DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

Prot. N. 0525/2026

DECREE

Worldwide Marriage Encounter has its origins in the intuitions of Fr. Gabriel Calvo who, in Spain in the 1950's, developed a series of conferences for married couples, focused on the development of an open and honest relationship within marriage, and on learning to live out this Sacramental relationship in service of others. The underlying intuition was that couples could discover God's love in their lived experience, in their commitment to love each other, and in the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship, and that ministry to these couples could be led by couples and priests working together. Developed across Spain as the "Marriage Teams of Pope Pius XII," and then as *Encuentro Conjugal*, this apostolate was introduced to Latin America in 1966 and to the United States in 1968, where it was developed by several groups. From these beginnings, *Worldwide Marriage Encounter* took shape as an international reality, and today is present in Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, the Pacific and in Africa.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter brings together married couples, priests and religious in order to renew families and parishes (Statutes, art. 1.2), and make of these couples "active agents of evangelisation in all contexts, nurturing strong Christ-centred families both where the Gospel has yet to be proclaimed and where it has been forgotten or is ignored" (Statutes, 1.3.). The vision of *Worldwide Marriage Encounter* is to share "the lived manifestation of Jesus' commandment: love one another as I have loved you (John 15: 12; Statutes 2.1.), and to proclaim the value of Marriage and of Holy Orders in the Church and in the world (Statutes, art. 2.2.), serving in communion with Pastors, and faithful to the Church's teaching on marriage and the family (Statutes, art. 2.42.).

The Second Vatican Council gives special attention to the importance of associations of the Christian faithful and their participation in the life and mission of the Church (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 18, 19 and 21). Subsequent Pontifical Magisterium underlines the role that such groups have in carrying forth the Gospel of Christ (cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici,* no. 29). It recalls the urgent need for a new evangelisation and the responsibility of all the baptised and all ecclesial associations and movements in this regard (cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, nos. 94 and 96). It also affirms the importance of an authentic Christian life as the source and inspiration for all efforts in evangelisation (FRANCIS, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 8), and the role international associations play

in supporting the Petrine mission by being leaven of unity and zealous missionaries (LEO XIV, *Address to the Moderators of lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities*, June 6th 2025).

Consequently:

Having examined the request first presented to the Pontifical Council for the Laity by the then International Ecclesial Team, Anthony and Catherine WITCZAK with Fr. Emile FRISCHE; and taken forward with the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life by their successors Daniel and Shelley EE with Fr. Nathaniel GOMEZ; and then Josico and Susana MATA PRADERA with Fr. Jun LIMBAGA;

Taking account of the longstanding good reputation of *Worldwide Marriage Encounter*, and of the fruits of its service to the Church in many countries;

Following a detailed study of the draft statutes, presented to this Dicastery in their final form on March 29th 2025 by the current International Ecclesial Team, Clarel and Danielle MARIE with Bishop Michael WARFEL;

In light of article 134 of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* for the Roman Curia, and according to canon 322 of the Code of Canon Law;

The Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life hereby decrees:

1. The recognition of *Worldwide Marriage Encounter* as an international private association of the faithful, with juridical personality, in conformity with the canonical norms in force and according to canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law;

2. The approval of the Statutes *ad experimentum* for a period of five years, a copy of these statutes having been duly authenticated by this Dicastery and deposited in its archives.

From the Vatican, February 2nd 2026, Feast of the Presentation of the Lord,

Card. Kevin Farrell
Prefect

Gleison De Paula Souza
Secretary

DICASTERIUM PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA