

# Pope Francis warns pets must not replace children in Italy

**Starting a family in Italy is becoming a “titanic effort” that only the rich can afford, Pope Francis has warned.**

Addressing a conference on Italy’s demographic crisis, he said pets were replacing children in many households.

Also on stage were dozens of young people, wearing t-shirts saying “we can do this” - alluding to convincing people to have more children.

Italy has one of the lowest fertility rates in the EU and births dropped below 400,000 last year - a new low.

In his speech in Rome, the Pope said the declining birth rate signalled a lack of hope in the future, with younger generations weighed down by a sense of uncertainty, fragility and precariousness.

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**Source:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65572153>

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