

Voice of the Family

Position Paper for the Extraordinary Synod on the Family 5-19 October 2014

- The Extraordinary Synod on the Family has been called to respond to the “widespread cultural, social and spiritual crisis”, which threatens the family today.¹
- The Synod provides an important opportunity to take concrete steps to address this crisis and give renewed impetus to the “New Evangelisation”.
- If the Synod is to be effective it is essential that the teaching of the Church is affirmed clearly and without ambiguity.
- All proposals which result from the Synod must be founded on the truths of the natural moral law and Divine Revelation.

Recent centuries have witnessed the rise of materialist philosophies and ideologies which deny the spiritual nature of man. Prominent among the movements resulting from such philosophies are those advocating eugenics and population control. These have brought forth:

- ‘racial science’
- genocide
- euthanasia
- mass sterilisations
- widespread use of contraception
- widespread abortion
- explicit anti-life sex education

It is our opinion that an effective response to the contemporary crisis will only be found by upholding and propagating the following three fundamental truths:

1. Marriage, the exclusive, life-long union of one man and one woman, is the fundamental foundation of a stable and flourishing society and is the greatest protector of children, born and unborn.

- The family, the first cell of human society, is founded on the bond of marriage.
- Marriage is a natural institution raised to the level of a sacrament when entered into by two baptised persons.
- The Church has always taught, following the words of Our Lord (cf. Mk 10:1-12, Mt 19:1-12), that a consummated sacramental marriage is indissoluble.

¹ *Instrumentum Laboris* prepared for Extraordinary Synod on the Family, 26 July 2014

- While many single parents provide children with loving and supportive homes, research overwhelmingly shows that children do better when brought up by their biological father and mother committed to each other in marriage.²
- Marriage provides the ideal conditions for the psychological, intellectual and spiritual development of children.
- Marriage protects unborn children. Research from the United Kingdom shows that children conceived outside of marriage are 4-5 times more likely to be aborted than those conceived within marriage.³
- The family based on marriage is the natural habitat of unborn children; anything which threatens this habitat puts unborn children at risk.
- Marriage is gravely undermined today by widespread acceptance of divorce, 'remarriage', contraception, and homosexual unions.

2. The separation of the unitive and procreative ends of the sexual act, which is intrinsic to the use of contraception, has acted as a major catalyst of the culture of death.

- As a result of this separation of 'life' and 'love', the procreation of new human life is increasingly viewed as a 'choice', rather than as the primary end of the sexual act.
- In this context unborn human life is therefore more readily seen as a 'problem', especially if the pregnancy is 'unplanned.'
- Studies have demonstrated that use of contraception does not reduce the abortion rate.⁴ It is a historically observable phenomenon that in nations where sale of contraceptives became legal and widespread, the legalisation of abortion followed in logical succession.
- The leading pro-birth control organisations, such as Planned Parenthood, were also the first advocates and providers of abortion.
- Estimates place the total number of abortions since 1922 at over 1 billion.⁵
- Hormonal forms of contraception can cause the death of the human embryo. Countless unborn children have lost their lives as a result of these abortifacient methods of birth control.
- The separation of the procreative and unitive dimensions of the sexual act is seen most strikingly in in-vitro fertilisation, which involves the large-scale destruction of human embryos.

² See for example "Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do About It, *Child Trends Research Brief*, (June 2002)

³ Office for National Statistics, *Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 2008*, table 3 and table 4 (23 November 2010)

⁴ David Paton, 'Teenage Pregnancy, STIs and Abstinence Strategies', *Fertility & Gender: Issues in Reproductive and Sexual Ethics*, ed Helen Watt, (Oxford, 2011). 'Trends in the use of contraceptive methods and voluntary interruption of pregnancy in the Spanish population during 1997-2007', *Contraception*, Volume 83, Issue 1 (January 2011).

⁵ *Summary of Registered Abortions Worldwide, through December 2013*, William Robert Johnson, <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/wrjp3312.html>

- It is also intrinsically connected to the growing acceptability of homosexual acts and homosexual unions, including so-called ‘same-sex marriage’.

The contraceptive mentality contributes to an approach to ‘sexual liberation’ that admits no possibility of sexual abstinence. Young people are taught to consider themselves incapable of self-restraint and urged to use contraception as the only alternative to ‘unwanted pregnancy’ or sexually transmitted disease. Modern sex education strips from young people any sense of self-respect or true understanding of the purpose and dignity of their sexuality.

3. Parents are the primary educators of their children.

Parents have a fundamental right and duty to be the first and foremost educators of their children. This right has been affirmed both by the Church and by international charters of human rights.⁶

Yet today this right is under threat as never before. The most pressing threats, which vary from nation to nation, include:

- The denial of the right of parents to home-school their children.
- The denial of the right of parents to control what their children are taught in schools i.e. through the imposition by the state of compulsory anti-life, anti-family sex education.
- The provision of access to abortion and contraception in schools without parental consent.
- The requirement for teachers to instruct children in the new definition of ‘marriage’ in countries where ‘same-sex marriage’ has been legalised.
- Attempts to prevent schools from teaching that their religious beliefs are objectively true. In the United Kingdom the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights has said: “A curriculum which teaches a particular religion’s doctrinal beliefs as if they were objectively true... is likely to lead to unjustifiable discrimination.”⁷

The ‘culture of death’ works to separate children from their parents. This occurs both at the practical level, such as through legislation, and at a deeper philosophical level because the separation of the unitive and procreative aspects of the sexual act damages the intrinsic link between the child and the loving union of their parents.

It will be impossible to engage in a ‘New Evangelisation’, or to build a new ‘culture of life’, if the true understanding of marriage and human sexuality is no longer understood and if parents are no longer free to educate their children according to the natural moral law and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

There are many men and women of good will, who have the truths of the natural moral law “written on their hearts” (Rm 2:15), who are open to hearing the message of the Church when it is presented with clarity and confidence. It is our hope that the Synod will use this opportunity to help bring the good news of Jesus Christ to families across the world.

⁶ e.g. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, Pontifical Council of the Family, 8th December 1995. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10th December 1948.

⁷ *Sixth Report*, Joint Committee on Human Rights, 26th February 2007