



## The World Meeting of Families



Four weeks after the International Gathering in Fatima where around 8,500 team members from over 80 countries came together as one big family, we found ourselves at the ninth World Meeting of Families in Dublin, Ireland. These events are held every three years; the previous one being in Philadelphia, USA. In Ireland 37,000 people, including over 13,000 from 116 overseas countries, came to celebrate the richness of marriage and family life. Apart from the talks and workshops, there were also children's and teenagers' sessions and an exhibition space hosting 300

stands representing faith based organisations. Equipes Notre Dame had one of these stands and was delighted to welcome visitors from many countries. Some were team members, some knew of us and for others it was the first time they had heard of END. Particular highlights for us were meeting the Canadian couple piloting the first Arabic speaking team in their country, and an Irish priest ministering to the Filipino community in Iceland! Our global village becomes increasing like a washing machine, mixing up nationalities and cultures. We already have over 100 French speaking teams in other parts of the world and more recently, Lebanese teams in Sydney and a Spanish team in Sweden. No doubt there are many other examples that we don't know about.

We are very grateful to the Irish region for hosting visiting teams members, organising the literature, the stand and the rota to man it. Teams couples and priests were only too glad to spend an hour or two being witnesses to others of the blessings that being a member of END brings to them. We were also particularly pleased to see that the Association of Inter-church Families was also represented in the exhibition. In the Eurasia zone we have team members from other Christian churches since only two of the twelve countries we liaise with can be described as "Catholic" (Ireland and the Philippines) and inter-church marriage is commonplace. Teams of Our Lady can be a welcoming home to these couples. For much of the three days, a teams couple, Antony and Janet Denman from Great Britain, manned the Inter-church Family stand. They reported that many people showed a great interest in the special mission of the association and directed several couples and priests to the END stand. The Irish sector

couple gave a great talk on hope for marriage through END and that also resulted in many more visitors to our stand.

The key topics and themes of the event were related to Pope Francis' teaching in *Amoris Laetitia* centred on The Family and Faith, The Family and Love and The Family and Hope. Sessions covered love within the family, how to cope with breakdowns in family life and looking outwards to other families and people of all faiths or none. A major theme throughout was care for our common home, emphasised by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. "In the family too, we can rethink our habits of consumption and join in caring for the environment as our common home." (*AL*, 277)

All the sessions were streamed live and those we attended were excellent. Many can be listened to on the World Meeting of Families website (<https://www.worldmeeting2018.ie>) or via YouTube. On the Saturday there was a wonderful Family Festival attended by Pope Francis including some moving testimonies from families who had faced adversity. The event ended on Sunday with Mass in Phoenix Park celebrated by Pope Francis. The Vatican has estimated attendance at 300,000. At the end of Mass the next venue for the WMOF in 2021 was announced – **Rome!** Once again, this is a place where many teams exist and can contribute to the programme. We would encourage all of you to start saving to come to what will surely be another great event.