

## Cast of Thousands to lead Global Celebration of Families in Croke Park!

Speaking at the launch in Croke Park, the President and Host of WMOF2018,

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said,

“One of the great attractions of Pope Francis is how he himself shows how the role of Pope can be unique in bringing the Christian message into our complex world. He shows us that he can live in a world where faith seems marginal and yet manages to touch hearts. He finds ways in which he can win hearts for what the teaching of Jesus involves, not through imposing and judging, but through winning and attracting. That is his real talent.”



**The Festival of Families** will be one of the highlights of WMOF2018 and is choreographed as a celebration of family life. Details of the programme have just been released, which include national and international performers, hundreds of musicians, dancers, choirs and flag-bearers and features community-based groups and artists.

Pope Francis will deliver an address to the families in the stadium and will hear five family testimonies, shared by families from Ireland, Canada, India, Iraq and Africa.

The selection of themes and artists featured in the event reflect many of the priorities in the ministry of Pope Francis including homelessness and those on the margins; migrants and refugees; care for our common home and the importance of the family.

Families from 116 countries are set to be entertained at the WMOF2018 Festival of Families event in the presence of Pope Francis. Organisers have today released details of the programme and some of the artists who will line out in Croke Park on Saturday 25 August. The Festival of Families is choreographed as a celebration of family life. It will be one of the highlights of the WMOF2018.

**The *Festival of Families* also brings together an exciting line-up of creative and performance talent in a cast of thousands**, featuring a host of contemporary Irish and international singers, performers, choirs, musicians, dancers, as well as hundreds of volunteers, together creating a unique experience.

**The programme includes community-based artists as well as some well-known local and international artists**, it features Andrea Bocelli, The Riverdance Troupe, Nathan Carter, Dana Masters, Daniel O'Donnell, Celine Byrne, The Begley Family, Holy Family Deaf Choir & Deaftones, Patrick Bergin, The Priests, Paddy Moloney, Bridgie and Missy Collins, and Moya Brennan.

As well as these artists the cast for the Festival of Families will include an orchestra in excess of 50 musicians; over 700 Irish, Sean Nós and contemporary dancers, including 500 from Irish dance schools across the country; a 1,000 strong choir; 100 community groups, and 300 flag bearers. More acts will be announced closer to the event.

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Pope Francis will deliver an address to the families in the stadium and will hear five family testimonies. The testimonies will be shared by families from Ireland, Canada, India, Iraq and Africa. The themes of the family testimonies will focus on: forgiveness in family; strength in family; hope in family life; the intergenerational nature of families today and the impact of technology on family life. Pope Francis will meet each of these families and hear their stories.

Also unveiled today at the launch was the stage design for the event which will include a circle of encounter space where families will sit with Pope Francis to watch some of the presentations on stage.