

Pope Francis teaches us how to *Grow in Love* as we prepare for the World Meeting of Families 2018

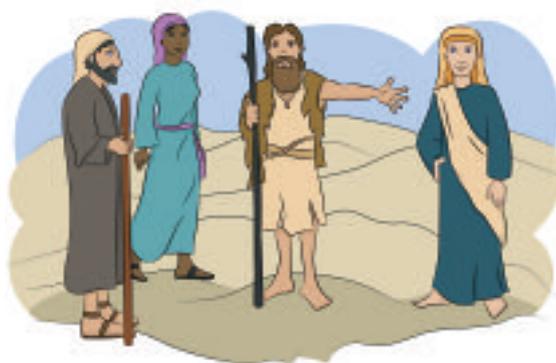
National Association of
Primary Diocesan Advisors

What an initiative of divine providence to have the celebration of the World Meeting of Families 2018 coincide with the phasing in of the *Grow in Love* Religious Education programmes to Catholic primary schools! The theme of the World Meeting of Families 2018 is based on Pope Francis' post-Synodal Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*).

This Religious Education programme from Junior Infants (P1) through to fourth class (P6) offers a variety of opportunities to families to grow in God's love by supporting and enhancing faith development. In this way, the growth of the 'domestic Church' is fostered by God's grace and his unconditional love and mercy. God's grace coupled with people's efforts make God's plans possible. Pope Francis teaches people the importance of family as the 'domestic Church.' The Pope once said: 'they are the right places for faith to become life and life to become faith'.

At each stage of *Grow in Love*, parents/guardians are encouraged to support the Religious Education taught in school. While the teacher uses the Teacher's Manual, pupils use the children's *Grow in Love* book *at home*, to support the work being done *in school*. At third and fourth class levels, the activities of the *at home* section invite chat, prayer, scripture reading and participative family encounters. Hopefully, with such engagement, families will deepen and develop their relationship with God, with Mary his Mother and with one another, thereby becoming more active disciples in Jesus' mission. Hence, the love of God will be rooted in daily life, with all its joys and sorrows.

Pope Francis' witness to the love of Jesus and Mary his Mother, has influenced this Religious Education programme. An issue very dear to Pope Francis is the 'Care of our Common Home'. In 2015, he wrote *Laudato Si'*, inviting every person in the world to take care of our common home, the earth. Families can read extracts of this letter,



find links to a video, pray the 'Care of the Earth' prayer and become good stewards of creation by following the *Grow in Love* programme.

Jesus' teaching on love is an integral part of *Grow in Love*. Jesus teaches his followers to love one another as he has loved them. He also teaches them the great commandment and the golden rule, and challenges all his disciples to an active love for their neighbour. Pope Francis strives to model the love of Jesus in his daily life. In *Grow in Love*, parents/guardians can listen to their children tell how Pope Francis took a moment to embrace, pray and lay his hands on a man with a disfiguring disease.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to pray the 'Five Finger Prayer' with their children, a prayer introduced by Pope Francis.

Families are presented with an image of Pope Francis attending the sacrament of Reconciliation in St Peter's, Rome, thereby inviting reflection on reconciliation with God and with one another. They are also invited to come to know Jesus as the one who seeks out in love and mercy those who are lost.

A variety of excellent resources was compiled for the World Meeting of Families 2018, and these provide catechesis for the 'domestic churches.' These resources are attractive and user-friendly, and they support the themes of the *Grow in Love* programme. Families are invited to find these programmes online through the website, www.worldmeeting2018.ie.

The prayer and the theme song composed for this special occasion, 'The Joy of Love,' are available online for family participation. A special icon was written to encourage both reflection and ongoing prayer for families as part of the journey of preparation for the World Meeting. The icon shows the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Lk 2:39-51), the Wedding Feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-11) and the Raising of Jairus' Daughter (Mk 5:21-24, 35-43). The Archangels Michael and Gabriel are introduced and invite families to recall the role of the angels in scripture and to pray to their guardian angel.

Other key resources focus on the Liturgical Year, where particular sacramental and seasonal initiatives and moments are introduced, e.g. St Valentine's Day, St Patrick's Day, Trócaire's Romero Family Award, Confirmation acts of kindness, First Communion, the *Amoris* cube and the Children's Family Album.

So, *Let's Talk Family, Let's be Family*, as we grow in God's love.

Sr Anne Neylon DC
Diocesan Advisor for Primary Schools,
Archdiocese of Dublin