



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

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Initial Reflections on *Amoris Laetitia*

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis articulates a pastoral vision for ministry to married couples and families in the contemporary context, incorporating the thoughts and deliberations of the bishop participants in the two Synods on the family, the Extraordinary Synod of 2014 and the Ordinary Synod of 2015. Recognizing the new and often daunting challenges that couples and families face today, Pope Francis reminds us that mere words and symbolic gestures are insufficient. Rather, in keeping with his consistent teaching, Pope Francis urges the Church's ministers to encounter and accompany families experiencing separation, conflict, poverty, and any number of other social ills that are so prevalent in our time.

True pastoral care will always demand time, attention and presence on the part of the Church's ministers. True to his Jesuit tradition, Pope Francis calls for discernment on the part of the Church's ministers with couples and families in concrete situations in a way that helps them know they are supported, loved and welcomed by the Christian community in keeping with the timeless truth the Church has received from her Lord on the sanctity of family life and the life-long commitment of mutual fidelity that is the marriage covenant.

As the Holy Father himself says, this lengthy document will require much reading and re-reading, pondering and probing, so that the depth of its teachings on the spirituality of marriage and family life may truly be appropriated by the Christian faithful. I encourage all of the people of our Archdiocese to enter into this reflection and discussion, so that the culture of marriage and family life may be built up and may thrive in our local church.

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