

My Very Dear Team Members,

For the Church, the year 2014 will be marked by the preparation for the next bishop's synod on the family or on the pastoral challenges for the family within the context of the new evangelisation. For us, as a Movement, it is obviously a topic of great interest, since our charism and mission is to bear witness within the Church and in the world to the *joie de vivre* of the ideal of Christian holiness within marriage.

After *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Francis' first encyclical, we have received his apostolic exhortation to live and experience the joy of the Gospel. It is a topic upon which Pope Francis has insisted since the beginning of his pontificate. If Pope Benedict accentuated a concern for truth (a very important question which we should continue to be committed to for, as Jesus said, "*You will know the truth and the truth will free you,*" (Jn 8, 32), Pope Francis invites us to live and bear witness to the joy of being who we are, of being Christians within our different states, married, single, religious.

We know that today's world does not give us much to be joyful about and we are also aware of the very serious problems, which threaten and hurt the family. Problems which are transversal and which impact all continents and cultures. But the joy that Pope Francis asks us to live and bear witness to is a joy which comes from inside, from the heart, placated by the love that God places in our hearts, if we let Him engulf us in his grace and mercy.

The questionnaire which was sent out to the whole Church represents an assessment of the state of the family in today's world and suggests that one of the causes of the actual crisis facing the family, on the intra-ecclesial level, is to be found in the weakening or abandonment of faith in the sacrament of marriage and in the therapeutic efficiency of sacramental penance. The diagnosis could not be more precise. And here, we have a very important programme for us as a Movement, for each couple and each team: to deepen and renew our faith in the sacraments, which take charge of the whole of our lives, in the holiness of marriage, which can only be experienced by accepting the grace of the sacrament of penance and by nourishing it in the Eucharist.

Here, very dear Couples, is a strong appeal to deepen our charisma and mission in the Church, based on the celebration of these sacraments, without which no spiritual progress is possible.

I hope that you are all well. I take my leave of you and beg for you all the graces and blessings of God, our Father.

Father José Jacinto Ferreira de Farias, SCJ  
Spiritual Counsellor for the International Leading Team (ERI)