Fact Sheet: World Meeting of Families

- **What:** The World Meeting of Families is the world's largest Catholic gathering of families, sponsored by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Family. The gathering is a week-long international event of prayer, catechesis and celebration that attracts a global audience.

- **Goal:** To strengthen the bonds between families and to recognize the importance of marriage and the family to all of society.

- **When:** September 22- September 27, 2015

- **Where:** Philadelphia (8th Meeting; 1st time in the United States)

- **Theme:** “Love Is Our Mission: the Family Fully Alive” (chosen by Pope Francis)

- **Events:** The World Meeting of Families is made up of three events:
  - World Meeting of Families Congress: Sept. 22-25 at Pennsylvania Convention Center (1101 Arch St.). Speakers engage registrants through keynote addresses and breakout sessions, focusing on ways to strengthen the bonds of the family (the Adult Congress).
  - Festival of Families: Sept. 26 (See Pope Francis below).
  - Papal Mass: Sept. 27 (See Pope Francis below).

- **Papal Involvement:** Pope Francis is expected to be present on Sept. 26-27 for Saturday's Festival of Families, an intercultural celebration of family life around the world, and Sunday's Papal Mass.

- **Public Access:** Both events mentioned in bullet above are open to the public and will take place on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Tickets are not required and public access is free.
- **History:** Started in 1994 by Pope St. John Paul II, the gathering has been held once every three years since.
- **Kids:** [The Youth Congress](#) provides opportunities for those ages 6-18 in the form of an interactive program that focuses on building, creating, playing, listening, serving and embracing the theme of this year's meeting. Child care will be available for those 6 months to 6 years old.
- **Registration:** Registration is required for the Congress from Sep. 22-25 and prices vary upon the package chosen by participants. See [here](#) for full pricing.
- **Significance** of the event being in the USA for the first time:
  - “The most distinctive thing about this meeting is that it comes at the end of Pope Francis's first-ever visit to the United States,” [J. Patrick Hornbeck II](#), Chair of the Theology Department at Fordham University, said. “He has sparked enormous enthusiasm among both Catholic and non-Catholic Americans, and because of his high profile and favorability the event will draw much more media attention than previous meetings.”
  - “The meeting also occurs at a moment in which contests over the definition of the family continue to shape American public life, especially in the wake of the Supreme Court's Obergefell decision legalizing same-sex marriage,” Hornbeck said. “It will be interesting to see whether and to what extent Pope Francis engages local controversies like these in the midst of a truly global event.”
- **Papal Participation:** Popes have participated in most of the World Meetings of Families: John Paul II in 1994, 1997 and 2000; Benedict XVI in 2006 and 2012. Both John Paul II and Benedict participated in other meetings by video link. This will be Pope Francis's first World Meeting of Families. The meeting was actually scheduled before he was elected pope.
• “The participation of popes underscores the significance of the event in the life of the Catholic Church,” Hornbeck said.

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September 21, 2015