coming months you can
recite it often, with holy insistence,
as Jesus has asked us. Now we recite
it together:

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendor of true love,
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and
prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic Churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,

may families never again

experience violence, rejection and
division:

may all who have been hurt or
scandalized

find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,

may the approaching Synod of
Bishops

make us once more mindful

of the sacredness and inviolability of
the family,

and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,

graciously hear our prayer.

Translation by Zenit

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