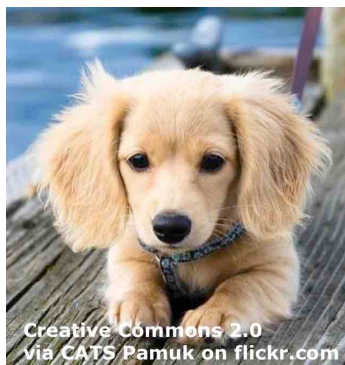


## Pope says Italians should have babies, not pets

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Birth rates in many countries are falling to alarmingly low levels. Politicians in Japan and South Korea are pondering questions about the future economic viability of their countries. A recent conference in Italy has addressed the country's looming demographic

crisis. Italy has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. The government is warning of considerable strains on pensions and the welfare system as Italy's population rapidly ages. The head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, has warned that having children is becoming more unaffordable for many couples. He lamented that starting a family in Italy is now a "titanic effort" that only the rich and wealthy can afford.

Pope Francis encouraged Italians to have more children, even amid rising prices. He cautioned young couples for making "selfish, egotistical" choices that are resulting in record low birth rates. He said this is threatening Italy's economic future. He called the situation a "demographic winter". Italy saw a record low number of births last year of 392,000, which combined with an elevated number of deaths - 713,000. The Pope urged couples to have babies instead of pets. He rebuked a woman who asked him to bless her "baby," which was actually a dog. The BBC wrote that Italy is often dubbed "the country of empty cribs". It quoted Elon Musk as tweeting that: "Italy is disappearing."

Sources: [bbc.com](http://bbc.com) / [abcnews.com](http://abcnews.com) / [foxnews.com](http://foxnews.com)

### Writing

No one should have a pet unless they have or have had a child. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

birth rates / low levels / questions / economic viability / demographic crisis / titanic / Italians / children / pets / selfish / egotistical / winter / babies / dog / disappearing

### True / False

- 1) The article says birth rates in every country are falling. T / F
- 2) The article says Japanese politicians are worried about Japan's future. T / F
- 3) Italy has the lowest birth rate in the world. T / F
- 4) The Pope said the people should watch the movie Titanic. T / F
- 5) The Pope said childfree young couples were selfish. T / F
- 6) The Pope said Italians have fewer children in winter. T / F
- 7) The Pope wasn't happy that a woman asked him to bless her dog. T / F
- 8) Elon Musk warned that Italy is disappearing. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. <b>falling</b>     | a. self-centred   |
| 2. <b>pondering</b>   | b. pressures      |
| 3. <b>vitality</b>    | c. scolded        |
| 4. <b>strains</b>     | d. thinking about |
| 5. <b>titanic</b>     | e. nicknamed      |
| 6. <b>cautioned</b>   | f. huge           |
| 7. <b>egotistical</b> | g. plunging       |
| 8. <b>threatening</b> | h. warned         |
| 9. <b>rebuked</b>     | i. dynamism       |
| 10. <b>dubbed</b>     | j. endangering    |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of pets?
- c) How selfish are you?
- d) How egotistical are you?
- e) With overpopulation, shouldn't we be encouraging having fewer kids?
- f) Are pets better than children?
- g) How expensive is it to raise children?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the Pope?

## Phrase Match

- |                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. falling to alarmingly              | a. "demographic winter"   |
| 2. pondering questions                | b. demographic crisis     |
| 3. addressed the country's looming    | c. rising prices          |
| 4. considerable strains on pensions   | d. number of deaths       |
| 5. a titanic                          | e. about the future       |
| 6. even amid                          | f. choices                |
| 7. making "selfish, egotistical"      | g. effort                 |
| 8. He called the situation a          | h. low levels             |
| 9. combined with an elevated          | i. of empty cribs         |
| 10. Italy is often dubbed the country | j. and the welfare system |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of children?
- What kind of child were you?
- What problems do falling birth rates bring?
- How can we get couples to have more children?
- Why are people having fewer or no children?
- What do you think of the Pope?
- What are the difficulties of raising children?
- Why is starting a family a "titanic effort"?

## Spelling

- falling to arllgamyin low levels
- the future economic aitbilyvi of their countries
- the country's looming oecamrdphqi crisis
- considerable strains on snineosp
- having children is becoming more ladunffborae
- a aitcnti effort
- Pope Francis caquerenod Italians
- He oiceatund young couples
- making selfish, glosiaeiectt choices
- an aleeedtv number of deaths
- He ruebdek a woman
- dubbed the country of empty isrbc

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. f
6. h	7. a	8. j	9. c	10. e

## Role Play

### Role A – Dogs

You think dogs are the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): rabbits, goldfish or elephants.

### Role B – Rabbits

You think rabbits the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): dogs, goldfish or elephants.

### Role C – Goldfish

You think goldfish the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): rabbits, dogs or elephants.

### Role D – Elephants

You think elephants the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): rabbits, goldfish or dogs.

## Speaking – Pets

Rank these with your partner. Put the best pets at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| • Goldfish  | • Dogs     |
| • Snakes    | • Hamsters |
| • Beetles   | • Rabbits  |
| • Elephants | • Horses   |

### Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	F	5	T	6	F	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.