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Families, live and transmit the faith!

The Holy Father spoke in St. Peter's Square about the Christian life of the family as he prepares for his apostolic trip to Valencia (Spain) for the 5th World Meeting of Families

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The Holy Father recalled that the first such gathering of families took place in Rome in 1994 on the occasion of the International Year of the Family promoted by the United Nations. It was then that John Paul II

wrote his famous Letter to Families. Subsequent World Meetings of Families have been held in Rio de Janeiro (1997), Rome (2000) for the occasion of the Jubilee of Families, and Manila (2003).

"It is important," Pope Benedict said, "that today's families also hear the memorable appeal launched 25 years ago in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* by John Paul II: 'Family, become what you are!'."

"The theme of the forthcoming Valencia meeting is the transmission of faith within the family. This is what has inspired the motto of my apostolic visit to that city: Families, live and transmit the faith!"

"In so many of today's secularized communities, the primary need for believers in Christ is precisely that of renewing the faith of adults, that they may become capable of communicating that faith to the new

generations. At the same time, the path of Christian initiation of babies and children can become a useful occasion for parents to draw near the Church once more, and deepen their knowledge of the beauty and truth of the Gospel.”

"The family is a living organism in which a reciprocal exchange of gifts takes place, what is important is that the Word of God, which keeps the flame of faith alive, should never be lacking. During the rite of Baptism, in an extremely significant gesture, the father or godfather lights a candle at the great Easter candle, symbol of the risen Christ; then, addressing the members of the family, the celebrants says: 'Ensure that your baby, illuminated by Christ, lives always as a child of the light'."

The Pope concluded: "In order to be authentic, that gesture - which contains all the significance of the

transmission of faith within the family - must be preceded and accompanied by the commitment of parents to deepen their knowledge of their own faith, reviving its flame through prayer and the assiduous practice of the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist."

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