

ERI LETTER SEPTEMBER 2026

Ten Years After the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*

The Holy Father Leo XIV has convened the leaders of the Eastern Catholic Churches and the presidents of the Episcopal Conferences to a summit on the family to mark the tenth anniversary of Pope Francis's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, to be held next October in Rome. This invitation comes in a message signed by the Pontiff on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, ten years after the publication of this Exhortation on March 19, 2016. We on the International Leading Team consider this a very opportune moment to reread this document as couples or with our base team.

At the time, this Exhortation was at the center of reflections and debates, which, unfortunately, were often limited solely to the issue of the sacraments for divorced and remarried persons. Pope Leo describes this Exhortation as a “radiant message of hope regarding conjugal and family love.” In fact, he wishes “to give thanks to the Lord for the impetus given to the Church’s study and pastoral conversion, and to ask Him for the courage to continue on this path, continually embracing the Gospel anew, with the joy of being able to proclaim it to all.”

In his message, Pope Leo XIV draws on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council to remind us that the family is “the foundation of society, a gift from God, and a school of deeper humanity” (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 52) and that “through the sacrament of marriage, Christian spouses form a kind of ‘domestic church,’ whose role is essential for the education and transmission of the faith” (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 11). He also recalls that the Popes took up the spirit of the Council: John Paul II with *Familiaris Consortio* in 1981 and Francis with *Amoris Laetitia*. Both exhortations, Pope Leo notes, “have stimulated the Church’s doctrinal and pastoral commitment to the service of young people, spouses, and families.”

Pope Leo insists on the need to continue delving deeper into the valuable teachings of *Amoris Laetitia* today. The Pope highlights several aspects of this Apostolic Exhortation:

- The biblical hope in God’s loving and merciful presence, which enables us to live “love stories” even when facing “family crises” (*AL* 8);
- The invitation to adopt “the gaze of Jesus” (*AL* 60);
- To tirelessly encourage “the growth, consolidation, and deepening of conjugal and family love” (*AL* 89);
- The call to discover that love in marriage “always gives life” (*AL* 165) and that it is “real” precisely in its “limited and earthly” nature (*AL* 113);
- “To accompany, discern, and integrate fragility, moving beyond a reductive conception of the norm, and to promote the spirituality that springs from family life” (*AL* 313).

In his message, Pope Leo also adds some words that seem directed at team members, saying that “to fulfill the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of the family to the younger generations, we must learn to evoke the beauty of the vocation to marriage precisely by acknowledging its fragility, in order to awaken trust in grace and the Christian desire for holiness.” From this, springs his gratitude to the Lord “for the families who, despite difficulties and challenges, live ‘the spirituality

of family love [...] made up of thousands of real and concrete gestures.” It is impossible not to see reflected here the faces of team couples in their daily lives.

For their part, the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life and the General Secretariat of the Synod published the thematic itinerary in July. This document prepares for and accompanies the work of the Meeting with the Holy Father. As this document emphasizes, these working sessions are intended to serve as a genuine space for encounter, listening, and discernment: welcoming the lived experiences of families, sharing concrete life stories, reflecting on the initiatives of support that communities are putting into practice, and engaging in dialogue with experts.

It is, therefore, as the working document states, “an eminently pastoral journey that places families **at the center, not only as the recipients of the Church’s action, but as AGENTS OF HER MISSION**, through whom the Gospel takes shape in everyday relationships, in decisions, in fragility, and in hope.” This pastoral emphasis is highlighted in the title of the working document: “Ten Years After *Amoris Laetitia*: Proclaiming the Gospel **with Today’s Families**.” This is very important because in TOOL, the Gospel of Marriage is proclaimed **WITH** couples and their families. Every day we learn more clearly that we not only receive the gifts and joys of the Charism but are also the ones responsible for proclaiming it here and now, where we live.

There are five thematic areas proposed for participants to reflect on, both before and during the Meeting:

1. **Families Today: reality, beauty, and challenges.** Discerning the signs of the times based on the experience of families and the Church’s commitment today.
2. **Young People and the Discovery of the Vocation to Marriage.** Listening to young people and accompanying them as they discover the value of marriage.
3. **Married Life. The First Years of Marriage: A Decisive Time.** Listening to and accompanying couples during the early years of married life and at every stage of life.
4. **In the difficulties of life: accompanying and supporting.** Walking alongside families in complex situations.
5. **Christian families, agents of the Church’s mission.** Embracing conjugal and family love as a driving force for the mission.

These topics may prompt some reflections within our base teams, at other times, or during formation sessions. But our final invitation is that, as TOOL, we accompany this meeting of the Holy Father with the bishops and families with our prayers, so that the Spirit of God may continue to make the joy and beauty of the proclamation of the love found in the sacrament of marriage and the family shine before humanity, and may He strengthen all of us team members to be His witnesses.