



# THE JOY OF LOVE

*Amoris Laetitia*

*Drawn from*

## ***“AMORIS LAETITIA”***

*“Amoris Laetitia”, Latin for  
“The Joy of Love”,  
are the first words of the Exhortation of  
Pope Francis, issued in March 2016,  
following the Synod of Bishops on  
Marriage and Family Life, which ended in  
Rome in September 2015.*

KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS AUSTRALIA

## **FORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 2017**

### **A proclamation of Good News**

Bible quotes are generally taken from the Jerusalem Bible

Prepared by  
Most Rev B J Hickey  
Emeritus Archbishop of Perth

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ B J Hickey'.



**POPE FRANCIS' PRAYER  
TO THE HOLY FAMILY**

Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
In you we contemplate  
the splendor of true love.  
In you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
Grant that our families too  
May be places of communion and prayer,  
Authentic schools of the Gospel  
And small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth  
May families never again experience  
Violence, rejection and division.  
May all who have been hurt or scandalized  
Find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
Make us once more mindful  
Of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,  
And the beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
Graciously hear our prayer.

Amen.





## SESSION ONE

### *Chapter II of "Amoris Laetitia"* *The Experiences and Challenges of Marriage*

**Step 1:**        **OPENING PRAYER** (from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:**        **NOTES** (to be read aloud)

There are nine chapters in "Amoris Laetitia". The first chapter is entitled "The Light of the World." Jesus is the Light of the World, and so are his teachings on marriage, especially in this age when traditional and Christian marriage is under extreme pressure.

We begin our series of eight reflections on the Exhortation with Chapter Two. A number of direct quotes from this long exhortation are presented here as a useful summary of each chapter for purposes of discussion.

**Step 3:**        **SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**(Paul to the Romans 12: 9 – 13)**

*"Do not let your love be a pretense, but sincerely prefer good to evil.*

*Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other.*

*Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit.*

*If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying.*

*If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care."*

**Step 4:**        **SILENT REFLECTION** (*brief*)

**Step 5:**        **READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1.    The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church... **(31)**
2.    Faithful to Christ's teaching we look to the reality of the family today in all its complexity, with both its lights and shadows. **(32)**
3.    The tensions created by an overly individualistic culture, caught up with possessions and pleasures, leads to intolerance and hostility in families. **(33)**

4. The ideals of marriage marked by a commitment to exclusivity and stability is swept aside whenever it proves inconvenient or tiresome. We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations...we have been called to form consciences, not to replace them. **(37)**
5. We need to find the right language, arguments and forms of witness that can reach the hearts of young people...inviting them to take up the challenge of marriage with enthusiasm and courage. **(40)**
6. Failures give rise to new relationships, new couples, new civil unions, and new marriages, creating family situations, which are complex and problematic for the Christian life. **(41)**
7. Consumerism may also deter people from having children, simply so they can maintain freedom and lifestyle. **(42)**
8. The weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has an effect on families. **(43)**
9. The sexual abuse of children is all the more scandalous when it occurs in places where they ought to be most safe, particularly in families, schools, communities and Christian institutions. **(45)**
10. Families who lovingly accept the difficult trials of a child with special needs are greatly to be admired. They render the Church and society an invaluable witness of faithfulness to the gift of life. **(47)**

**Step 6:**        **SILENT REFLECTION**  
*(a few minutes)*

**Step 7:**        **SHARING**  
 Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8:**        **CONCLUSION** *(by Chairman)*

**Step 9:**        **CLOSING PRAYERS** *(by Chairman)*

Pope Francis' Prayer for Families                      (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers.              (Chairman)

## SESSION TWO

### *Chapter III of "Amoris Laetitia"* *Looking to Jesus: The Vocation of the Family*

**Step 1:**        **OPENING PRAYER** (from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:**        **NOTES** (*to be read aloud*)

In this chapter we see how the teachings of Jesus relate to family life and draw on recent Papal comments in order to understand the vocation of the family.

**Step 3:**        **SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**(Paul to the Colossians 3: 12-15)**

*You are God's chosen race, his saints. He loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.*

*Bear with one another. Forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same.*

*Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love.*

*And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body.*

*Always be thankful.*

**Step 4:**        **SILENT REFLECTION** (brief)

**Step 5:**        **READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1. Jesus, who reconciled all things in himself, restored marriage and the family to their original form. Marriage and the family have been "redeemed" by Christ. **(63)**
2. 'Nazareth teaches us the meaning of family life, its loving communion, its simple and austere beauty, its sacred and inviolable character. **(66)**
3. The spouses are consecrated and by means of a special grace build up the Body of Christ and form a domestic church. **(67)**
4. The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses. **(72)**

5. Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens. **(73)**
6. Sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is in turn a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple. They become one flesh. **(74)**
7. The child who is born does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfilment". **(80)**
8. A child deserves to be born of that love, and not by any other means. **(81)**
9. If the family is the sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is rejected and destroyed. **(83)**
10. Schools do not replace parents, but complement them... a rift has opened up between the family and society, between family and the school... and the family is in crisis. **(84)**
11. The Church is a family of families. The Church is good for the family, and the family is good for the Church. **(87)**

**Step 6:**        **SILENT REFLECTION**  
*(Brief)*

**Step 7:**        **SHARING** (a few minutes)  
 Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8:**        **CONCLUSION** (by Chairman)

**Step 9:**        **CLOSING PRAYERS** (Chairman)

Pope Francis' Prayer for Families                      (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers.              (Chairman)

**SESSION THREE**  
**Chapter IV of “Amoris Laetitia”**  
**Love in Marriage**

**Step 1: OPENING PRAYER** (from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2: NOTES** (to be read aloud)

This Chapter uses St Paul’s famous “Hymn to love” in order to illuminate the role of love in marriage.

**Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 13: 4-7**

*Love is always patient and kind. It is never jealous*

*Love is never boastful or conceited. It is never rude or selfish. It does not take offence and is not resentful.*

*Love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins but delights in the truth.*

*It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.*

**Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION** (brief)

**Step 5: READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1. There is no need to lay upon two limited persons the tremendous burden of having to reproduce perfectly the union existing between Christ and his Church, for marriage as a sign entails “a dynamic process. **(122)**
2. Conjugal love is the “greatest form of friendship”. **(123)**
3. A love that is weak or infirm .... cannot sustain a great commitment. **(124)**
4. Marriage is likewise a friendship marked by passion, but a passion always directed to an ever more stable and intense union. **(125)**
5. The aesthetic experience of love is expressed in that “gaze” which contemplates other persons as ends in themselves, even if they are infirm, elderly or physically unattractive. **(128)**

6. This lies behind the complaints and grievances we often hear in families: “My husband does not look at me; he acts as if I were invisible”. “My wife no longer looks at me, she only has eyes for our children”. **(128)**
7. On the other hand, joy also grows through pain and sorrow .... After suffering and struggling together, spouses are able to experience that it was worth it. **(130)**
8. A love that fails to grow is at risk. Growth can only occur if we respond to God’s grace through constant acts of love, acts of kindness that become ever more frequent, intense, generous, tender and cheerful. **(134)**
9. Sexuality is not a means of gratification or entertainment; it is an interpersonal language wherein the other is taken seriously, in his or her sacred and inviolable dignity. **(151)**
10. Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected. **(156)**
11. None of this, however, is possible without praying to the Holy Spirit for an outpouring of his grace, his supernatural strength and his spiritual fire, to confirm, direct and transform our love in every new situation. **(164)**

**Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION**  
(Brief)

**Step 7: SHARING** (a few minutes)  
Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8: CONCLUSION** (by Chairman)

**Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS** (Chairman)

Pope Francis’ Prayer for Families (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers. (Chairman)

**SESSION FOUR**  
**Chapter V of “Amoris Laetitia”**  
**Love made Fruitful**

**Step 1:            OPENING PRAYER** (as for the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:            NOTES** (to be read aloud)

In this Chapter, Pope Francis expresses his concern for children who grow up without love, and insists that all children be surrounded by love. This is a challenge to the Church when single or abandoned mothers look for help in the raising of their children.

**Step 3:            SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**Matthew 18 :6**

*Anyone who welcomes a little child like this welcomes me.*

*But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have great faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone around his neck.*

**Step 4:            SILENT REFLECTION** (brief)

**Step 5:            READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1. The family is the setting in which a new life is not only born but also welcomed as a gift of God. (166)
2. And yet, “from the first moments of their lives, many children are rejected, abandoned, and robbed of their childhood and future... This is shameful! ... How can we issue solemn declarations on human rights and the rights of children, if we then punish children for the errors of adults? **(166)**
3. If a child comes into this world in unwanted circumstances, the parents and other members of the family must do everything possible to accept that child as a gift from God and assume the responsibility of accepting him or her with openness and affection. **(166)**
4. Every child growing within the mother’s womb is part of the eternal loving plan of God the Father: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (Jer 1:5). **(168)**
5. Every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father... not just as individuals but also of their mutual love. **(172)**

6. Nowadays we acknowledge as legitimate and indeed desirable that women wish to study, work, develop their skills and have personal goals. At the same time, we cannot ignore the need that children have for a mother's presence, especially in the first months of life. **(173)**
  
7. A father possessed of a clear and serene masculine identity who demonstrates affection and concern for his wife is just as necessary as a caring mother. **(175)**
  
8. A reversal of the roles of parents and children is unhealthy, since it hinders the proper process of development that children need to experience. **(176)**
  
9. Open and caring families find a place for the poor and build friendships with those less fortunate than themselves. **(183)**
  
10. "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent" (Ps 71:9). We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elderly feel like a living part of the community. **(191)**

**Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION**  
(Brief)

**Step 7: SHARING** (a few minutes)  
Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8: CONCLUSION** (by Chairman)

**Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS** (Chairman)

Pope Francis' Prayer for Families (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers. (Chairman)

**SESSION FIVE**  
**Chapter VI of “Amoris Laetitia”**  
**Some Pastoral Perspectives**

**Step 1:            OPENING PRAYER** (as from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:            NOTES** (*to be read aloud*)

In this Chapter Pope Francis encourages priests, parishes and the Catholic faithful to ease the pain of marriage breakdown, and to support families facing difficulties.

**Step 3:            SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**Matthew 7: 1 - 4**

*Do not judge and you will not be judged, because the judgements you give are the judgement you will get.*

*And the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given.*

*Why do you observe the splinter in your brother’s eye and never notice the plank in your own?*

**Step 4:            SILENT REFLECTION** (Brief)

**Step 5:            READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1. Nor must we forget that, in her teaching on the family, the Church is a sign of contradiction. **(200)**
2. The Synod Fathers emphasized that Christian families, by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony, are the principle agents of the family apostolate. **(200)**
3. The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish. **(202)**
4. It is important for families to be part of the seminary process and priestly life, .... to keep them well grounded in reality. **(203)**
5. “The complexity of today’s society and the challenges faced by the family require a greater effort on the part of the whole Christian community in preparing those who are about to be married. **(206)**

6. Among the causes of broken marriages are unduly high expectations about conjugal life. Once it becomes apparent that the reality is more limited and challenging than one imagined, the solution is not to think quickly and irresponsibly about separation, but to come to the sober realization that married life is a process of growth. **(221)**
7. The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty. **(232)**
8. Divorced people who have not remarried, and often bear witness to marital fidelity, ought to be encouraged to find in the Eucharist the nourishment they need to sustain them in their present state of life. **(242)**
9. It is important that the divorced who have entered a new union should be made to feel part of the Church. "They are not excommunicated" and they should not be treated as such, since they remain part of the ecclesial community. **(243)**
10. Families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives. **(250)**
11. There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions between homosexual persons on the same level as marriage. **(251)**

**Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION**  
(Brief)

**Step 7: SHARING** (a few minutes)  
Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8: CONCLUSION** (by Chairman)

**Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS** (Chairman)

Pope Francis' Prayer for Families (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers. (Chairman)

**SESSION SIX**  
**Chapter VII of “Amoris Laetitia”**  
**Towards a Better Education of Children**

**Step 1:**        **OPENING PRAYER** (as from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:**        **NOTES** (to be read aloud)

This Chapter spells out the vital role of the family in educating children, more than the role of schools which are meant to help the family in its work.

**Step 3:**        **SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**Paul to the Ephesians 6: 1 – 4**

*Children, be obedient to your parents in the law – that is your duty.*

*The first commandment that has a promise attached to it is: Honour your father and your mother.*

*And you will prosper and have a long life in the land.*

*And parents, never drive your children to resentment, but in bringing them up correct them and guide them as the Lord does.*

**Step 4:**        **SILENT REFLECTION** (Brief)

**Step 5:**        **READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1. Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. **(259)**
2. Parents need to consider what they want their children to be exposed to, and this necessarily means being concerned about who is providing their entertainment, who is entering their rooms through television and electronic devices, and with whom they are spending their free time. **(260)**
3. Obsession, however, is not education. What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy. **(261)**
4. Parents rely on schools to ensure the basic instruction of their children, but can never completely delegate the moral formation of their children to others. **(263)**
5. Parents are also responsible for shaping the will of their children, fostering good habits and a natural inclination to goodness. **(264)**

6. The family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom. **(274)**
7. Sex education should provide information while keeping in mind that children and young people have not yet attained full maturity. The information has to come at a proper time and in a way suited to their age. **(281)**
8. Raising children calls for an orderly process of handing on the faith. **(287)**
9. Handing on the faith presumes that parents themselves genuinely trust God, seek him and sense their need for him. **(287)**
10. In all families the Good News needs to resound, in good times and in bad, as a source of light along the way. **(290)**

**Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION**  
(Brief)

**Step 7: SHARING** (a few minutes)  
Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8: CONCLUSION** (by Chairman)

**Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS** (Chairman)

Pope Francis' Prayer for Families (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers. (Chairman)

**SESSION SEVEN**  
*Chapter VIII of “Amoris Laetitia”*  
**Accompanying, Discerning and Integrating Weakness**

**Step 1:        OPENING PRAYER** (as from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:        NOTES** (to be read aloud)

To Pope Francis this is his most important Chapter. He asks readers to think about it sincerely and to understand what he is saying. His main point is that Bishops and pastors should treat individual cases of hardship, marriage breakdown, divorce and re-marriage with understanding and compassion, and try to involve these people in the life of the Church as far as is possible, so that they can receive the support of the people as the Body of Christ.

He calls on Bishops and Bishop Conferences to build mercy into any guidelines they make for ministering to these people.

**Step 3:        SACRED SCRIPTURE**  
**John 8: 1 – 11**

*At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.*

*The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, ‘Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?’ They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, ‘If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again.*

*When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’*

*‘No one, sir’ she replied. ‘Neither do I condemn you,’ said Jesus ‘go away, and don’t sin any more.’*

**Step 4:        SILENT REFLECTION** (Brief)

**Step 5:        READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (to be read aloud)

1. Christian marriage, as a reflection of the union between Christ and his Church .... Some forms of union radically contradict this ideal, while others realize it in at least a partial and analogous way. **(292)**



**SESSION EIGHT**  
**Chapter IX of “Amoris Laetitia”**  
**The Spirituality of Marriage**

**Step 1:           OPENING PRAYER** (as from the Order of Prayers)

**Step 2:           NOTES** (*to be read aloud*)

Pope Francis reminds us that Christian Marriage is really a Covenant, because, in Jesus teaching, marriage reflects the covenantal union between Christ and his Church.

The spirituality of marriage is about how spouses live that covenant by honouring each other, how they strengthen the bonds of love between them, and how their fidelity to God is expressed in the joys and sorrows of family life, in the struggles and sacrifices they make for the family and in the way they place prayer and the Eucharist, the source of grace, at the centre of their lives.

The following exhortation by Paul to married Christian people calls on them to see their relationship through the eyes of faith. Although Paul’s acceptance of a hierarchical order in the household sounds strange to modern ears, Paul wants married people to model their relationship on that of Christ and his Church, not on the ruthless subjugation of women that existed in much of pagan society of his day.

**Step 3:           SACRED SCRIPTURE** (*to be read aloud*)  
**Paul to the Ephesians 5: 2a, 25 – 32**

*Follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.*

*Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless.*

*In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it;*

*and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body – and we are its living parts.*

*For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body.*

*This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.*

**Step 4:           SILENT REFLECTION** (Brief)

**Step 5: READINGS FROM AMORIS LAETITIA** (*to be read aloud*)

1. The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. **(315)**
2. The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures. In the end, marital spirituality is a spirituality of the bond, in which divine love dwells. **(315)**
3. If a family is centred on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life .... In the darkest hours of a family's life, union with Jesus in his abandonment can help avoid a breakup .... Moreover, moments of joy, relaxation, celebration, and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection. **(317)**
4. Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening this paschal faith. **(318)**
5. The family's communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist, especially in the context of the Sunday rest. There, spouses can always seal anew the paschal covenant which united them and which ought to reflect the covenant which God sealed with mankind in the cross. **(318)**
6. Christian couples are, for each other, for their children and for their relatives, cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith. God calls them to bestow life and to care for life. For this reason the family "has always been the nearest hospital". **(321)**
7. Led by the Spirit, the family circle is not only open to life by generating it within itself, but also by going forth and spreading life by caring for others and seeking their happiness .... When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is a symbol, witness and participant in the Church's motherhood. **(324)**

**Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION**  
(*Brief*)

**Step 7: SHARING** (a few minutes)  
Is there any point on which you wish to make a comment?

**Step 8: CONCLUSION** (by Chairman)

**Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS** (Chairman)

Pope Francis' Prayer for Families (Page 3)

Final prayer from the Order of Prayers. (Chairman)