



Secretariat of Laity, Marriage,
Family Life and Youth



Logistical Elements

for **Stateside** World Meeting of Families Events (Diocesan and Parish)

Once the goals, theme, and collaborators are established for your stateside event in celebration of the World Meeting of Families, it is time to look at the basic logistical components of the stateside program. (Note: this document accompanies the Stateside Preparation Checklist)

Date and Time

Based upon the objectives you wish to accomplish for your stateside celebration, determine the best **date(s)** and **time(s)** for your event. Some key questions to consider:

- Many stateside events take place during the final weekend of the World Meeting of Families (WMF). Will you do the same or will you establish events all week long leading up to the final weekend?
- What is the time difference between your local event and the international World Meeting of Families? If you want to watch the events **live** in Rome, Italy during your event, this may determine your plans.
- Since WMF technically lasts multiple days: will you have multiple activities (e.g., catechesis, stations, vigil, Mass, etc.) during your stateside program? Factoring the number of activities may determine if you are looking at a full or half-day event, or an event over several days.
- What travel, holidays, local festivals and events, and already-existing parish or diocesan events should you consider?
- If you plan to develop a walking/riding pilgrimage or service project as part of your program, to mirror the pilgrimage aspect of WMF, how will that affect the timing of your stateside celebration?
- Will you develop other digital opportunities for families to engage in the WMF events at home or on their mobile devices? Will you be communicating live with international pilgrims using digital technology? If so, that may also play into your timing.

See the sample schedules listed in this guide for additional ideas on how to structure your stateside event(s). These sample schedules can be adjusted to the needs and preferences of your planning team, the above considerations, as well as the site/location you have chosen.

Budget and Finances

Before final decisions about the event details are finalized, it is essential to know the budget with which you are working, as everything costs something. Some questions to consider:

- Is there a dedicated budget set aside for the event? If so, what is the amount that has been set aside? If not, where will you seek funding?
- Are there partner organizations, groups, collaborators, or private donors who may be able to assist with the event budget or provide material donations? This may include parishes that cover event expenses incurred by them.
- Will you charge for the event? Will this fee only partially offset the costs or will it cover all the costs?
- Will you bring in sponsors, exhibitors, or vendors to help offset costs (and in turn, provide them with a place to exhibit)?
- Will you provide partial or whole scholarships? Will you include this in your promotional materials? If so, how will you be able to fund such assistance?
- Is there an opportunity to fundraise for the stateside gathering in your local church or community?
- What are your diocesan/eparchial policies regarding fundraising?

Based on your primary and secondary audiences, also consider what organizations, ecclesial movements, ministries, schools and universities, religious institutes, and other groups would have a vested interest in being visible and involved at the event. Consider having significant aspects of the event (such as the site, the food and drink, music, entertainment, sound and lighting, equipment, and so forth) donated or funded by a partnering organization.

Create a realistic budget worksheet for this event and use it as the guiding document for team members in implementing the event plans. Practice responsible stewardship of the financial gifts made available to host a stateside WMF celebration show your gratitude to those who support it. In addition, fundraising within your church or civic community can also help market the event and raise greater awareness, which may also help with attracting the attention of participants and additional funding sources.

Schedule

The next step in the planning process is to identify components of the schedule and decide when they fit into the overall timeframe you have established for the stateside event. You may want to consider mirroring the schedule of the international WMF pilgrimage (check online to find the most updated schedule). Consider also how much time certain components will take, and how much additional time you will need to account for transitions, delays, etc.



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When considering the schedule, think about what might motivate the families in your community to celebrate WMF such as: encountering other local Catholic families, receiving the sacraments, hearing motivational speakers, spending time together as a family with other families, experiencing the universality of the Catholic Church, participating in the international events with the Pope virtually, understanding the heritage and culture of Rome, and so forth.

When developing the schedule, also consider whether you will be incorporating events of the international World Meeting of Families gathering via technology (such as live or recorded moments during WMF Rome), and how much time to allot for showing them (and setting up the technology).

Catechesis

During the international WMF celebration, there are usually catechetical sessions related to the theme. Consider offering at least one catechetical session as a part of your stateside pilgrimage or include catechesis through breakouts on different topics. What catechetical topics would be most valuable for the families in your area to hear about? What inspiring local or regional speakers could you invite to offer catechesis? How can the WMF theme be integrated into the local context and the reality family life in your area? Consider inviting your local bishop(s), if they are not attending the international event, as well as other key Catholic leaders in the area.

PLANNING TIP

Consider how opportunities for evangelization and catechesis can happen informally through conversation. Invite local priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, and lay ecclesial ministers to be present at the event to mingle with families.

Prayer and Liturgy

During WMF, families are invited to set aside distractions and set out on pilgrimage to encounter Christ, the Church, and other pilgrims. Even though your group may not be traveling far, consider how you can help your pilgrims enter a distinct time and space through prayer. Are there ways that you can utilize technology to pray **live** with the Holy Father and the international community? Alternatively, could you record and watch portions of the international event? Consider holding a special Mass or Eucharistic procession, prayer service with icons, walking rosary, Holy Hour, etc.

Another major component of the international gathering is accessibility to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at various locations and on almost all the days of WMF. Invite several confessors to be part of your stateside event; you can either have a special time on the schedule for reconciliation or make confession available throughout the program. Make sure confession guides are available for those who may need a refresher.

Music and Food

Music is a powerful tool for prayer and celebration that also serves to highlight the local culture of the WMF host country. In what ways can you highlight the music or cultural traditions of Italy? Can you incorporate in



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some way the WMF theme songs over the years? How can you also highlight the musical talent of your local community at the stateside event?

Every WMF also includes an official theme song composed in the language of the native country; it may also be available in several other languages. Consider featuring the theme song from the World Meeting of Families in Rome at your stateside Mass or use a devotional or traditional hymn from Italy.

Food is another powerful way to enter into the international experience of WMF. Trying local cuisine is always a significant part of foreign travel. If you are offering food at the stateside event, consider offering a meal, dessert, or drink from Italy. You could also feature foods specific to your own local area or cultural community. This is a great opportunity to collaborate with families, parish, or secular cultural groups in your area; it can also be a wonderful way to introduce the participants to the diversity of foods that exist around the world and in their own country. Food can be one of the most expensive parts of an event. As mentioned previously in the budget section, you will need to consider if you can provide food or how you will charge for it. Are there partners, collaborators, or donors who would be willing to provide food and drink for the event? Another option is making the stateside event a “potluck” event whereby the participants bring a favorite or unique food of their own cultural heritage.

Technology

The effective utilization of technology during a WMF stateside celebration can greatly deepen the connection between the international and local pilgrimages. Consider some ways to use technology at the stateside celebration:

- Incorporate a live feed (or video/digital recording) of a WMF event in Rome.
- Utilize Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, or other video conferencing to talk with pilgrims from your area who are at the international WMF celebration (without distracting them from their own pilgrimage experience in Rome).
- Be active on social media using and searching for the WMF hashtags on social networking sites. Share what you find and encourage your stateside pilgrims to participate and share updates. Develop your own event hashtag and use it in your promotional materials.

Site Location

Based upon the audience, schedule, and budget determine the best location to host the stateside event. Consider all the options and secure your location as early as possible. You may want to have a few backup sites if the initial plans fall through or if weather could be a limiting factor. To assist you with narrowing down the options for an ideal site, consider the following questions:



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- What nearby locations include a space or spaces that best accommodate the various components of your event schedule?
- What do your various location options cost? If a venue is free, will you still need to pay for set-up, cleaning, and other costs incurred by the venue?
- How will participants travel to your event? Is there sufficient parking? Is it accessible by public transit? Can people walk there?
- Are there enough bathrooms or other facilities available on-site or nearby? Will you need to rent portable toilets?
- What audience(s) would find it hardest to get to that location? Keeping this mind, how could you reach out to these people and encourage their participation, despite any obstacles that this location poses?

PLANNING TIP

Consider a location that has a vested interest in reaching out to your audience of families or a community from which you can build a strong base of volunteers or audience to invite (i.e., school, university, retreat center, large parish, local shrine, etc.).

Also, this location may become a collaborator for this event, as well as future activities of your ministry.

PLANNING TIP

Always remember that the most effective marketing is personal encounter and invitation. How can you empower others to personally invite families to the stateside WMF event?

- Is the facility handicap-accessible?
- Does the facility have a worship space capable of holding the target audience size that you expect? Does the facility have meeting, dining, gathering, or prayer areas that work with your size and program?
 - What resources does the facility have for liturgy, audio-visual options, meal preparation and storage, etc.?
- If you plan to have a stateside gathering that includes movement (e.g., pilgrimage walk, traveling, etc.), does the facility allow for this to happen? What extra steps will be needed to accommodate movement?

Event Publicity

While the World Meeting of Families is well-known among Catholic ministry leaders and some active Catholics in the community, it may not be for your target audience(s). The families you are trying to reach may not even know what this event is all about. This means that a part of your marketing and publicity for the event needs to explain what WMF is, why it is important in the life of the Church (and families) and highlight the aspects of the program (internationally or your own) that are the most compelling to families.

You can also ask those in the local area who have been to a stateside or an international WMF event in the past to share their experiences as a way to inspire others to participate in a local pilgrimage. You can also ask your bishop, pastor, or other key Catholic leaders to promote the event in



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person or through digital promotions (e.g., have them record a video and share that on social media, or write an article or blog that you can post).

The primary question when designing your marketing materials is “What is the key draw for your target audience?” Some traditional answers would be: following the activities of the Pope; spending time as a family; seeing a favorite speaker/musician; meeting new families and celebrating together with families from your parish, diocese/eparchy. Utilize the answer to this question in the choices you make regarding the language and images you use to promote the event – and consider how you would answer this question above and beyond the traditional responses. This may be something for your core team to wrestle with early in the planning process.

PLANNING TIP

Think big. Utilize an event like this to help lay the foundation for ministry growth in your parish, diocese, or community. Determine your big-picture spiritual and ministerial goals and allow the World Meeting of Families to be a catalyst. For example, if you want small group ministry to take off, use the small groups during your stateside WMF celebration and plan a post-event small group series or other similar gatherings.

When marketing the stateside gathering, explore communication structures that exist already in your parish, region, or diocese/eparchy such as newspapers, websites, bulletins, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Ask yourself, “How can we ensure there is a presence on every local Catholic platform (bulletin, website, social media, newspaper, particular group email lists, pulpit announcements)?” What resources can you create to distribute to local parishes (event postcards, flyers, etc.)? Try to make it easy for the parish secretary or others who coordinate church communications.

In all that you do for marketing and promotion, make sure it is high quality, well-presented, and clear/understandable to your audiences. Consider what images and words would be useful in promoting the event. Also consider what venues are best for marketing the stateside gathering with young people in your local community. If your target audience includes non-active Catholics, consider where they gather and receive information, which may be different than how more active families get informed about upcoming events.

Finally, never underestimate the value of one-on-one invitations. Ultimately, you are families to an encounter with Christ, so personal invitations are key in this regard.

After the Event

Like many retreat experiences, once the “high” of this particular event wears away, it can be difficult to see or feel the effects. So much of the international experience of WMF is sharing the story and experience. It is also important to connect the stateside pilgrims with those who traveled overseas.

Even though WMF does not occur often, it is important to offer people an opportunity to evaluate the event. You can either provide hard-copy evaluation sheets or offer a link to an online survey after the stateside gathering. This will help you plan future events and pilgrimages

and give you insights for the next WMF gathering. Perhaps the stateside celebration will even inspire your local community to host an annual celebration for families. Strong feedback can help you make the case for such a development.

Overall, one of the key goals to any WMF experience, international or stateside, is to form and equip families to be missionary disciples. How can you continue to keep this at the heart of your follow-up efforts? Consider how you can connect stateside participants to spiritual directors, mentors, pastors, lay ecclesial ministers, religious men and women, or others willing to accompany families. Consider how you can support their ongoing journey through faith formation and opportunities for service and charity, prayer and spirituality, and invitations to leadership in the community.

Spiritual Preparation

If the goal of a local WMF pilgrimage is to help families encounter Jesus, then spiritual preparation before the stateside event is essential. However, it may also be difficult to do, considering many families may just show up at the WMF event.

Consider gathering a group of families regularly for prayer, catechesis, or community-building prior to your event. If there are international WMF pilgrim spiritual preparation events in your area (like retreats, days of prayer, catechesis, and so forth), consider extending the invitation to these programs to families who may be planning to attend your stateside gathering.

In publicizing the event, consider offering short moments of spiritual formation (prayers, Scripture verses, catechesis, etc.) for those who are considering attending. The 2022 World Meeting of Families theme "Family Love: A Vocation and a Path to Holiness" can be reflected on, as well as the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

Finally, consider your *own* spiritual preparation. Pray with the Lord about how he wants this stateside event to go. Let prayer inform and bolster all your preparation efforts and those of your planning team. Encourage others to pray for the families who will attend these events.



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