



Ten years after *Amoris laetitia*: *proclaiming the Gospel with families today*

Meeting of the Holy Father Leo XIV
with the Heads of Eastern Churches
and the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences

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Introductory remarks at the afternoon plenary session

Saturday 10 October 2026

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Having listened attentively to the summaries of the group contributions, we now enter another important phase of our journey: the open floor discussion. This is a particularly valuable moment, as it offers an opportunity to further enrich the ecclesial and pastoral discernment we are called to undertake, helping us to identify fundamental orientations for accompanying families in the many different circumstances of life.

Naturally, our thoughts turn first of all to those families in which the spouses have embraced Christian marriage as an authentic vocation of faith. They are a treasure for the Church and deserve to be supported so that they may continue to bear witness to the beauty of the Gospel of the family in today's world.

Yet, from a genuinely missionary perspective, our gaze cannot be limited to those who already participate fully in the life of the ecclesial community. Other families, too, often distant from religious practice or without any explicit reference to faith, are embraced by God's love and are the concern of the Church's evangelizing mission. We must therefore not forget those who – as we may infer from the teaching of Saint Augustine – are in fact Christians, though not yet in name.¹

While we are called to strengthen our accompaniment of families who are, so to speak, within the sheepfold, perhaps we should ask ourselves more boldly how we can walk alongside those families who may not yet fully know the springs of grace that flow from the sacraments, but who, along their human journey, have discovered a stream, a well, or an unexpected source of living water from which to draw authentic values, mutual love, dedication, and so forth. In these families, sometimes in hidden and surprising ways, God's grace is already at work. As *Amoris laetitia* states in paragraph 76: “ ‘The

¹ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes*, I, 13, 3: “Again, when I said: ‘In our times, this is the Christian religion which to know and follow is most secure and most certain salvation,’ I did so with reference to the name only, not to the thing itself of which this is only the name. For what is now called the Christian religion existed even among the ancients and was not lacking from the beginning of the human race until ‘Christ came in the flesh.’ From that time, true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian. For, after the Resurrection and the Ascension into heaven, when the disciples had begun to preach Him and many believed, ‘the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch,’ as is written (Cf. Acts 11:26). For this reason, I said: ‘In our times, this is the Christian religion,’ not because it did not exist in former times, but because it had received this name in later times.”

Gospel of the family also nourishes seeds that are still waiting to grow, and serves as the basis for the care of those trees that have withered and need to be tended' (*Relatio Synodi* 2014, 23), so that, beginning with the gift of Christ in the sacrament, 'they may be led patiently further on to a richer understanding and a fuller integration of this mystery in their lives' (John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 9).

I am convinced that all of us are familiar with situations of this kind. As one of the speakers emphasized this afternoon, we need to move from the realm of imagination to reality. For this very reason, it would be particularly valuable if some of you could share with the assembly concrete experiences from your own local Churches. Perhaps we, too, have sometimes been surprised to discover God's discreet yet real presence in situations where, at first sight, there seemed to be nothing but fragility, disorder, or distance from ecclesial life. And yet the Lord often goes before us, sowing seeds far beyond our boundaries and making himself present in the most unexpected places.

I would therefore like to invite each of you to share the signs of hope you have recognized along the way: those moments when we have caught a glimpse of the Holy Spirit at work in individuals and families whom we might not immediately have considered as participants in a journey of faith.

Sharing these experiences can help us to carry out more fruitfully the task entrusted to us here: to discern these signs together, so as to deepen our understanding of the criteria that should guide us in promoting ministry with and for families and in proclaiming the Gospel today. We certainly cannot find solutions here that will suit every culture. Together, however, we can discern orientations that will help us to see the world more deeply through the eyes of the Lord and enable us to respond to the challenges we face – both together and each in our own context – so that we may be a Church capable not only of caring for those who are already close, but also of recognizing, accompanying, and nurturing the seeds of the Kingdom that God continues to bring to life everywhere.