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October 23, 2014

Reflections on the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops  
on the Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization

- Introduction

- It's very nice to be with you tonight to reflect together on what's happened over the course of the last couple of weeks in the Vatican at the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization, what led up to it, what's flowing from it, and how we're called to approach it as Catholics.
- Because of the astonishingly imprudent decision on the part of the Synod's general secretariat to publish its much-flawed interim report, many in the culture, in the media and some Catholics who have long sought to try to get the Church to prioritize the Sexual Revolution over Revelation were rejoicing that the Church seemed to be prepared for revolutionary change in the approach to those who are divorced-and-remarried, in non-sacramental civil marriages, cohabitating, using contraception or involved in same-sex relationships. At the same time many Catholics were alarmed that the Church, if media reports were right, might be on the precipice of abandoning the deposit of faith on marriage, the Eucharist, Confession, sin and its consequences.
- St. Paul says that if soldiers are being summoned to battle, it's key that they hear the call of a clear and unambiguous trumpet (1 Cor 14:8). During the Synod, however, which was convened to try to defend and strengthen the family in the midst of a variety of conceptual, legal and moral assaults, what seemed to be coming from the Vatican was mainly cacophony, confusion, controversy and chaos. The upshot of the mayhem was to mangle the Church's trumpet: If bishops and cardinals seem to be in open disagreement about Church teaching and practice with regard to today's hot button moral issues — it was asked — how can the faithful be expected to know the truth and live it with confidence?
- But there's a reason why first drafts of papal encyclicals, presidential State of the Union addresses, or Supreme Court decisions aren't released to the general public: because they may change drastically between the first draft and the final version. In the case of the Synod's "relatio," that's exactly what happened as the majority of bishops pushed for massive revisions of a document they said was poorly written and did not represent the synod's consensus on some of the more culturally controversial issues.
- The final output of the Synod is overall quite good but most Catholics haven't heard about it. Last Saturday, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York was interviewed by Charlie Rose on the CBS morning program and he said that he hoped CBS and other media outlets would cover the final report as much as they covered the draft. Well, he hasn't gotten his wish. The main lede for most press coverage of the final report is that the Church abandoned its outreach to gays, that Pope Francis lost his desire for reform, and lots of other false narratives, continuing to try to analyze the results of the Synod through a political lens that focuses far more on divisions than the large consensus coming out the last two weeks.
- I'm here to tell you that, as Pope Francis said in his concluding address, the "fundamental truths of the sacrament of marriage" were never about to be abandoned during the Synod. Never was it in doubt whether the Church was going to seek to change revelation on sex being exclusively for marriage or on marriage being an institution of one man and one woman for life, open to life, indissoluble and faithful. The main thrust of the Synod was how to bring these truths, this Good News, this saving truth, about marriage, to a world that's so confused about love, marriage, sex and family.
- As my colleague from Catholic Voices, Austen Iverleigh wrote in an article earlier this week, Pope Francis through the Synod "has invited tough questions to be asked with unprecedented frankness: how to bind the wounds of the divorced, while promoting indissolubility? How to embrace gay

people while celebrating marriage as a conjugal institution? How can the church be, like a good parent, both clear teacher and merciful mother? The tensions are as old as Jesus, who called people to lifelong sexual fidelity yet saw the adulteress as both sinner and victim.”

- So what I'd like to do tonight is to try to address the chaos that accompanied the Synod and try to shed some clarity as to the final product and where we go for here. I hope to do so playing the Church's trumpet on the Gospel of the Family clearly, loudly, beautifully, urgently, and emphatically and to help you learn how to trumpet that same needed Gospel.
- Yesterday we celebrated the feast day of St. John Paul II, who wrote in *Familiaris Consortio*, his apostolic exhortation after the first Synod on the Family 33 years ago, that “the future of humanity passes by way of the family” (86). If the family is suffering, then the future of humanity will suffer. And the family is suffering.
- The family is under an unprecedented conceptual, legal and moral assault.
  - Conceptual — Many trying to change the definition outright. Many other forms. Single parent homes. Two male parents. Two Female Parents. Step-family situations. Sperm dads.
  - Legal — Many laws don't support. Most notorious is no fault divorce laws. Tax policy makes it hard for seniors to marry.
  - Moral — Always been under moral assault from the beginning with the temptations suffered by the first family. The devil tries to get people to distrust God and his teaching on love, marriage, sex and family, to have lust invade the home to supplant genuine self-giving love.
- That's why Pope Francis wanted to focus the Church's attention on the family.
  - Originally, when he was elected, there was supposed to be a follow-up to the Synod on the New Evangelization, but many people started to focus on the needs of the family today, both as a recipient of a new evangelization as well as hopefully the principle agent of the preaching the Gospel on family life. He decided to change course and make it fundamentally about the family in the context of evangelization, both the spreading of the faith to those who have never heard it before as well as the “new evangelization, meaning the re-proposal of the faith to those who have been exposed to the Gospel before but for whatever reason are not living fully in accordance with the promises of their baptism, which is particularly relevant in our context. There are many families where all the people are baptized but in which God is practically absent, living more in accordance with cultural norms rather than with the catechism. There are other families in Catholic regions who are no longer even taking their children to be baptized. There are others that practice the faith but they harbor prejudices against Church teaching on the family as if it's hopelessly out of touch with today's needs. For all of these reasons, it's clear that the family needs to be evangelized.
  - The evangelization of the family, to strengthen families with the Gospel so that they might joyfully live the Good News, is perhaps the most urgent task within the New Evangelization.
- The struggles of the family today.
  - In the Preparatory Document for the Extraordinary Synod, it was written: “The social and spiritual crisis, so evident in today's world, is becoming a pastoral challenge in the Church's evangelizing mission concerning the family, the vital building-block of society and the ecclesial community. Never before has proclaiming the Gospel on the Family in this context been more urgent and necessary.”
  - “Concerns which were unheard of until a few years ago have arisen today as a result of different situations,
    - from the widespread practice of cohabitation, which does not lead to marriage, and sometimes even excludes the idea of it,
    - to same-sex unions between persons, who are, not infrequently, permitted to adopt children.
    - mixed or inter-religious marriages;
    - the single-parent family;
    - polygamy;

- a culture of non-commitment and a presumption that the marriage bond can be temporary;
  - forms of feminism hostile to the Church;
  - migration and the reformulation of the very concept of the family;
  - relativist pluralism in the conception of marriage;
  - the influence of the media on popular culture in its understanding of marriage and family life;
  - underlying trends of thought in legislative proposals which devalue the idea of permanence and faithfulness in the marriage covenant;
  - an increase in the practice of surrogate motherhood (wombs for hire);
  - New interpretations of what is considered a human right.
  - And within the Church, faith in the sacramentality of marriage and the healing power of the Sacrament of Penance show signs of weakness or total abandonment.
- So there are many challenges that the Bishops were trying to address synthetically.
- What I hope to do in this talk:
  - Discuss briefly the whole process of the Synod so that all of us can grasp where we've come from, what's just happened, and where it goes from here.
  - Take up the main conclusions of the Extraordinary Synod so that you know not what was in the draft and cut out and therefore not proposed by the Synod but what were the final conclusions of the Synod.
  - Tackle a few of the more controversial issues that were debated in the Synod Hall and covered by the media, to try to remedy as best I can the various confusions that Catholics and non-Catholics both may have.
  - Look at the Synod's work within the overall context of Pope Francis' missionary transformation of the Church.
  - Leave time for your input and questions
- The Synod itself
  - The Synod was established by now Blessed Pope Paul VI in 1965 to keep going something of what happened during the Second Vatican Council. Every three years the bishops convene in order to discuss a current topic and give guidance to the Pope on pastoral initiatives. We've had Synods on Spreading the Faith, on Catechesis, on the Family, on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vatican II, on the Missions, on the Priesthood and Priestly Formation, on the Eucharist, on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church and on other topics. There have likewise been extraordinary synods of various regions of the world or on special topics that met outside of the regular three-year cycle.
  - This time Pope Francis made an innovation, to combine an extraordinary Synod this October with an Ordinary one next October. This first one was to set together the state of the situation and next year to develop pastoral guidelines to meet the circumstances in which one is found. So the past two weeks are a prelude to what will take place next Oct 4-25 in the Vatican.
  - Synod, as Pope Francis likes to mention often, is a Greek term that means "journey together." It's a means by which the Bishops of the World, and the Church with them, make a pilgrimage together through the "streets" and "crossroads" of the world. The Eastern rite Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Churches have a Synod structure that is binding, in elections and doctrinal statements. The Synod structure in the Roman Catholic Church is fundamentally consultative, but its deliberations have almost always led to papal documents where they become exhortative and normative.
  - This process began with a Preparatory Document Released Last Fall that contained a questionnaire, to try to get genuine information from around the world. Dioceses requested information from married couples, clergy and others in their Dioceses. The questions focused:
    - on the diffusion of the teachings on the family in Sacred Scripture and the Church's Magisterium;

- whether people still recognize and accept a natural law about marriage as the union between one man and one woman;
  - what pastoral care of the family is given in terms of marriage preparation and accompaniment;
  - how pastoral care is done in difficult marital situations like cohabitation, civil marriages, separation, divorced-and-remarried people;
  - what is the status on unions of people of the same sex and the Church's pastoral response to them; how is the education of children in irregular situations handled;
  - whether the couples are open to life, whether they know and practice the teaching of the Church, whether NFP programs are offered, and how a general openness to children can be promoted;
  - and the relationship between the family and the person, particularly with regard to how they are obstructing or facilitating one's encounter with Christ.
- On the basis of those reports each country or episcopal conference filed a report with the Synod Council in the Vatican. On the basis of those questions, a working document or *Instrumentum Laboris*, was made trying to collate what had come in from across the world. It was structured:
- (Part I) Communicating the Gospel of the Family in Today's World
    - (Chapter 1) God's Plan for Marriage and the Family
      - The Biblical Teaching on the Family (1-3)
      - The Family in the Documents of the Church (4-7)
    - The Knowledge and Acceptance of the Teachings on Marriage and the Family from Sacred Scripture and Church Documents
      - The Knowledge of the Bible on the Family (9-10)
      - The Knowledge of the Documents of the Magisterium (11)
      - The Necessity of Properly Prepared Clergy and Ministers (12)
      - A Diversified Acceptance of Church Teaching (13-14)
      - Some Reasons for the Difficulty in Acceptance (15-16) , like the lack of an encounter with Christ
      - Fostering a Greater Knowledge of the Magisterium (17-19)
    - The Gospel of the Family and the Natural Law
      - The Relation of the Gospel of the Family to the Natural Law (20)
      - Present-Day Problems Related to the Natural Law (21-26)
      - Practical Objections to the Natural Law concerning the Union between a Man and a Woman (27-29)
      - A Call for a Renewal in Terms of Language (30)
    - The Family and Vocation of the Person in Christ
      - The Family, the Person and Society (31-34)
      - In the Image of Trinitarian Life (35)
      - The Holy Family of Nazareth and Learning to Love (36-38)
      - The Differences, Reciprocity and Manner of Living as a Family (39-42)
      - The Family and the Integral Development of a Person (43-44)
      - Guidance in the Renewed Desire to Marry and Form a Family and the Related Crises (45-48)
      - Ongoing Formation (49)
  - The Pastoral Program for the Family in Light of New Challenge
    - The Pastoral Program for the Family: Various Proposals Underway
      - The Responsibility of Bishops and the Clergy and the Charismatic Gifts in the Pastoral Care of the Family (50)
      - Marriage Preparation (51-56)
      - Popular Piety and a Familial Spirituality (57)
      - Support for a Familial Spirituality (58)
      - Testimony on Behalf of the Beauty of the Family (59-60)

- The Pastoral Challenges of the Family (61)
  - The Crisis of Faith and Family Life
    - Pastoral Action in the Crisis of Faith (62-63)
  - Critical Situations within the Family
    - Difficulty in Relationships / Communication (64)
    - The Break-Up and Breakdown of Families (65)
    - Violence and Abuse (66-67) , murder, sexual promiscuity, sexual tourism
    - Dependence, the Media and the Social Network (68-69)
  - External Pressures on the Family
    - The Impact of Work on the Family (70-71)
    - Migration and the Family (72)
    - Poverty and the Struggle for Subsistence (73)
    - Consumerism and Individualism (74)
    - Counter-Witness in the Church (75)
  - Special situations
    - The Weight of Societal Expectations on the Individual (76)
    - The Impact of Wars (77)
    - Disparity of Cult (78)
    - Other Critical Situations (79) (mental illness, death of children, depression, occultism)
- Difficult Pastoral Situations
  - Situations in Families (80)
    - Cohabitation (81-82).
    - De facto unions (83-85)
    - Persons Separated, Divorced and Divorced and Remarried (86)
    - Children and Those Who Are Alone (87)
    - Teen Mothers (88)
    - Situations of Canonical Irregularity (89-92)
    - Concerning the Reception of the Sacraments (93-95)
    - Other Requests (96)
    - Concerning Separated and Divorced Persons (97)
    - Streamlining the Processing of Marriage Cases (98-102)
    - Pastoral Care in Difficult Situations (103-104)
    - The Request for Marriage by Non-Practicing Catholics and Unbelievers (105-109)
  - Concerning Unions of Persons of the Same Sex
    - Civil Recognition (110-112)
    - An Evaluation of the Particular Churches (113-115)
    - Some Pastoral Guidelines (116-119)
    - The Transmission of the Faith to Children in Same Sex Unions (120)
- An Openness to Life and Parental Responsibility in Upbringing
  - The Pastoral Challenges concerning an Openness to Life (121-122)
    - Knowledge and Acceptance of the Magisterium concerning a Mentality of an Openness to Life (123-125)
    - Some Causes of Difficulty in Acceptance (126-127)
    - Pastoral Recommendations (128)
    - Concerning Sacramental Practice (129)
    - Promoting a Mentality of an Openness to Life (130-131)
  - The Church and the Family in the Challenge of Upbringing
    - The Challenge of Upbringing in General

- The Challenge of Upbringing and the Family Today (132)
      - The Transmission of the Faith and Christian Initiation (133-134)
      - Some Specific Difficulties (135-137)
    - Christian Education in Difficult Family Situations (138)
      - An Overview of the Situation of Upbringing (139-140)
      - Requests Addressed to the Church (141-145)
      - The Response of the Particular Churches (146-150)
      - The Time and Manner of the Christian Initiation of Children (151-152)
      - Some Specific Difficulties (153)
      - Some Pastoral Guidelines (154-157)
  - The Synod deliberations were structured on the basis of the *Instrumentum*. All of the participants — 114 presidents of bishops’ conferences, 13 heads of Eastern Catholic Churches, 25 heads of Vatican congregations and councils, 14 married couples from around the world, 14 Cardinals, eight bishops and four priests appointed by the Pope; and then 38 observers, 16 mostly lay experts, including 14 married couples — sent in reports about what they’d like to focus on based on the *Instrumentum*. Their talks were organized into sections on that and they then gave their interventions or speeches.
  - Then based on the interventions a “*relatio post disceptationem*” (the report after the discussion) was written that was supposed to collate the general sense of the talks and lead a discussion among small groups in various languages on that, submitting changes and edits before voting on every paragraph.
  - That would lead to the *Relatio Synodalis* (The Synod Report) that will become the starting working document for next year and the means by which bishops’ conferences around the world are asked to submit their input.
  - After next year’s Ordinary Synod, it is presumed that Pope Francis will publish a post-synodal exhortation that will chart the Church’s path forward in many of the initiatives proposed.
  - The major procedural controversy coming from the Synod was with regard to transparency and that first draft. Not releasing the interventions. Then the publication of the RPD which many bishops said contained information that really wasn’t in their discussions as well as only half-true in other areas. That’s why it was truly unwise to publish a draft none but 6 of the 250 participants of the Synod had seen.
- Main conclusions of the Synod
    - We can also learn a lot from Pope Francis’ Concluding Speech about what the Synod was about. He didn’t smooth over the issues that came up but he gave a somewhat authoritative opinion about what was really going on that those of us who were not present need to consider:
      - It has been “a journey” – and like every journey there were moments of running fast, as if wanting to conquer time and reach the goal as soon as possible; other moments of fatigue, as if wanting to say “enough”; other moments of enthusiasm and ardor. There were moments of profound consolation listening to the testimony of true pastors, who wisely carry in their hearts the joys and the tears of their faithful people. Moments of consolation and grace and comfort hearing the testimonies of the families who have participated in the Synod and have shared with us the beauty and the joy of their married life. A journey where the stronger feel compelled to help the less strong, where the more experienced are led to serve others, even through confrontations. And since it is a journey of human beings, with the consolations there were also moments of desolation, of tensions and temptations, of which a few possibilities could be mentioned:
        - Hostile inflexibility, that is, wanting to close oneself within the written word, (the letter) and not allowing oneself to be surprised by God, by the God of surprises, (the spirit); within the law, within the certitude of what we know and not of what we still need to learn and to achieve.
        - Destructive tendency to goodness [it. buonismo], that in the name of a deceptive mercy binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them; that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots.

- The temptation to transform stones into bread to break the long, heavy, and painful fast (cf. Lk 4:1-4); and also to transform the bread into a stone and cast it against the sinners, the weak, and the sick (cf Jn 8:7), that is, to transform it into unbearable burdens (Lk 11:46).
- The temptation to come down off the Cross, to please the people, and not stay there, in order to fulfil the will of the Father; to bow down to a worldly spirit instead of purifying it and bending it to the Spirit of God.
- The temptation to neglect the “depositum fidei” [the deposit of faith], not thinking of themselves as guardians but as owners or masters [of it];
  - or, on the other hand, the temptation to neglect reality
- Personally I would be very worried and saddened if it were not for these temptations and these animated discussions; ... if all were in a state of agreement, or silent in a false and quietist peace.
- Instead, I have seen and I have heard – with joy and appreciation – speeches and interventions full of faith, of pastoral and doctrinal zeal, of wisdom, of frankness and of courage: and of *parresia*. And I have felt that what was set before our eyes was the good of the Church, of families, and the “supreme law,” the “good of souls” (cf. Can. 1752). And this always – we have said it here, in the Hall – without ever putting into question the fundamental truths of the Sacrament of marriage: the indissolubility, the unity, the faithfulness, the fruitfulness, that openness to life (cf. Cann. 1055, 1056; and Gaudium et spes, 48).
- The duty of the Pope is that of guaranteeing the unity of the Church; it is that of reminding the faithful of their duty to faithfully follow the Gospel of Christ; it is that of reminding the pastors that their first duty is to nourish the flock – to nourish the flock – that the Lord has entrusted to them, and to seek to welcome – with fatherly care and mercy, and without false fears – the lost sheep. I made a mistake here. I said welcome: [rather] to go out and find them
- We still have one year to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families.
- Main conclusions were published in the Relatio (report) published at the end of the Synod.
  - Introduction showed that the document was much more full of hope, trying to propose the Good News of the Family rather than focusing too much on all the problems.
    - Added right at the beginning: “Il Sinodo dei Vescovi riunito intorno al Papa rivolge il suo pensiero a tutte le famiglie del mondo con le loro gioie, le loro fatiche, le loro speranze. In particolare sente il dovere di ringraziare il Signore per la generosa fedeltà con cui tante famiglie cristiane rispondono alla loro vocazione e missione. Lo fanno con gioia e con fede anche quando il cammino familiare le pone dinanzi a ostacoli, incomprensioni e sofferenze. A queste famiglie va l’apprezzamento, il ringraziamento e l’incoraggiamento di tutta la Chiesa e di questo Sinodo”
  - Added much material on how the Church’s teachings on marriage flow from Jesus Christ:
    - Paragraph 2: “ad annunciare senza sosta e con convinzione profonda il "Vangelo della famiglia" che le è stato affidato con la rivelazione dell’amore di Dio in Gesù Cristo e ininterrottamente insegnato dai Padri, dai Maestri della spiritualità e dal Magistero della Chiesa. La famiglia assume per la Chiesa un’importanza del tutto particolare e nel momento in cui tutti i credenti sono invitati a uscire da se stessi è necessario che la famiglia si riscopra come soggetto imprescindibile per l’evangelizzazione. Il pensiero va alla testimonianza missionaria di tante famiglie.
  - Emphasized routinely marriage as the union of one man and one woman:
    - Paragraph 4: il confronto alla luce del Signore Gesù per discernere le vie con cui rinnovare la Chiesa e la società nel loro impegno per la famiglia fondata sul matrimonio tra uomo e donna

- Included larger issues facing the family
  - 5: Fedeli all'insegnamento di Cristo guardiamo alla realtà della famiglia oggi in tutta la sua complessità, nelle sue luci e nelle sue ombre. Pensiamo ai genitori, ai nonni, ai fratelli e alle sorelle, ai parenti prossimi e lontani, e al legame tra due famiglie che tesse ogni matrimonio
- Added some lines on the destruction caused by pornography and prostitution.
  - 10. Preoccupa una certa diffusione della pornografia e della commercializzazione del corpo, favorita anche da un uso distorto di internet e va denunciata la situazione di quelle persone che sono obbligate a praticare la prostituzione.
- Eliminated the confusing "law of gradualness" that many had interpreted as a gradualization of the law. Instead in pondered the way God teaches us in stages.
  - 13. In ragione della pedagogia divina, secondo cui l'ordine della creazione evolve in quello della redenzione attraverso tappe successive, occorre comprendere la novità del sacramento nuziale cristiano in continuità con il matrimonio naturale delle origini. Così qui s'intende il modo di agire salvifico di Dio, sia nella creazione sia nella vita cristiana. Nella creazione: poiché tutto è stato fatto per mezzo di Cristo ed in vista di Lui (cf. Col 1,16), i cristiani sono «lieti di scoprire e pronti a rispettare quei germi del Verbo che vi si trovano nascosti; debbono seguire attentamente la trasformazione profonda che si verifica in mezzo ai popoli» (Ad Gentes, 11). Nella vita cristiana: in quanto con il battesimo il credente è inserito nella Chiesa mediante quella Chiesa domestica che è la sua famiglia, egli intraprende quel «processo dinamico, che avanza gradualmente con la progressiva integrazione dei doni di Dio» (Familiaris Consortio, 11), mediante la conversione continua all'amore che salva dal peccato e dona pienezza di vita.
  - 24. «Pertanto, senza sminuire il valore dell'ideale evangelico, bisogna accompagnare con misericordia e pazienza le possibili tappe di crescita delle persone che si vanno costruendo giorno per giorno. [...] Un piccolo passo, in mezzo a grandi limiti umani, può essere più gradito a Dio della vita esteriormente corretta di chi trascorre i suoi giorni senza fronteggiare importanti difficoltà. A tutti deve giungere la consolazione e lo stimolo dell'amore salvifico di Dio, che opera misteriosamente in ogni persona, al di là dei suoi difetti e delle sue cadute» (Evangelii Gaudium, 44).
- Explained indissolubility instead of just focus on hardness of hearts
  - L'indissolubilità del matrimonio ("Quello dunque che Dio ha congiunto, l'uomo non lo separi" Mt 19,6), non è innanzitutto da intendere come "giogo" imposto agli uomini bensì come un "dono" fatto alle persone unite in matrimonio. In tal modo, Gesù mostra come la condiscendenza divina accompagni sempre il cammino umano, guarisca e trasformi il cuore indurito con la sua grazia, orientandolo verso il suo principio, attraverso la via della croce. Dai Vangeli emerge chiaramente l'esempio di Gesù che è paradigmatico per la Chiesa. Gesù infatti ha assunto una famiglia, ha dato inizio ai segni nella festa nuziale a Cana, ha annunciato il messaggio concernente il significato del matrimonio come pienezza della rivelazione che recupera il progetto originario di Dio (Mt 19,3). Ma nello stesso tempo ha messo in pratica la dottrina insegnata manifestando così il vero significato della misericordia. Ciò appare chiaramente negli incontri con la samaritana (Gv 4,1-30) e con l'adultera (Gv 8,1-11) in cui Gesù, con un atteggiamento di amore verso la persona peccatrice, porta al pentimento e alla conversione ("va' e non peccare più"), condizione per il perdono.
- Added a reference to St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body
  - 16. Il Vangelo della famiglia attraversa la storia del mondo sin dalla creazione dell'uomo ad immagine e somiglianza di Dio (cf. Gen 1, 26-27) fino al compimento del mistero dell'Alleanza in Cristo alla fine dei secoli con le nozze dell'Agnello (cf. Ap 19,9; Giovanni Paolo II, Catechesi sull'amore umano).



- Totally replaced a whole section on the discernment of values in wounded families and irregular situations, that sought to find “positive elements in imperfect forms” with a section on Family in the Documents of the Church, focusing on Vatican II, *Humanae Vitae*, the TOB, the Letter to the Families, and *Familiaris Consortio*, on B16 in *Deus Caritas Est*, and Pope Francis in *Lumen Fidei*. (Added two paragraphs here).
- In talking about mercy it also talks about sin
  - L’amore misericordioso, come attrae e unisce, così trasforma ed eleva. Invita alla conversione. Così nello stesso modo intendiamo l’atteggiamento del Signore, che non condanna la donna adultera, ma le chiede di non peccare più (cf. Gv 8,1-11).
- Much greater focus on the word of God not just for individuals but for discernment
  - 34. La Parola di Dio è fonte di vita e spiritualità per la famiglia. Tutta la pastorale familiare dovrà lasciarsi modellare interiormente e formare i membri della Chiesa domestica mediante la lettura orante e ecclesiale della Sacra Scrittura. La Parola di Dio non solo è una buona novella per la vita privata delle persone, ma anche un criterio di giudizio e una luce per il discernimento delle diverse sfide con cui si confrontano i coniugi e le famiglie.
- Instead of a section confusingly entitled “Positive Aspects of Civil Unions and Cohabitation,” it was changed to “Pastoral care of those who live in civil marriage or cohabitation.”
- Extra attention was given to single parent families
  - 47. In ogni caso la Chiesa dovrà sempre mettere in rilievo l’ingiustizia che deriva molto spesso dalla situazione di divorzio. Speciale attenzione va data all’accompagnamento delle famiglie monoparentali, in maniera particolare vanno aiutate le donne che devono portare da sole la responsabilità della casa e l’educazione dei figli.
- Added a paragraph on adoption
  - 58. La scelta dell’adozione e dell’affido esprime una particolare fecondità dell’esperienza coniugale, non solo quando questa è segnata dalla sterilità. Tale scelta è segno eloquente dell’amore familiare, occasione per testimoniare la propria fede e restituire dignità filiale a che ne è stato privato.
- Mentioned parental rights in education
  - 60. Ciò indica che i genitori possano scegliere liberalmente il tipo dell’educazione da dare ai figli secondo le loro convinzioni.
- Focused on Marian devotion for the family
  - 61. Maria, nella sua tenerezza, misericordia, sensibilità materna può nutrire la fame di umanità e vita, per cui viene invocata dalle famiglie e dal popolo cristiano. La pastorale e una devozione mariana sono un punto di partenza opportuno per annunciare il Vangelo della famiglia
- Controversies
  - Seeds of the Gospel in civil marriages and cohabitation?
    - The document declared that the Church needed to recognize the “positive elements” in “imperfect forms” (18), the “seeds of the Word” (20), and the “authentic family values or at least the wish for them” (38) present in their circumstances. It even challenged Church communities to accept and value not those with same-sex attractions but the same-sex orientation itself (50).
    - It’s not surprising, therefore, that many media outlets found in the document a rupture with the previous magisterium, not just in tone but in substance. There was no indication at all that the Church still deemed any such conduct sinful.
    - The whole discussion gave the impression that the Sexual Revolution was triumphing over Revelation and that many of the Church’s teachings with regard to marriage and sexuality had a 2014 expiration date.
    - But all of these were eliminated from the final version.
  - Communion for those who are divorced and separated

- Prior to the Synod there was much confusion flowing from a Feb 20 speech by Cardinal Walter Kasper to the Cardinals in a consistory. Cardinal Kasper, a very prominent theologian, has been writing for 35 years about the possibility for those who are divorced-and-remarried under certain circumstances to be able to be readmitted to the altar. He proposed five conditions for reception, but we can focus just on the first: that the first was that the person “repents of his failure in the first marriage.” Not only does that suggest that the first marriage, rather than the second, is the morally problematic one, but also doesn’t seem to consider that one may have been abandoned and may bear little or no fault at all for the failure of the first. These disagreements continued into the Synod Hall. Basically no real decision was made. There was a change in paragraphs but even after the revisions, it didn’t get the necessary 2/3 to be approved. It did get a simple majority and Pope Francis had it retained.
- Old
  - 47. As regards the possibility of partaking of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, some argued in favor of the present regulations because of their theological foundation, others were in favor of a greater opening on very precise conditions when dealing with situations that cannot be resolved without creating new injustices and suffering. For some, partaking of the sacraments might occur were it preceded by a penitential path -- under the responsibility of the diocesan bishop --, and with a clear undertaking in favor of the children. This would not be a general possibility, but the fruit of a discernment applied on a case-by-case basis, according to a law of gradualness, that takes into consideration the distinction between state of sin, state of grace and the attenuating circumstances
- New (didn’t get 2/3)
  - 52. Si è riflettuto sulla possibilità che i divorziati e risposati accedano ai sacramenti della Penitenza e dell’Eucaristia. Diversi Padri sinodali hanno insistito a favore della disciplina attuale, in forza del rapporto costitutivo fra la partecipazione all’Eucaristia e la comunione con la Chiesa ed il suo insegnamento sul matrimonio indissolubile. Altri si sono espressi per un’accoglienza non generalizzata alla mensa eucaristica, in alcune situazioni particolari ed a condizioni ben precise, soprattutto quando si tratta di casi irreversibili e legati ad obblighi morali verso i figli che verrebbero a subire sofferenze ingiuste. L’eventuale accesso ai sacramenti dovrebbe essere preceduto da un cammino penitenziale sotto la responsabilità del Vescovo diocesano. Va ancora approfondita la questione, tenendo ben presente la distinzione tra situazione oggettiva di peccato e circostanze attenuanti, dato che «l’imputabilità e la responsabilità di un’azione possono essere sminuite o annullate» da diversi «fattori psichici oppure sociali» (Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica, 1735).
- The reason why the Church cannot change her discipline with regard to communion for those who are divorced-and-remarried is because it would radically damage the Church’s doctrine and practice with regard to three sacraments: Marriage, Communion and Penance.
- First, with regard to marriage, the Church’s teaching is based on Jesus’ clear words that in marriage God joins a man and a woman in one flesh in a bond that no one can break and that when one divorces and marries another he or she commits adultery (Mk 10:7-12). If the Church were to seem to accept the legitimacy of the second union, it would either suggest that the first union — and therefore marriage in general — was not indissoluble or that Christ permits bigamy. It would also raise a slew of other issues. Would such second and subsequent unions — civil bonds outside the Church that have always been considered invalid and non-sacramental due to a lack of Catholic form — now be considered valid? If such civil bonds are now intrinsically non-problematic since they wouldn’t prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, would they now be able to be convalidated in the Church? What about communion for those who have serially divorced and remarried? Would declarations of nullity now be rendered superfluous, since whether the first bond were valid or not would

now seem to be irrelevant? Would the Church now consider herself foolish to have lost much of the Church in England when it refused to capitulate to Henry VIII's demand that he be allowed to enter into a second bond with Anne Boleyn? There would also be the much larger subject of the Church's fidelity to Jesus' clear words. One of the reasons why Blessed John Paul II said that the divorced and remarried cannot receive Holy Communion is because of a "special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage." Jesus was clearly and wholeheartedly against divorce and remarriage — and his words about the beginning had no expiration date. Do we still believe in the truth about marriage that he teaches and that that truth really sets us free? Can the Church today ever think she can love those in divorced-and-remarried situations more than Jesus did? If we're not faithful to what Jesus calls a state of adultery, wouldn't we be risking the earthly and eternal happiness of those affected?

- With regard to **Holy Communion**, allowing those who are divorced-and-remarried to receive Holy Communion would mean that those whom Jesus indicates are living in an adulterous state are worthy to receive the Eucharist. If those whom Jesus refers to objectively as adulterers are nevertheless able to receive without ending the adultery, then it's hard to imagine anyone in any situation objectively contrary to the Gospel likewise not being admitted. This would lead to a total confusion about what Holy Communion is. John Paul II said that the principal reason why the divorced-and-remarried are not able to receive Holy Communion is not because the Church is punishing them or making a judgment on the subjective state of their soul. It's because "their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist." Receiving Holy Communion is the one-flesh consummation of the indissoluble, faithful and fruitful spousal union between Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride the Church. In order to receive Holy Communion, one must be living first and foremost in a faithful covenantal bond with Christ, just as in order for love-making to be sacramental instead of sinful, one first must be united by God in a one-flesh covenantal bond with one's spouse. Covenant comes before consummation. Permitting those who are divorced and remarried to receive Holy Communion would either mean that the Church no longer considers that there is an objective contradiction or that such a contradiction no longer matters.
- Finally with regard to the **Sacrament of Penance**, nothing short of total chaos would ensue. Those who are divorced-and-remarried are not able to receive the Sacrament of Penance unless, as John Paul II wrote 30 years ago, "repenting of having broken the sign of the Covenant and of fidelity to Christ, [they] are sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage." That means in practice that minimally they need to make the public commitment to live in "complete continence, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples." Jesus' mercy, as we see in his defense of the woman caught in adultery, is tied to his loving command "Go and sin no more." If those who are divorced-and-remarried are no longer required to eliminate what Jesus himself calls adulterous conduct, then the constitutive requirement for a firm purpose of amendment would effectively no longer be part of the Sacrament, something that would cease to make confession a Sacrament of conversion. If those whom Jesus says are in a state of adultery are no longer required to repent and amend, then it's hard to see why others engaged in other behaviors contrary to his moral teaching would need to either. It would even confuse people as to whether what Jesus calls adultery is even considered sinful any longer.
- Processes for Declarations of Nullity
  - 48 Un grande numero dei Padri ha sottolineato la necessità di rendere più accessibili ed agili, possibilmente del tutto gratuite, le procedure per il riconoscimento dei casi di nullità. Tra le proposte sono stati indicati: il superamento della necessità della doppia sentenza conforme; la possibilità di determinare una via amministrativa sotto la responsabilità del vescovo diocesano; un processo sommario da avviare nei casi di nullità notoria. Alcuni Padri tuttavia

si dicono contrari a queste proposte perché non garantirebbero un giudizio affidabile. Va ribadito che in tutti questi casi si tratta dell'accertamento della verità sulla validità del vincolo. Secondo altre proposte, andrebbe poi considerata la possibilità di dare rilevanza al ruolo della fede dei nubendi in ordine alla validità del sacramento del matrimonio, tenendo fermo che tra battezzati tutti i matrimoni validi sono sacramento.

- 49. Circa le cause matrimoniali lo snellimento della procedura, richiesto da molti, oltre alla preparazione di sufficienti operatori, chierici e laici con dedizione prioritaria, esige di sottolineare la responsabilità del vescovo diocesano, il quale nella sua diocesi potrebbe incaricare dei consulenti debitamente preparati che possano gratuitamente consigliare le parti sulla validità del loro matrimonio. Tale funzione può essere svolta da un ufficio o persone qualificate (cf. Dignitas Connubii, art. 113, 1)
- We need to help people come to get them, while at the same time keeping it a process seeking the truth about whether they were validly married. Pope Francis has put a commission together here. Personally I think 18 months for an annulment is a long time. In some other tribunals, clearly a thing of money, lack of judges and the rest.
- Pastoral Care of those with Same-Sex Attractions
  - This was the most controversial section. Because of the language used originally.
  - RPD 50. Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community: are we capable of welcoming these people, guaranteeing to them a fraternal space in our communities? Often they wish to encounter a Church that offers them a welcoming home. Are our communities capable of providing that, accepting and valuing their sexual orientation, without compromising Catholic doctrine on the family and matrimony?
  - RD 55 (didn't get 2/3). Alcune famiglie vivono l'esperienza di avere al loro interno persone con orientamento omosessuale. Al riguardo ci si è interrogati su quale attenzione pastorale sia opportuna di fronte a questa situazione riferendosi a quanto insegna la Chiesa: «Non esiste fondamento alcuno per assimilare o stabilire analogie, neppure remote, tra le unioni omosessuali e il disegno di Dio sul matrimonio e la famiglia». Nondimeno, gli uomini e le donne con tendenze omosessuali devono essere accolti con rispetto e delicatezza. «A loro riguardo si eviterà ogni marchio di ingiusta discriminazione» (Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Considerazioni circa i progetti di riconoscimento legale delle unioni tra persone omosessuali, 4)
- Summary on these controversial cases: a double-welcoming with Pope Francis
  - On the middle Sunday of the Extraordinary Synod, every Catholic parish in the world providentially focused on Jesus' parable about the kingdom of heaven.
  - Jesus compared his kingdom to a banquet for which he has sent his servants to invite everyone, the good and the bad. But then the king entered the banquet hall, found someone not dressed in a wedding garment and had him bound and cast into the darkness outside (Mt 22:1-14).
  - The parable summarizes the essential mission of the Church. We're called to invite everyone to the feast, saints and sinners both. But we're also called to help people get properly dressed for the kingdom.
  - In the ancient world, whenever kings would invite those who wouldn't have proper vesture, they would also send out royal tailors to get them properly arrayed. To show up in unfit apparel, therefore, would not be a result of poverty but of a choice not to change one's clothes and wear the suitable garb provided.
  - That's why the king's response wasn't unfair. He wasn't cruelly banishing a guest for failing to meet an impossible standard, but rather for the stubborn refusal to take advantage of the gifts provided to meet that standard.
  - The evangelizing mission of the Church features not just the proclamation of the Gospel but the path of sanctification. It involves welcoming everyone but at the same time helping everyone to welcome God, his call to conversion and holiness, and the means he provides to live up to that call.

- The garments God has sent out his Church to provide are the white robe of baptism that every believer is given and instructed to keep unstained to eternal life. It's an outfit washed in the blood of the Lamb and weaved with faith, hope, love, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, truth, justice, and God's word (Rev 7:14; Col 3:12-14; Eph 6:11-17).
- Jesus concluded the parable by saying, "Many are called but few are chosen." The properly-vested chosen few are not the lucky winners of a divine lottery, but those who have responded fully to God's invitation by choosing to align their life to the kingdom.
- The Church exists to help people choose the God who has lovingly chosen them. Merely to welcome people without at the same time challenging and helping them to change their old clothes and ways for the new robes would be akin to inviting people to come to the banquet in dirty rags. Such wouldn't be an act of true mercy but of pastoral malpractice with eschatological consequences.
- The synod needs to be understood within the context of Pope Francis' missionary metamorphosis of the Church. That's what the final product did, something the initial report seemed to question.
- Pope Francis has called us to focus on the "kerygma" rather than the "secondary aspects of our faith," lest the Church's message seem identified with those subordinate teachings that "do not in and of themselves convey the heart of Christ's message" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 34). Yet the interim report stressed not the kerygmatic message that Jesus loves, gave his life to save us, and is now living at our side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free us (EG 164) — especially through accompanying us in sacramental marriages — but precisely those secondary issues about which Pope Francis has said we shouldn't seem obsessed. The final report fixed it.
- The Holy Father has said the Church's evangelizing mission needs to imitate Jesus' methodology in Emmaus, as he entered into the disciples' conversation walking away from Jerusalem into the darkness. Jesus responded to them with the light of the faith, with the law and the prophets, with a heart on fire that could warm their hearts and lead them eventually to run back to Jerusalem and the faith it symbolizes. The document entered into modern conversations, but without much of the light of Scripture or of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church through centuries and without the merciful warmth Jesus himself showed in not condemning the adulterous woman but also calling her to go and sin no more (Jn 8:11). That's what the final edition did.
- Pope Francis has called the Church a field hospital in battle and has summoned us to go heal the most pressing and life-threatening wounds. Many of the deepest wounds in families, marriages and individuals today have come from the damage wrought by the sexual revolution with its countless casualties of broken hearts, broken marriages, broken families, and wounded souls. Instead of addressing the causes of these lesions, however, the interim report sought to find positive elements in them with what Pope Francis seemed to be describing in his concluding address as a "deceptive mercy [that] binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them, that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots." That's what the final product made clear.
- The Church needs to take on the smell of the sheep. The Synod did a good job in reaching out to the lost sheep who don't practice the faith with regard to sexual morality. But it wasn't nearly as effective in addressing the needs of abandoned spouses who have remained faithful to their marital promises, homosexuals who want help in living chastely, divorced-and-remarried Catholics who faithfully abstain from receiving Holy Communion, and all those families battling against cultural wolves to conform to the sexual revolution rather than to Revelation. The final report did this.
- Finally, Pope Francis has called us to take risks, to be willing to make a mess and get a little dirty in bringing the Gospel to the crossroads and peripheries. But that work implies also taking the bold pastoral risk of challenging people to make the return journey, accompanying them from disorder to order, from darkness to light, from wounds to health, from sin to sanctity and from the streets to the banquet of the kingdom.

- Prayer (Pope Francis, Feast of the Holy Family, Dec 29, 2013):
  - “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love, to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic Churches. Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing. Holy Family of Nazareth, may the approaching Synod of Bishops make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.”