



ANALYSIS OF THE FINAL REPORT OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD ON THE FAMILY





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(5-19 OCTOBER 2014)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome from 5th-19th October 2014 to discuss “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelisation”. The lead-up to the synod was dominated by discussion of the proposals made by Walter Cardinal Kasper to the consistory of cardinals held on 20th February 2014 that divorced Catholics who have entered into invalid civil unions should be admitted to Holy Communion without amendment of life.

An interim report (*relatio post disceptationem*) was presented to the synod fathers and the press on 13th October, half-way through the synod’s deliberations. This purportedly represented the interventions made by the synod fathers during the first week, though numerous cardinals and bishops have insisted that it did not represent the majority view. Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, Archbishop of Durban, told journalists that the report “was not what we are saying at all” and placed them in a “virtually irredeemable position.”¹ Many cardinals, bishops, clergy and lay organisations expressed their opposition to the report. Concerns focused on the inclusion of the proposals made by Cardinal Kasper, a new approach to homosexuality and a focus on supposedly positive aspects of irregular unions. Raymond Cardinal Burke said the interim report was “a gravely flawed document and does not express adequately the teaching and discipline of the Church and, in some aspects, propagates doctrinal error and a false pastoral approach.”²

During the second week of the synod the synod fathers divided into small groups to analyse the interim report and suggest amendments. A committee appointed by Pope Francis then revised the interim report based on their suggestions. This final report (*relatio synodi*) is in many ways markedly different from the interim report. There are expanded sections setting out aspects of the Church’s teaching on marriage and the family, based on ecclesiastical documents promulgated in recent decades.

There are specific issues, not present in the interim report, which are discussed in the final report, such as an acknowledgement that there is a “*crisis of faith*” in the Church, which is contributing greatly to the crisis facing the family (No 5).³ This is a welcome acknowledgement because this reality

has been denied for so many years by many in the hierarchy who have insisted that the Church is experiencing a “new springtime” and a “new Pentecost”. Another welcome addition is a section discussing the pervasiveness of pornography and the grave psychological and moral harm it causes to individuals and society (No. 10). It is also good to see references to the catastrophic consequences of divorce, especially the effects on children and abandoned spouses (No. 47). All of these changes are to be welcomed and are the result of the concerted efforts made by those cardinals and bishops who have remained faithful to the teaching of the Church on life, marriage and the family. These synod fathers deserve the grateful thanks of faithful Catholics.

The document remains gravely flawed however because, despite the amendments that have been made, the approach adopted in the interim report remains fundamentally unchanged. This approach, as we will demonstrate in this analysis, is a serious threat to the integrity of the Catholic faith.

2. THE INTERPRETATIVE KEY

God and History

The introduction to the final report provides the key to its interpretation when it states that the principle that can be considered as “*describing the synodal experience and indicating the task at hand*” is “*to read both the signs of God and human history, in a twofold yet unique faithfulness which this reading involves.*” (No. 3)

This statement proclaims that the task of the synod is to be faithful to two different sources of authority, (1) “*the signs of God*” and (2) the signs of “*human history*”. It is in fact impossible to view “*human history*” as an object of fidelity; man cannot be faithful to a sequence of events. Such fidelity is conceivable however if one believes that humanity

¹ Source: *Voice of the Family* representative at Holy See press conference held on 14 October 2014.

² Cardinal Burke to CWR: confirms transfer, praises pushback, addresses controversy over remarks by Cardinal Kasper”, 17 October 2014, *Catholic World Report*, [Accessed 18 December 2014], http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/3449/cardinal_burke_to_cwr_confirms_transfer_praises_pushback_addresses_controversy_over_remarks_by_cardinal_kasper.aspx.

³ All quotes from the *relatio synodi* are in italics and other quotes are in roman type.

is in a state of gradual development towards ever greater perfection; in this case it does make sense to insist that “*faithfulness*” to “*human history*” is required.

If one has to be faithful both to God and “*human history*” it follows that whenever there is a clash between their mutual demands a compromise must be found. Man must be faithful to God and yet faithful to the ever changing stream of history and human development. This approach results in the immutable natural moral law being displaced by a law subject to flux and change over the course of time.

There is no indication here that God is the Creator, who through his providence governs all the things that he has made. The Creator is not presented here as Lord over history but is ranked alongside it. Indeed to speak merely of “*the signs of God*” reduces the objective revelation of God to something to be merely taken notice of and interpreted.

The assertion of a twofold fidelity to both the so-called “*signs of God*” and the signs of “*human history*” is the basis for the changes proposed before and during the Extraordinary Synod:

– one remains faithful to God by asserting that marriage is indissoluble, but faithful to human history by finding a “pastoral solution”, which will permit reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and “remarried” as required by modern sensibilities

– one remains faithful to God by asserting that homosexual acts are wrong, but faithful to human history by “valuing” and “welcoming” the orientation in accordance with modern ideology

– one remains faithful to God by continuing to assert the traditional understanding of marriage, but faithful to human history by finding so-called positive aspects of sinful unions, and choosing to no longer speak about sin and its consequences because modern society no longer regards certain practices as morally objectionable.

Of course none of these solutions is ultimately faithful to God.

It is necessary to consider the Extraordinary Synod in its historical context if it is to be understood fully

why we insist that this, rather than other problematic statements contained in the report, should be considered the document’s “interpretative key”.

The Historical Context

Since the Second Vatican Council the Church has been enduring a period of prolonged turmoil. Under the banner of *aggiornamento* or “updating” there have been radical distortions of doctrine and practice affecting every level of the Church. Pope John Paul II described this period of turmoil in the following words:

“...ideas opposed to the truth which has been revealed and always taught are being scattered abroad in abundance; heresies, in the full and proper sense of the word, have been spread in the area of dogma and morals, creating doubts, confusions and rebellions; the liturgy has been tampered with; immersed in an intellectual and moral relativism and therefore in permissiveness, Christians are tempted by atheism, agnosticism, vaguely moral enlightenment and by a sociological Christianity devoid of defined dogmas or an objective morality.”⁴

One of the major contributing factors to this crisis is a false understanding of the relationship between the Church and the processes of historical change. During recent centuries there have been radical changes in many areas of human life. Throughout this time there have been voices calling for the Church to conform herself to those principles that are deemed most fundamental to “modernity”.

The Church however steadfastly maintains that her teachings cannot be made to conform to concepts that conflict with divine revelation or the natural law, no matter how fundamental these may seem to be to a particular age. The fundamental principles of “modernity” are to be judged true or false by the standard of the immutable teachings of the Church; the teachings of the Church cannot be judged by “the modern world” as outdated or in need of reform.

It is at this point that we must note that the Church has always identified a sharp distinction between herself and “the world”. This is the “world” whose

⁴ *Osservatore Romano*, 7 February 1981.

ruler is Satan (cf. Jn 12:31, 14:30) and whose children are distinct from the children of light (cf. Lk 16:8). Between the “world” and the “Church Militant” there is constant conflict. It is important to note that this “world”, which is under the power of the devil, is not synonymous with the created universe which is good and ordered to God.

One of the most important aspects of modernity is an evolutionary approach to history. Many nineteenth-century historians, such as Thomas Babington Macaulay, saw mankind moving steadily towards ever greater liberty and prosperity. Such theories were given extra weight by Darwin’s theory of evolution, which spawned new ideologies and approaches to history. Eugenics took Darwin’s theories to their logical conclusion and sought to direct the process of human evolution by both voluntary and coercive means. Communism saw mankind evolving towards an ideal form of society, while Nazism combined a eugenic approach with a neo-pagan religiosity, which included the conception of an overarching evolutionary direction to history. In many of these ideologies human nature is considered subject to perpetual evolution and change; individual men and women are made subjects, not masters, of historical development and the providence of God is no longer acknowledged. The denial of the fundamental immutability of human nature is witnessed most strikingly today in “gender theory” and the redefinition of marriage.

This false evolutionary approach to historical development has also had advocates within the Church. It manifested itself clearly in the heresy of Modernism which made the understanding of divine truths subject to changes in human nature and society. The identification and condemnation of these errors did not prevent the evolutionary mentality surviving and being propagated within the Church.

Most famous among such thinkers was the Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin who thought mankind was evolving towards ever greater consciousness which would one day reach a point of supreme consciousness which he termed the “Omega point” and identified with Christ. Similar views were held by members of the hierarchy; Jules-Géraud Cardinal Saliège, Archbishop of Toulouse from 1926 to 1958, wrote “There have been unforeseen biological changes

which have the appearance of a new species. Are we now witnessing a kind of change that will profoundly modify the human structure, by which I mean the mental and psychological structure of humanity?”⁵

Theologians comprising the school of thought termed the “nouvelle theologie” argued that the Church should change her theological language to make it compatible with modern thought, while asserting that the doctrinal content should remain the same. Many of these theologians, such as Hans Küng and Edward Schillebeeckx, did clearly come to depart from Catholic orthodoxy.

Many prelates and theologians thought that it would be impossible for the Church to evangelise until she brought herself as far into line with the “modern world” as possible; they considered that the Church must be faithful to human history as well as faithful to God. Shortly before his election as Paul VI, Giovanni Battista Cardinal Montini expressed the opinion that, “The Council should trace the line of Christian relativism, laying down how far the Catholic religion must act as the iron guardian of absolute values, and how far it can and must bend in its approach, in its connaturality with human life as it exists in time.”⁶

Such a position was a major influence on the Second Vatican Council and can be seen in the manner in which its documents were composed and interpreted. One Council father, Mgr Schmitt, Bishop of Metz, expressed the attitude as follows: “The cultural situation we are living in entails changes not only in our external behaviour, but in the very notion we have of creation and of the salvation brought by Jesus Christ.”⁷ Cardinal Walter Kasper tells us that the “spirit of Vatican II” was present again in the synod.⁸

Kasper himself expressed the wish to see God made subject to history in an article published in 1967:

“The God who is enthroned over the world and history as a changeless being is an offence to man. One must deny him for man’s sake, because he

⁵ Quoted in Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum: A Study of Changes in the Catholic Church in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Rev. John Parsons (Kansas, 2004), p70.

⁶ *Osservatore Romano*, 8-9 October 1962.

⁷ Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p69.

⁸ “Statement on Cardinal Kasper Interview”, 15 October 2014, *Edward Pentin*, 18 December 2014, <http://edwardpentin.co.uk/statement-on-cardinal-kasper-interview/>.

claims for himself the dignity and honour that belong by right to man.... We must resist this God, however, not only for man’s sake, but also for God’s sake. He is not the true God at all, but rather a wretched idol. For a God who is only alongside of and above history, who is not himself history, is a finite God. If we call such a being God, then for the sake of the Absolute we must become absolute atheists. Such a God springs from a rigid worldview; he is the guarantor of the status quo and the enemy of the new.”⁹

Similar views are expressed, in more cautious terms, in his 2013 book *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, which was publicly praised by Pope Francis and has been widely promoted in the lead up to the Extraordinary Synod.¹⁰

We can see then that the approach adopted in the final report, namely, “to read both the signs of God and human history in a twofold yet unique faithfulness which this reading involves” is part of a well established methodology.

Reflections on the “Interpretative Key”

In this section we will investigate the *relatio synodi* in the light of the “interpretative key”. Paragraph 13 begins:

“Since the order of creation is determined by its orientation towards Christ, a distinction needs to be made without separating the various levels through which God communicates to humanity the grace of the covenant. By reason of the divine pedagogy, according to which the order of creation develops through successive stages to the moment of redemption, we need to understand the newness of the Sacrament of Marriage in continuity with natural marriage in its origin, that is, the manner of God’s saving action in both creation and the Christian life.”

Some sentences or phrases in this paragraph have been retained from the *relatio post disceptationem*, while others are new additions in the *relatio synodi*. The combined result seems, like many other passages in the document, to yield no clear meaning. The interim report distinguished the “order of creation” from “that of redemption” but the revised final report

draws no such distinctions, leaving us uncertain precisely what is meant by this phrase.¹¹ We are left unsure as to whether this is simply a confused reference to salvation history or whether the passage is proposing some kind of continual development of the natural order of creation “through successive stages to the moment of redemption”.

It is important then to state clearly that the “order of creation” will in fact remain in that “perfection [which] is the completeness of the universe at its first founding” until the second coming of Our Lord and the consequent “final perfection, which is the end of the whole universe”, namely, “the perfect beatitude of the saints at the consummation of the world”.¹² Neither will there any longer be “successive stages to the moment of redemption” in the supernatural order as we are now under the new and everlasting covenant, professing the faith “which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3) and awaiting the second coming of Our Lord.

We emphasise this point because it seems reasonably clear that the original interim report was using this idea of development in “the order of creation” to prepare the way for radical changes in the Church’s doctrine and discipline. The earlier version connects the development of the “order of creation” with “interpreting the nuptial covenant in terms of continuity and novelty”, with “the law of gradualness”, and with reference to the permitted separation of spouses under Moses, which is said to demonstrate that “divine condescension always accompanies the path of humanity, directing it towards its new beginning.” We can see here the connection between the evolutionary view of history and the proposals being made by radical clerics.

Paragraph 13 continues: “In creation, because all things were made through Christ and for him, Christians ‘gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of

⁹ “Gott in der Geschichte”, *Gott heute: 15 Beiträge zur Gottesfrage*, (Mainz, 1967) Translation of passage from “The New Pastoral Approach of Cardinal Kasper to the divorced and ‘remarried’”, 12 April 2014, *Documentation Information Catholiques Internationales*, [Accessed 16 December 2014], <http://www.dici.org/en/documents/the-new-pastoral-approach-of-cardinal-kasper-to-the-divorced-and-remarried/>.

¹⁰ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, (New York, 2013). See for example p9-13.

¹¹ As in the rest of the document only quotes from the *relatio synodi* are in italics while other quotes are in roman type.

¹² St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 73, a. 1.

the Word which lie hidden among their fellows; they ought to follow attentively the profound changes which are taking place among peoples' (Ad Gentes, 11)."¹³

Here the supposed changes in the "order of creation" are linked with "profound changes taking place among peoples", which Christians "ought to follow attentively." Once again we are being called to be faithful to the signs of "human history" alongside the "signs of God". Among the "profound changes" taking place in our own day are new attitudes towards human sexuality; consequently many argue that the Church must change her approach and "gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word" by identifying and focusing on the supposedly positive aspects of sinful relationships.

Paragraph 13 concludes with the assertion that "the reception of Baptism brings the believer into the Church through the domestic church, namely the family." While at the present moment of time the majority of those baptised are indeed presented for baptism by their parents, the sacrament of baptism is a sacrament of the Catholic Church as a whole, not of the "domestic church". An adult convert, who is perhaps choosing Christ heroically against family pressures, is not being brought into the Church through the "domestic church". This statement is further evidence of the absence of clarity and precision in the language used in this document.

Paragraph 5 begins: "Faithful to Christ's teaching, we look to the reality of the family today." This statement, which might seem innocuous, should cause concern in this context. It could be used to set up a conflict between "Christ's teaching" and the "reality of the family today" resulting in calls for compromises such as those of Cardinal Kasper. The paragraph also speaks of "anthropological and cultural changes"; the use of "anthropological" in addition to "cultural" potentially suggests that human nature itself, rather than just aspects of human society, is subject to change.

In the final sentence of paragraph 2 we read: "The family is uniquely important to the Church and in these times, when all believers are invited to think of others rather than themselves, the family needs to be rediscovered as the essential agent of evangelisation." It is highly questionable to state that "in these times" more than others "believers are invited to think of

others rather than themselves". It might be more accurate to say that it is precisely in these times that the clergy are generally calling upon believers to make fewer sacrifices for their fellow men. It must also be pointed out that the "essential agent of evangelisation" is not the family but rather the bishop, and those who share in his ministry. It is the bishops who have the authority and duty to teach the gospel, celebrate the sacraments and govern the Church.

In paragraphs 9 and 10, on "The Importance of Affectivity in Life", modern man is once more treated as different to his ancestors. We read in paragraph 9 that "people in many parts of the world are feeling a great need to take care of themselves, to know themselves better, to live in greater harmony with their feelings and sentiments and to seek to live their affectivity in the best manner possible" as if this has never been the case before. In paragraph 10 we have the highly questionable assertion that "Cultural tendencies in today's world seem to set no limits on a person's affectivity in which every aspect needs to be explored, even those which are highly complex." We are also told "nowadays a person's affectivity is very fragile." This preoccupation with the supposed needs of modern man obscures the immutability of human nature. The needs of man, and particularly what man needs to receive from the Church, remain fundamentally unchanged in all ages. The approach adopted here however opens the way for an attempt to force fundamental change in doctrine and practice.

The section on "Pastoral Challenges" begins:

"In this regard, the Church is conscious of the need to offer a particularly meaningful word of hope, which must be done based on the conviction that the human person comes from God, and that, consequently, any reconsideration of the great question on the meaning of human existence can be responsive to humanity's most profound expectations." (No. 11)

¹³ It should be noted that the document omits the second part of this sentence from *Ad Gentes 11* which reads "and let them exert themselves to keep modern man, intent as he is on the science and technology of today's world from becoming a stranger to things divine; rather, let them awaken in him a yearning for that truth and charity which God has revealed." *Ad Gentes*, Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965, Vatican, [Accessed 18 December 2014], http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat_ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

It is surprising to read that the authors, retaining a phrase from the interim report, consider that there is need to speak in this document of a "reconsideration of the great question of the meaning of human existence." The stated purpose of the synod was to address the crisis facing the family. The document states that this "reconsideration" must be "based on the conviction that the human person comes from God." We are not told why this point alone is stressed to the exclusion of other truths about man and his destiny. Nor are we informed if this "reconsideration" is intended to lead to changes in the Church's doctrine.

Paragraph 4 repeats a sentence from the interim report which calls for a re-evaluation of the content of divine revelation:

"looking, our gaze fixed on Christ, to re-evaluate, with renewed enthusiasm, what revelation, transmitted in the Church's faith, tells us about the beauty and dignity of the family..."

The context of this comment, and its origin in the radical interim report, should raise serious concerns about the nature of this re-evaluation. The presence of a phrase such as "our gaze fixed on Christ" is not sufficient to reassure us; we would rather be told clearly that our bishops are committed to remaining faithful to the deposit of faith transmitted by the magisterium for twenty centuries. The paragraph concludes with the following sentence:

"...facing the situation, with an eye on the Lord Jesus, to discern how the Church and society can renew commitment to the family."

The phrase "an eye on the Lord Jesus" is another attempt at piety but it does not have a real meaning in this context; better to have an intellect perfected by faith and a will perfected by charity than one eye on the Lord and another on "the world". The presence of such phrases supplies pious language, which sounds Christian, to a document inspired by an ideology which is fundamentally anti-Christian. This anti-Christian nature lies in the tendency of the document to lead the Church to conformity with the contemporary world rather than to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We need hardly note that a document that never mentions the most serious threats facing families, such as abortion, or the ever increasing threats to

the freedom of Catholics seeking to live according to their consciences, can scarcely be considered as "facing the situation".

3. THE LAW OF GRADUALNESS

In the interim report the "law of gradualness" was invoked on three occasions. It was used:

- to justify "interpreting the nuptial covenant in terms of continuity and novelty"
- as the basis for asking "what possibilities are given to married couples who experience the failure of their marriage"
- and finally in an explicit manner to justify the reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and "remarried".

The "law of gradualness", according to the most common usage of the term, maintains that the demand of obedience to the moral law only imposes itself gradually as the person matures and develops and becomes capable of observing the law. This means that a person is not in fact obliged to live according the fullness of the moral law at certain points in their lifetime. This approach to moral difficulties was debated at the Synod of Bishops in 1980 and was corrected by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*:

"[Married persons] cannot however look on the law as merely an ideal to be achieved in the future: they must consider it as a command of Christ the Lord to overcome difficulties with constancy. 'And so what is known as "the law of gradualness" or step-by-step advance cannot be identified with "gradualness of the law", as if there were different degrees or forms of precept in God's law for different individuals and situations.'"¹⁴ (No. 34)

It is, of course, the case that the virtues develop over the course of a person's lifetime and at particular stages of their lives some individuals may find themselves struggling to observe certain precepts of the moral law. Nonetheless they are obliged by the law, even if in particular cases they have reduced culpability due to ignorance or a lack of consent of the will.

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, (1981), No. 34.

It was notable that at the Extraordinary Synod the so-called “law of gradualness” was a key component of the “progressive” party’s strategy for securing radical change. It was discussed frequently at the press briefings and, as stated above, played a prominent role in the interim report.

The phrase itself is not found in the final report but the concept is present.

Paragraph 12 states:

“Jesus looked upon the women and men he met with love and tenderness, accompanying their steps with patience and mercy in proclaiming the demands of the Kingdom of God.”

This sentence was originally found in the interim report in the section on “gradualness”.

We have already considered paragraph 13 in our section on the “Interpretative Key”. Here we must note again the connection drawn between developments in the “order of creation” and “the law of gradualness” in the interim version of the report. The interim report describes God revealing the “nuptial covenant” in stages, according to a “law of gradualness”, which involved tolerating divorce. The implication seems to be that the “law of gradualness” could therefore be applied to the lives of such couples today. The final report removes the mention of “gradualness” but still speaks of “an ongoing conversion to a love which saves us from sin and gives us fullness of life.” This choice of words is perfectly acceptable in and of itself but the context, and the content of the earlier version, gives legitimate cause for concern.

We noted, in our earlier discussion, that paragraph 13 adopted a confused approach to historical development. This paragraph points us towards the connection between historicism and the “law of gradualness”. The evolutionary view of history, which sees everything as subject to change, thereby denies the existence of any immutable natural moral law. It is precisely this immutable law which is denied by the “law of gradualness” if it is interpreted as stating that the law varies depending on the circumstances of the individual. Once more we can see clearly that the final report is underpinned by an ideology absolutely incompatible with the Catholic faith and human reason.

4. THE NEW APPROACH TO IRREGULAR UNIONS

Paragraph 22 of the report reads:

“...the Second Vatican Council wished to express appreciation for natural marriage and the valid elements present in other religions (cf. Nostra Aetate, 2) The presence of the seeds of the Word in these cultures (cf. Ad Gentes, 11) could even be applied, in some ways, to marriage and the family in so many societies and non-Christian peoples. Valid elements, therefore, exist in some forms outside of Christian marriage – based on a stable and true relationship of a man and a woman – which, in any case, might be oriented towards Christian marriage.”

In fact the passage in *Nostra Aetate* which is cited makes no mention of natural marriage. Natural marriage, being ordained by God, belongs to the whole human race and not to any particular religion.

The report states that “outside of Christian marriage” there are “valid elements” which “exist in some forms” of union “based on a stable and true relationship of a man and a woman”. This statement cannot be reconciled with the teaching of the Church. If the passage is speaking of natural marriage it clearly contradicts the teaching of the Church that natural marriages are true valid marriages not merely unions with some “valid elements”. If it is not speaking of natural marriage then it asserts that gravely sinful unions have some “valid elements”, without explaining in what sense we are to understand the term “valid.” Through its confused use of language the document seems to equate the beauty and dignity of natural marriage with unions that are contrary to the moral law.

The paragraph continues:

“With an eye to the popular wisdom of different peoples and cultures, the Church also recognises this type of family as the basic, necessary and fruitful unit for humanity’s life together.”

What “type of family” is being referred to here? The authors may be intending to speak of families based on natural marriage; however we have already shown that their description of the unions they are referring to contradicts the Church’s teaching on natural

marriage. If they are speaking of any relationship “based on a stable and true relationship of a man and woman” then they are asserting that sin is a “basic, necessary and fruitful unit for humanity’s life together.” Finally we must add: why is this “recognition” based on “popular wisdom” rather than on natural reason and the teaching of the Catholic Church?

Paragraph 41 reads:

“While continuing to proclaim and foster Christian marriage, the Synod also encourages pastoral discernment of the situations of a great many who no longer live this reality. Entering into pastoral dialogue with these persons is needed to distinguish elements in their lives which can lead to a greater openness to the Gospel of Marriage in its fullness. Pastors ought to identify elements which can foster evangelization and human and spiritual growth. A new element in today’s pastoral activity is a sensitivity to the positive aspects of civilly celebrated marriages and, with obvious differences, cohabitation. While clearly presenting the Christian message, the Church also needs to indicate the constructive elements in these situations which do not yet or no longer correspond to it.”

The first thing which strikes us about this passage is the unreality of any attempt to enter into such “pastoral dialogue”. One can reasonably expect that such couples already consider many aspects of their lifestyle to be positive. How likely are they to want to enter into a “pastoral dialogue” with a cleric who approaches them intent on distinguishing these?

Secondly, the document speaks of “a greater openness to the Gospel of Marriage in its fullness.” This phrase suggests degrees of marriage exist and ignores the fact that one is either married or one is not married; one has either entered into natural or sacramental marriage or one is living in an objectively sinful state which is not marriage at all. There is no such thing as a partial marriage, which would imply a partial yet complete gift of self. It is a contradiction in terms.

Thirdly, the document places a great deal of emphasis on the so-called “constructive elements” that can be found in irregular unions but fails completely to indicate the negative elements. The negative elements, however, are grave both for the individuals and for the society of which they form

a part. The gravest consequence is the separation from God through mortal sin. It is the duty of the Church to lead men and women away from sin and back to God. This cannot be done if the hierarchy will no longer even speak of sin. In paragraph 43 the authors call for a “constructive response”; it is a great missed opportunity that they do not take this as an opening to call for clear and courageous teaching of the whole truth about marriage and about the nature of sin, virtue and grace. One wonders if this new emphasis is in fact a way of providing a retrospective justification for the widespread failure of the Catholic clergy to preach the gospel over the past fifty years.

There is a grave danger that, by only speaking of the “constructive elements” of irregular unions, we deceive people into a false sense of security and cause them to continue to think that their situation is acceptable in the sight of God. This means denying them opportunities for repentance and developing that relationship with God in which alone peace, happiness and eternal life can be found. The same danger is present in the approach recommended in paragraph 51 where Catholics are urged that “language or behaviour which might make [the divorced and ‘remarried’] feel an object of discrimination should be avoided.” This is a very subjective determination to make. There is the danger that Catholics will think themselves to be acting with “charity” while failing to share the truth in love. True mercy and charity lead people to the true human flourishing that ultimately can only be found in God.

Finally, we must note that the whole of this discussion is carried out without any real distinctions being made between widely differing states. We can never quite tell whether in any given case the authors are speaking of those who are truly married or living in a variety of states that are not true marriages.

In reality there is only marriage as established by God in the beginning; this true and natural marriage becomes sacramental when entered into by two baptised persons. To speak of different kinds of marriage or different kinds of families, that do not share the essential properties of these states as ordained by God, is a contradiction in terms and an abuse of language. To distinguish true marriages and true families from those states which are immoral and harmful is a true and just discrimination.

5. HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE DIVORCED AND “REMARRIED”

We must begin discussion of paragraphs 52 and 53 by pointing out that they failed to get the necessary two-thirds approval of the synod fathers but were nonetheless included in the final *relatio*.

Paragraphs 52 and 53, while purporting to simply report the positions expressed by synod fathers are in fact intended to further the proposals made by Cardinal Kasper at the consistory of cardinals on 20th February and advocated by him, and other senior clerics, since that date. Including these passages in the document, contrary to the vote of the Extraordinary Synod, ensures that they will be on the agenda for the Ordinary Synod.

Cardinal Kasper’s proposal is essentially that validly married Catholics who have contracted invalid civil “marriages” may receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion without amendment of life. This is contradicted by the immutable doctrine of the Catholic Church which teaches that such a union is adulterous and consequently gravely sinful. The sacrament of Penance and, consequently, Holy Communion, can only be received by such persons if they have a firm purpose of amendment. This was confirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in a response to a *dubium* answered on 22nd October 2014.¹⁵

There is no need to dwell here on the various erroneous justifications that Kasper and his collaborators have used to defend these proposals because they have been ably dealt with elsewhere.¹⁶ Here we will simply make a few comments about these proposals as put forward in paragraphs 52 and 53.

We may begin by noting the reduction of the Church’s discipline, which in this case is inseparable from her doctrine, to the level of mere “regulations”. This word implies something that is open to change. The paragraph goes on to say that some synod fathers advocated an “*individualised approach, permitting access in certain circumstances and with certain well-defined conditions, primarily in irreversible situations and those involving moral obligations toward children who would have to endure unjust suffering.*” The sentence ignores the fact that this

matter is already settled, for the reasons explained above, and cannot be raised again. The mention of “*certain circumstances and with certain well-defined conditions*” is an attempt to mislead; the question at hand is an objective one, may a person in grave sin receive Holy Communion? The only “*circumstance*” which can resolve this is absolution and the only “*well-defined condition*” is the state of sanctifying grace.

The mention of children in paragraph 52 is particularly insidious. The implication is that it is somehow necessary for the “remarried” to be admitted to Holy Communion to avoid children having to endure “*unjust suffering*”. In fact the Church, recognising the difficulties inherent in this situation, teaches that there are cases when an invalidly “remarried” couple can continue living together “as brother and sister” when it is considered that the good of children requires it. Cardinal Kasper believes that this is not a practical solution because “heroism is not for the average Christian.”¹⁷ The Church, pointing to the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that of His martyrs, disagrees. God promises to give the graces needed to avoid sin, even in the most difficult circumstances, to those who ask for them: “God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Cor 10:13) The Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent states:

“... no one, however much justified, should consider himself exempt from the observance of the commandments; no one should use that rash statement, once forbidden by the Fathers under anathema, that the observance of the

¹⁵ A translation can be found at: “Four Days After Synod Closes, CDF responds officially”, 14 November 2014, *Rorate Caeli*, [Accessed 18 December 2014], <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2014/11/four-days-after-synod-closed-cdf.html>.

¹⁶ Readers are directed to (i) *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, ed. Robert Dodaro, (San Francisco, 2014), (ii) Juan Jose Perez-Soba and Stephan Kampowski, *The Gospel of the Family: Going Beyond Cardinal Kasper’s Proposal in the Debate on Marriage, Civil Re-Marriage, and Communion in the Church* (San Francisco, 2014), (iii) *The Hope of the Family: Dialogue with Gerhard Cardinal Müller*, (San Francisco, 2014).

¹⁷ “Merciful God, Merciful Church”, 7 May 2014, *Commonweal*, [Accessed 10 November 2014], <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/merciful-god-merciful-church>.

commandments of God is impossible for one that is justified.

“For God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding admonishes thee to do what thou canst and to pray for what thou canst not, and aids thee that thou mayest be able.”¹⁸

In paragraph 53 the drafters try to find an opening for the admission to Holy Communion of the divorced and “remarried” by asserting that there are synod fathers who find it difficult to understand the difference between spiritual communion and sacramental communion. The traditional understanding of the Church is as follows:

- (1) If a person receives Holy Communion with the correct dispositions they receive both sacramentally and spiritually.
- (2) If a person receives Holy Communion, but is not correctly disposed, they receive sacramentally but not spiritually; that is to say, they physically eat the Body and Blood of the Lord but do not receive an increase of sanctifying grace, rather “he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.” (1 Cor 11:29)
- (3) Finally, a person who is correctly disposed to receive Holy Communion, but is not able to do so physically, receives spiritually but not sacramentally when they make an act of spiritual communion.¹⁹

A person who wilfully persists in a state of mortal sin is thus not able to make a spiritual communion in the proper sense of the term. Therefore a person who is divorced and “remarried” is not able to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, or able to make a spiritual communion, until they repent of their sin. The erroneous view that a person who is in unrepentant mortal sin can make an act of spiritual communion, in the proper sense of the term, is perhaps responsible for the confusion among bishops expressed in paragraph 53.

We may conclude this section by noting that hints of the “Kasper proposal” can be found outside of the rejected paragraphs; for example paragraph 11 states:

“*People need to be accepted in the concrete circumstances of life. We need to know how to support them in their searching and to encourage them in their hunger for God and their wish to feel fully part of the Church, also including those who have experienced failure or find themselves in a variety of situations. The Christian message always contains in itself the reality and the dynamic of mercy and truth.*” (No. 11)

This paragraph asserts a need to satisfy the wish of people to “*feel fully part of the Church*” while being “*accepted*” in their “*concrete circumstances*”. While the “*failure*” experienced and the nature of the “*variety of situations*” are not specified it is clear that this could be taken as an opening towards the reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and “*remarried*.” This seems to be confirmed by the insidious final line which by speaking of the “*dynamic of mercy and truth*” suggests that there may be occasions where “*mercy*” takes priority over “*truth*”. On the contrary, there can be no merciful solution that is not based on reality, that is, on truth. It is important that people really are “*fully part of the Church*” rather than simply being led to “*feel*” that they are.

Paragraph 45 should also raise very serious concerns. It states:

“*The necessity for courageous pastoral choices was particularly evident at the Synod. Strongly reconfirming their faithfulness to the Gospel of the Family and acknowledging that separation and divorce are always wounds which cause deep suffering to the married couple and their children, the synod fathers felt the urgent need to embark on a new pastoral course based on the present reality of weaknesses within the family, knowing oftentimes that couples are more ‘enduring’ situations of suffering than freely choosing them. These situations vary because of personal, cultural and socio-economic factors. Therefore, solutions need to be considered in a variety of ways, as suggested by Pope St John Paul (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 84).*”

¹⁸ *Decree on Justification*, Council of Trent, Session VI, promulgated by Pope Paul III on 13th January 1547.

¹⁹ This question is thoroughly discussed by Paul Jerome Keller O.P. in “Is Spiritual Communion for Everyone?”, *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2014): 631-655.

Nowhere in this report are “*courageous pastoral choices*” to help the “*separated and divorced*” to be found. This is surprising if the synod fathers felt a “*necessity*” that was “*particularly evident*” and an “*urgent need*”. Many readers, longing to read courageous suggestions, will instead be astonished to find that many of the real problems facing families are nowhere mentioned. So what are the “*courageous*” measures here proposed? Where is the “*new pastoral course*” towards the divorced? They are presumably to be found contained in paragraphs 52 and 53, rejected by the synod, yet still found in its final report.

6. HOMOSEXUALITY

The interim report contained a lengthy section on homosexuality which received much media attention and was frequently, and fairly, described as a “*revolution*” in the Church. The radical language of that version has been entirely removed. There is nothing contrary to the faith in the content of paragraphs 55 and 56 in the final report. It is however a serious omission that the threat posed by same-sex marriage is not adequately addressed.

In the light of the extensive revision of this section, it seems likely that it was the votes of bishops who dissent from Catholic teaching on human sexuality that prevented the passage attaining a two-thirds majority.

Vincent Cardinal Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, expressed his dissatisfaction with the text as follows; “I didn’t think it went far enough, there were three key words as far as I was concerned ... ‘respect’, ‘welcome’ and ‘value’.” He continued, “I was looking for those words and they weren’t there and so I didn’t think that was a good paragraph.”

Nichols also commented on the decision to keep the rejected paragraphs in the final report: “By the rule book those votes should have removed paragraphs from the text if it were the end of a synod.” However “[The Pope] said no, no, we are releasing the lot, we tell people ... what the balance of voting is, this document – all of it – is the starting point for the next synod, please go away and reflect on these things, talk to people, talk about where we are at this point because this document is part of a

process of dialogue and discernment for the future of the Church.”²⁰

It is clear then that the rejection of the radical proposals of the interim report will not prevent the same agenda being advocated at the next synod. It is therefore worth briefly considering the serious errors contained in the interim report. Firstly, it suggested “welcoming homosexual persons” by “guaranteeing them a fraternal space in our communities.” “Often,” the interim report continues, “they wish to encounter a Church that offers them a welcoming home.” While all persons should be welcomed by the Church, the document fails to specify precisely what it means by referring to homosexuals in particular. The implication is that the Church should not only welcome individual persons but also tolerate in her midst homosexual acts and homosexual relationships. Secondly, the report speaks of “valuing their sexual orientation.” This is a very serious error; while all individual persons should be valued, the homosexual orientation cannot be valued because it is “intrinsically disordered.”²¹ Thirdly the document states: “The Church furthermore affirms that unions between persons of the same sex cannot be considered on the same footing as matrimony between man and woman.” This misleading statement implies that these are real “unions” which are simply inferior to marriage; in reality such “unions” are absolutely contrary to the natural law.

It is our contention that this desire to conform the Church’s teaching to the confused understanding of human sexuality prevailing in the modern world results from the erroneous understanding of the Church’s relationship to the world and to human history that we have discussed earlier in this analysis.

7. CONTRACEPTION

One of the most “*profound changes*” witnessed in the twentieth century was the adoption, by a

²⁰ “Vatican Call for Church to welcome gay people did not go ‘far enough’ – Cardinal Vincent Nichols”, 19 October 2014, *The Telegraph*, [Accessed 18 November 2014], <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/the-pope/11172521/Vatican-call-for-Church-to-welcome-gay-people-did-not-go-far-enough-Cardinal-Vincent-Nichols.html>.

²¹ *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1 October 1986.

majority of people in the western world, of the use of contraception. The contraceptive mentality developed alongside the eugenic ideologies resulting from Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. The early advocates of birth control were concerned with reducing the growth of population groups deemed undesirable. Birth control was also closely connected to Malthusian perceptions of the threat posed by so-called “overpopulation”. Indeed Malthusianism, Darwinism and eugenics are inextricably connected. Darwin asserted that it was Malthus’s theory which provided him with the inspiration for the theory of natural selection.

The organisations and movements advocating birth control became the leading advocates of abortion. This is a logical development because contraception involves the separation of the procreative and unitive ends of the sexual act. As a result of this separation, the procreation of new human life is increasingly viewed as a “choice”, rather than as the primary end for which marriage was ordained by God. In this context unborn human life is more readily seen as a “problem”, especially if the pregnancy is “unplanned”. Abortion effectively becomes a form of birth control.

The use of contraception is also linked to abortion in a much more direct way; many forms of hormonal contraception can act as abortifacients.

Given this destructive reality one might expect a document discussing the crisis in the family to make reference to some of these facts. In fact the section entitled “The Transmission of Life and the Challenges of the Declining Birthrate” fails to tackle any of the major problems.

The document contains no adequate definition of marriage and fails to discuss the ends of marriage and the relationship between them. It offers no defence of the Church’s teaching or any acknowledgment of the all but universal failure of the clergy to communicate it to the laity. It makes no mention of the abortifacient nature of many hormonal contraceptives, nor does it indicate the profound connection between contraception and abortion generally.

The only reference to the Church’s teaching is an ambiguous reference to *Humanae Vitae* in the following context:

“... we should return to the message of the *Encyclical Humanae Vitae* of Blessed Paul VI, which highlights the need to respect the dignity of the person in morally assessing methods in regulating births.”

Far from upholding the moral law this statement seems to imply that the issue is one of individual conscience. This is precisely the position that Cardinal Kasper argued for on the first day of the synod:

“[Paul VI] was concerned to remain in the truth and not give up something, but I think it’s also a question of the interpretation of this encyclical *Humanae Vitae* because he was the first pope who spoke in ‘personalistic’ terminology about marriage – it was new! So in the light of this general approach we have to interpret what he said about contraception and so on, and I think what he said is true, but it’s not a casuistic we can deduce from it [sic], it’s an ideal and we have to tell people, but then we have also to respect the conscience of the couples.”²²

As the signs of “*human history*” indicate an acceptance of contraception the approach adopted by the progressives is to seek for a way in which the Church can reconcile herself to this historical reality while appearing to retain her doctrine intact.

8. KEY OMISSIONS

The Natural Moral Law

All men and women have the natural moral law “written in their hearts” to which their “conscience utters its own testimony.” (Rm 2:15) This natural law is identical for every human being and is binding on all.

St Thomas Aquinas tells us that “the rule and measure of human acts is reason, which is the first principle of human acts.”²³ In order for an act to be truly human, it must accord with right reason.²⁴ Law can be defined as “a rule and measure of acts,

²² “Card Kasper: Synod to model Pope’s ‘listening magisterium’”, 10 October 2014, *Vatican Radio*, [Accessed 18 December 2014], http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/01/card_kasper_synod_to_model_popes_listening_magisterium/1107667.

²³ ST II-I q.90 a.1.

²⁴ ST II-I q.1. a.1.

whereby man is induced to act or is restrained from acting.”²⁵ If reason is the rule and measure of all human acts, and if law is the rule and measure of certain acts, then it follows necessarily that law must also accord with reason. It is on these grounds that Aquinas can assert that “a law is nothing else but a dictate of practical reason emanating from the ruler.”²⁶ If what is commanded is to “have the nature of law, it needs to be in accord with some rule of reason.”²⁷ Laws that are contrary to reason, such as those which permit abortion, are not true laws.

The whole created universe “is governed by Divine Reason” and, because “law is nothing else but a dictate of practical reason emanating from a ruler”, St Thomas can state that “the very idea of government of things in God the ruler of the universe, has the nature of law.”²⁸ This law is the eternal law.

All created things are governed by this eternal law and have it “imprinted on them” and from this “they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends.”²⁹ St Thomas states that a rational creature, such as man, has “a share of the eternal reason” and thus “a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law.”³⁰ By this natural law “one knows, and is conscious of, what is good and what is evil.”³¹ Man is bound to act according to this law.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* prepared to guide the course of the synod contained many problematic texts on the subject of the natural law including the following statements:

“In fact, what underlies the relationship between the Gospel of the Family and the natural law is not so much the defence of an abstract philosophical concept as the necessary relation which the Gospel establishes with the human person in the variety of circumstances created by history and culture. ‘The natural law responds thus to the need to found human rights on reason and makes possible an intercultural and interreligious dialogue.’” (No. 20)

...“The language traditionally used in explaining the term ‘natural law’ should be improved so that the values of the Gospel can be communicated to people today in a more intelligible manner. In

particular, the vast majority of responses and an even greater part of the observations request that more emphasis be placed on the role of the Word of God as a privileged instrument in the conception of married life and the family, and recommend greater reference to the Bible, its language and narratives. In this regard, respondents propose bringing the issue to public discussion and developing the idea of biblical inspiration and the ‘order in creation,’ which could permit a re-reading of the concept of the natural law in a more meaningful manner in today’s world.” (No.30)

These paragraphs, and others like them, indicate an extraordinary confusion about the reality of natural law and the relationship between the natural and supernatural orders.

The final report does not make any reference to the natural law thus abandoning one of the fundamental concepts underpinning philosophy and theology.

This abandonment of the natural law is an inevitable consequence of the approach adopted towards God and history. As stated above, once man is called to show “faithfulness” to the ever changing stream of “human history” then an immutable moral law accessible to human reason is no longer comprehensible. Attempts to force the Church to bring her teaching in line with modern principles on such issues as homosexuality will be the inevitable result.

Abortion

Conservative estimates indicate that over one billion unborn human lives have been lost since the legalisation of abortion across most of the world in the twentieth century, beginning with the Soviet Union in 1920. This loss of more than one billion human lives, and the continuation and proliferation of abortion around the world, did not merit a single mention by the authors of this report. Nor was there any mention of *in vitro* fertilisation which has also resulted in the destruction of millions of unborn children worldwide. The authors completely

²⁵ ST II-I q.90 a.1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ ST II-I q.91 a.1.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ ST II-I q.91 a.2.

abandon unborn children, their mothers and fathers, and all affected by the horror of abortion. This is truly a grave scandal.

It is perhaps even more scandalous that the only indirect mention of abortion was a reference to a “decline in population” partly due to “a mentality against having children promoted by the world politics of reproductive health.” (No. 10) Here cardinals and bishops adopt the euphemism of the pro-abortion lobby and do nothing to explain what “reproductive health” really involves, namely, the killing of unborn children or the prevention of their conception.

The absence of abortion from the report is explicable in the light of the “interpretative key” identified in this analysis. Abortion is not considered an important issue by mainstream “progressive” opinion. It is not therefore one of the signs of “human history” that needs to be faithfully attended to by progressive clerics. Other matters, such as those relating to the economy, unemployment etc, are among the signs of “human history” which they are allowed to take notice of and so the authors of the document feel free to discuss them at some length.

Euthanasia and ‘assisted suicide’

The omission of any reference to euthanasia and “assisted suicide” in this document is as striking as the omission of abortion. Euthanasia is the deliberate killing of individuals whose lives are no longer deemed worth living. “Assisted suicide” refers to assistance given to a severely disabled person who has expressed a wish to end their life but is not capable of taking their own life. Both practices are now legal in a number of countries and there is much pressure for their legalisation in nations across the world, particularly in developed nations.

Euthanasia and “assisted suicide” are both contrary to the natural moral law and the teaching of the Catholic Church. Euthanasia violates the natural law because it is the taking of an innocent life; it thus constitutes murder. St Thomas Aquinas explains that suicide is contrary to the natural moral law for three reasons:

- (1) Man has a natural inclination to love and preserve his own life. Suicide is an act contrary to this instinct.

- (2) Man is part of a community and, in one sense, belongs to that community. Suicide deprives the community of that which belongs to it and is thus unjust.

- (3) Man’s life is a gift from God and is subject to his power. When a man commits suicide he “usurps to himself judgment of a matter not entrusted to him.”³²

The legalisation of euthanasia and “assisted suicide” puts the vulnerable at risk of being killed involuntarily, or of being put under pressure, of varying kinds, to take their own life. Both practices indicate a view that certain lives are not worth living.

The gravity of this threat is such that the failure of the report to address this issue is yet another grave betrayal of the weakest among us. The failure to even mention abortion and euthanasia raises serious questions about the competence of the authors of the report. They seem almost completely disengaged from the reality of the situation in which families are forced to live today.

“Gender theory”

We noted above that the section of the final report dealing with homosexuality makes no mention of the serious threat posed by so-called “same-sex marriage.” There is likewise no reference to so-called “gender theory” which denies the reality of the distinction between male and female, masculinity and femininity.

This theory poses a fundamental threat to human society, and particularly to children. In his Christmas Address to the Roman Curia in 2012 Pope Benedict XVI warned that:

“According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society. The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious. People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide

³² ST II-II q. 64 a. 5.

that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves. According to the biblical creation account, being created by God as male and female pertains to the essence of the human creature. This duality is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God. This very duality as something previously given is what is now disputed. The words of the creation account: ‘male and female he created them’ (Gen 1:27) no longer apply. No, what applies now is this: it was not God who created them male and female – hitherto society did this, now we decide for ourselves. Man and woman as created realities, as the nature of the human being, no longer exist. Man calls his nature into question. From now on he is merely spirit and will. The manipulation of nature, which we deplore today where our environment is concerned, now becomes man’s fundamental choice where he himself is concerned. From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be. Man and woman in their created state as complementary versions of what it means to be human are disputed. But if there is no pre-ordained duality of man and woman in creation, then neither is the family any longer a reality established by creation. Likewise, the child has lost the place he had occupied hitherto and the dignity pertaining to him... the child has become an object to which people have a right and which they have a right to obtain. When the freedom to be creative becomes the freedom to create oneself, then necessarily the Maker himself is denied and ultimately man too is stripped of his dignity as a creature of God, as the image of God at the core of his being. The defence of the family is about man himself. And it becomes clear that when God is denied, human dignity also disappears. Whoever defends God is defending man.”³³

Unfortunately the authors of this report did not see fit to include a similar warning; much less did they suggest ways of responding to this serious threat to the family.

Parents as Primary Educators

In paragraph 60 a brief mention is made of parental rights. The report states: “Parents, then, are able to freely choose the type of education for their children,

according to their convictions.” This statement is inadequate for two reasons. Firstly, it does not fully state that parents are themselves the primary educators of their children who possess the right and the duty to educate their children, both in accordance with their temporal needs and according to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The second grave omission is that there is no mention of the severity of the threat currently faced by parents. 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 knowledge or 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 Catholic schools from teaching that their religious beliefs are objectively true.

The failure of the final document to address these issues is a grave betrayal of families.

Threats to Freedom

The threats to freedom outlined above are not the only threats faced by families. Cases are multiplying all over the world of individuals who have seen their livelihoods destroyed or threatened by a vigorous and intolerant homosexual lobby which demands complete approval and compliance. Cases include attempts to force B&B owners to accept homosexual couples sharing beds on their premises and to force bakers to bake cakes celebrating “same-sex marriages”. We have also seen employees punished for expressing their views on “same-sex marriage” and homosexuality and religious ministers and

³³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Christmas Address to the Roman Curia*, 21 December 2012.

street preachers arrested for sharing their traditional Christian views. Most seriously of all we see children being indoctrinated into the “homosexual rights” agenda in their schools. All of this has developed against a longer term background of threats to the right of conscientious objection to involvement in grave moral offences such as abortion.

Concern is growing across the Catholic world. Parents fear that their children will grow up in a world where they will have to endure great suffering if they strive to live according to the natural moral law and the teaching of the Church. Yet the authors of this report omit any discussion of these realities.

9. FINAL REFLECTIONS

The final report of the Extraordinary Synod paves the way for the dissenting faction within the Church to pursue its radical agenda at the Ordinary Synod in October 2015.

The document is founded on a false understanding of the relationship between God, the Church and human history. It is representative of a school of thought which has for two centuries called for the Church to conform herself to the modern world. The Church has repudiated this school since its emergence in the early nineteenth century and still repudiates it today, even if for a time many of its adherents remain formally within her ranks.

Far from conforming herself to principles contrary to natural reason and the deposit of faith entrusted to her, the Church is called to transform human society by restoring man’s relationship with God; “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was leavened.” (Lk 13:31).

The authors of this report have abandoned this fundamental mission of the Church and try instead to lead her into conformity with the world. They do this both through distortions of her doctrine, as in the treatment of irregular unions, and through omission of the real problems facing human society, such as abortion. We repeat: the failure to spend even one sentence addressing the mass slaughter of unborn children is shameful.

The efforts of faithful synod fathers did ensure certain positive amendments to the interim report but these

have not been sufficient to change the underlying approach. Consequently, *Voice of the Family* is bound to repeat the judgment we expressed on the interim report:

“We urge Catholics not to be complacent or give in to a false sense of obedience, in the face of attacks on the fundamental principles of the natural law. Catholics are morally obliged to oppose the course being taken within the Synod.”

VOICE OF THE FAMILY IS AN INITIATIVE OF CATHOLIC LAITY FROM TWENTY-THREE MAJOR PRO-LIFE AND PRO-FAMILY ORGANISATIONS FORMED IN SUPPORT OF THE SYNOD ON THE FAMILY 2014~2015.

THE FOLLOWING TRUTHS ARE AT THE HEART OF VOICE OF THE FAMILY'S WORK:

MARRIAGE, THE EXCLUSIVE, LIFE-LONG UNION OF ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN, IS THE FOUNDATION OF A STABLE AND FLOURISHING SOCIETY AND IS THE GREATEST PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN, BORN AND UNBORN.

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.

PARENTS ARE THE PRIMARY EDUCATORS OF THEIR CHILDREN AND THE PROTECTION OF THIS RIGHT IS ESSENTIAL FOR BUILDING A CULTURE OF LIFE.



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