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After a horrid year, free streaming of 'Dancing at the Vatican' is an inspirational gift and a call to aid Huntington's disease families

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At Risk for Huntington's Disease

HD is a genetically caused brain disorder that causes uncontrollable bodily movements and robs people's ability to walk, talk, eat, and think. The final result is a slow, ugly death. Children of parents with HD have a 50-50 chance of inheriting the disease. There is no cure or treatment.

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2020

After a horrid year, free streaming of 'Dancing at the Vatican' is an inspirational gift and a call to aid Huntington's disease families

Dancing at the Vatican, the 38-minute documentary featuring South American Huntington's disease-afflicted families' remarkable 2017 encounter with Pope Francis at the Vatican, will be streamed indefinitely on YouTube for free starting December 1.

"The film has a distinct Christmas theme – the surprise invitations to the HD families in Latin America all arrived on the [Epiphany](#)," wrote *Dancing at the Vatican* producer and narrator [Charles Sabine](#) in a recent e-mail to me, referring to the Catholic feast day, January 6, on which the HD families in South America received the official invitations to meet the pope. "So, I am going to be encouraging people to regard this as an inspirational gift at the end of a pretty horrid year."

HD families from Colombia, Venezuela, and the pope's homeland, Argentina, had met with the pontiff at [#HDdenmore](#): Pope Francis' Special Audience with the Huntington's Disease Community in Solidarity with South America ([click here](#) to read more). Some 1,500 HD family members and their supporters – including my family and me – attended from around the world.

For the first time, a world leader had recognized Huntington's disease.



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Pope Francis with HD families in Rome, May 18, 2017 (photo by #HDdenmore)

Online starting December 1

Starting December 1, you can watch *Dancing at the Vatican* by [clicking here](#). Also, the English-language film now has versions with subtitles in French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

The producers request that people click on the “subscribe” button on YouTube and leave comments on the film to help facilitate tracking of its viewings and to further support the HD cause. In the spirit of a heartwarming holiday gift, they also ask that viewers share the video with at least two people who have not heard about HD before.

According to [Ignacio Muñoz-Sanjuán, Ph.D.](#), a leading HD researcher and a co-organizer of #HDdenmore along with Sabine, the papal audience brought “critical” recognition to HD families living in “extremely vulnerable conditions.”

“This has touched them and their communities in many ways,” Dr. Muñoz wrote me. “But their plight continues, and the documentary should be a call to action to help those in most need, regardless of where they live in the world.”

In the spirit of *Dancing at the Vatican*, the HD community can come together to “give voice to the voiceless” and raise badly needed funds for local patient associations as well as [Factor-H](#), a nonprofit organization that he co-founded to [aid Latin American HD families](#), Dr. Muñoz added.

A message for all faiths and backgrounds

Dancing at the Vatican captures key moments of the impoverished, disease-stricken families’ extraordinary journey – some had never ventured beyond their home towns; some even lacked birth certificates – to their meeting with the Spanish-speaking Francis, the first Latin American pontiff in the Catholic Church’s 2000-year history.

#HDdenmore was open to people of all faiths and backgrounds, as were the three in-person screenings of *Dancing at the Vatican* in [Los Angeles](#), London, and [San Diego](#).

Sabine and the film’s organizers had hoped to organize additional screenings in the U.S., Europe, and South America.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic – which has made 2020 a trying year for all of humanity – forced the organizers to scuttle those plans. Instead, they have focused on the plan to provide free online access to *Dancing at the Vatican*.

Depending on the local impact of the pandemic, some communities might organize in-person screenings, Sabine explained.

“For example, in New Zealand, where COVID-19 has been virtually eradicated, there will be screenings in the first week of December in actual full movie theatres,” he noted.

Taking on HD families' suffering

Sabine said that the Vatican's communications department will help promote the online launch. In addition, the producers will promote the film “on all the relevant family organization websites and social media” and also reach out to clinicians, pharmaceutical companies, and nonprofits involved in HD, he said.

The screenings and publicity about the online screenings have been sponsored by [Roche](#), [Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.](#), [Wave Live Sciences](#), and [Takeda](#).

According to Sabine, the film demonstrates that “anything can be achieved if you put together enough people who believe that nothing is impossible.”

Also, he suggested, the HD community can use *Dancing at the Vatican* to promote the cause by “showing that, as Pope Francis said, it is time for HD families to be ‘Hidden No More.’”

Dr. Muñoz pointed out that HD continues to devastate the South American families portrayed in the film. (An upcoming article will update the families' stories.)

The film and the efforts of advocates such as Sabine and Dr. Muñoz echo the words of Pope Francis, who in [his speech](#) at #HDdenmore emphasized “what Jesus himself taught us.”

“Throughout his ministry, he met many sick people,” Francis stated. “He took on their suffering; he tore down the walls of stigma and of marginalization that prevented so many of them from feeling respected and loved.”

Posted by [Gene Veritas](#) at 2:43 PM      

Labels: [#HDdenmore](#) , [Catholic Church](#) , [Charles Sabine](#) , [Christmas](#) , [Dancing at the Vatican](#) , [Factor-H](#) , [Huntington's disease](#) , [Ignacio Muñoz-Sanjuán](#) , [Jesus](#) , [South America](#) , [Vatican](#)

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