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Statement of Bishop Daniel E. Thomas
on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*

In his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), released today, Pope Francis offers pastoral guidance for the Church in addressing the concrete realities of marriage and family life in the contemporary world. This document continues the dialogue of the two recent synods that took place in Rome in October 2014 and October 2015. As the title of this exhortation suggests, Pope Francis believes the Catholic Church can do more to assist families in rediscovering joy and hope in family life. The Holy Father encourages us not to allow fragile, complex or irregular situations to steal the joy that perseverance in faithful, generous and life-giving love brings to the world in a powerful way.

Amoris Laetitia signals no change in Church teaching on sensitive and controversial matters, such as divorced and remarried Catholics and same-sex unions. Pope Francis calls all in the Church to a culture of encounter and accompaniment. The Holy Father desires all of us to rediscover the beauty of living the teachings of Jesus that show us the path to true love and true joy. He calls us neither to condemn nor condone, but instead to meet people where they are, no matter the situation, and draw them into the transforming love of Christ. This document is all the more significant when read through the lens of this Jubilee Year of Mercy, a year which proclaims not anything goes, but anything forgiven.

I hope and pray that anyone who feels estranged or confused by the Church's teaching will seek the care and assistance of our local pastors, and encounter the mercy and healing of Jesus.

In the introduction to his exhortation, Pope Francis encourages us to read *Amoris Laetitia* patiently and carefully in order to avoid a "rushed reading of the text" (AL #7). We look forward to the fruit that the study of this document will bring to the lives of the families of our Diocese. This document on love in the family reawakens in our hearts joy-filled memories of our diocesan pilgrimage to the World Meeting of Families during Pope Francis' historic visit to the United States this past September. I am encouraged by the vibrant Catholic family life I see here in the Diocese of Toledo, and I invite us all to continue to foster holy disciples, holy families and holy vocations to become a Holy Diocese of Toledo.

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