



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

October 22, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the Hamilton Diocese,

Family is a powerful influence in our lives. The family models and lives the gifts of love, caring, compassion, humour, kindness and patience. It is in the family that we first learn about God and grow in faith, so we regard the family as the Domestic Church, the first community of faith for each person.

On March 19, 2021, Pope Francis officially opened a Year of Amoris Laetitia Family, celebrating and commemorating the fifth anniversary of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*. The exhortation both celebrates family and looks at the challenges families face in their everyday living. In his message launching the year, Pope Francis said that the family fulfills two main functions, “*the frankness of the proclamation of the Gospel and the tenderness of accompaniment*”. These are crucial tasks and the Church supports families as they endeavour to live together in love, compassion, obedience and faith.

The Pope announced the upcoming year on the Feast of the Holy Family, Dec. 27, 2020. This year of Amoris Laetitia Family overlaps the Year of St. Joseph, which began Dec. 8, 2020. These two years are connected by the foundation of family so vital to each of us. We read at the end of the Apostolic Exhortation, “*no family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love.*” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 325) The Pope goes on to remind us that support for this essential vocation comes by living in loving community with the Holy Family. St. Joseph played a pivotal role within the Holy Family as a faithful earthly father to Jesus and his life serves as a model for us all; the overlap of the two years unites the Holy Family and all families in their vocation.

The example of love, devotion, faith and trust in God that Mary and Joseph demonstrated in their daily living and care for Jesus should inspire us during this year. The family provides a safe refuge for us to develop ourselves fully and to cultivate the particular gifts God provides each person. The Church offers its full presence and support for families as they experience the highs and lows, the opportunities and challenges of domestic life. As you strive to teach and learn what it means to give and forgive, to work together for a common purpose, and to share both joys and sorrows, may you remember that by nurturing the gift of faith in your children they will be able to grow into mature Disciples of Christ. We look forward to offering you support through Diocesan initiatives over the coming months, including a family conference at the end of May 2022. May these events serve to provide assistance, learning and inspiration for you in your essential role as family.

Pope Francis ended his announcement of the Amoris Laetitia Family Year with the following: “*May the Virgin Mary grant that families throughout the world be increasingly fascinated by the evangelical ideal of the Holy Family, so as to become a leaven of [a] new humanity and of a genuine and universal solidarity.*” Together let us continue to work in solidarity to strengthen and care for all families.

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

+ *Douglas Crosby*, OMI

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton

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