



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC LETTER  
ISSUED MOTU PROPRIO

BY THE SUPREME PONTIFF  
FRANCIS

## ***SUMMA FAMILIAE CURA***

instituting the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute  
for Matrimonial and Family Science

Inspired by his great care for the family, Saint John Paul II, following up the Synod of Bishops of 1980 on the Family and the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, of 1981, with the Apostolic Constitution *Magnum Matrimonii Sacramentum*, conferred stable legal form to the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, working at the Pontifical Lateran University. Since then, it has carried out fruitful work in theological study and pastoral formation both in its central campus in Rome and in its extra-urban Sections, now present on all the continents.

More recently, the Church has taken a further Synodal journey, again placing at the centre of attention the situation of marriage and the family, firstly the Extraordinary Assembly in 2014 dedicated to “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelisation”, and then in the Ordinary Assembly of 2015 on “The Vocation and the Mission of the Family in the Church and in the World”. The climax of this intense journey was the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, published on 19 March 2016.

This Synodal season has led the Church towards a renewed awareness of the Gospel of the Family and of the new pastoral challenges to which the Christian community is called upon to answer. The centrality of the family in the paths of “pastoral conversion”<sup>[1]</sup> of our communities and of “missionary transformation of the Church”<sup>[2]</sup> demands that — also at the level of academic

formation — in reflection on marriage and on the family the pastoral perspective and attention to the wounds of humanity must never be lacking. If a fruitful examination of pastoral theology cannot be conducted neglecting the special ecclesial profile of the family<sup>[3]</sup>, likewise that same pastoral sensibility must take into account the valuable contribution of thought and reflection that examine, in the deepest and most rigorous way, the truth of the revelation and wisdom of the tradition of faith, in view of its better comprehension at the present time.

“The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church.... We do well to focus on concrete realities, since ‘the calls and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history’, and through these the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family”.<sup>[4]</sup>

Anthropological-cultural change, that today influences all aspects of life and requires an analytic and diversified approach, does not permit us to limit ourselves to practices in pastoral ministry and mission that reflect forms and models of the past. We must be informed and impassioned interpreters of the wisdom of faith in a context in which individuals are less well supported than in the past by social structures, and in their emotional and family life. With the clear purpose of remaining faithful to the teaching of Christ, we must therefore look, with the intellect of love and with wise realism, at the reality of the family today in all its complexity, with its lights and its shadows.<sup>[5]</sup>

For these reasons I have considered it timely to give a new legal disposition to the John Paul II Institute, so that “the farsighted intuition of Saint John Paul II, who strongly wanted this academic institution, today [may] be better recognised and appreciated in its fruitfulness and timeliness”.<sup>[6]</sup> Therefore, I have decided to institute a Theological Institute for Matrimonial and Family Science, broadening its field of interest, both in relation to the new dimensions of the pastoral task and of the ecclesial mission, and with reference to developments in the human sciences and in anthropological culture in a field so fundamental for the culture of life.

#### Art. 1.

With the present Motu Proprio I institute the *Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute for Matrimonial and Family Science* which, linked to the Pontifical Lateran University, succeeds and substitutes the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, established by the Apostolic Constitution *Magnum Matrimonii Sacramentum*, which thus comes to an end. It will therefore be essential that the original inspiration that gave life to the former Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family continue to bear fruit in the broader field of activity of the new Theological Institute, effectively contributing to making it correspond fully to the current demands of the pastoral mission of the Church.

#### Art. 2.

The new Institute shall constitute, within the range of the Pontifical institutes, an academic centre of reference in the service of the mission of the universal Church, in the field of sciences regarding marriage and the family and with regard to themes connected to the fundamental covenant of man and woman for the care of generation and creation.

### **Art. 3.**

The special relationship of the new Theological Institute with the ministry and the teaching of the Holy See will be further enhanced by the privileged relation that it will establish, in forms to be mutually agreed, with the Congregation for Catholic Education, with the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, and with the Pontifical Academy for Life.

### **Art. 4.**

§1. The Pontifical Theological Institute, thus renewed, will adapt its own structures and use the necessary tools – professorships, lecturers, programmes, administrative staff – to carry out the scientific and ecclesial mission entrusted to it.

§2. The academic authorities of the Theological Institute are the Grand Chancellor, the Dean and the Board of the Institute.

§3. The Theological Institute has the faculty of conferring *iure proprio* to its students the following academic qualifications: the Doctorate in Matrimonial and Family Sciences; the Master's Degree in Matrimonial and Family Sciences; and the Diploma in Matrimonial and Family Sciences.

### **Art. 5**

The provisions made herein shall be furthered and defined in the Statutes, approved by the Holy See. In a special way, the most suitable methods shall be sought to promote cooperation and comparison, in the fields of teaching and research, between the authorities of the Theological Institute and those of the Pontifical Lateran University.

### **Art. 6**

Pending the approval of the new Statutes, the Theological Institute shall be temporarily governed by the statutory regulations currently in force at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, including its framework in the form of Sections and the related norms, to ensure that they are not in conflict with the present Motu Proprio.

Everything that I have decreed in this Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio must be observed in all its parts, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if it be worthy of particular mention, and I

hereby decree that it be promulgated by publication in the daily newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, that it enter into force on the day of promulgation, and thereafter be published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

*Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's on 8 September, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the year 2017, the fifth of my Pontificate*

**Francis**

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[1] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 26-32.

[2] Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 1.

[3] Cf. Vatican Ecumenical Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, II.

[4] Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 31; cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 4.

[5] Cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 32.

[6] *Address to the academic community of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, 27 October 2016; L'Osservatore Romano, 28 October 2016, p. 8.*