# ANALYSIS OF THE *FINAL REPORT* OF THE ORDINARY SYNOD ON THE FAMILY

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# INTRODUCTION

The 14th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome from 4-25 October 2015 to discuss the theme "The vocation and the mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world". The *Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father* was voted on and approved by the synod fathers on 24 October 2015 and was published in

Italian later the same day. Translations in six other languages were made public during December 2015; the English text forms the basis of this analysis.[1]

The *Final Report* is closely based on the *Instrumentum Laboris* prepared by the Synod Secretariat to guide discussion at the Ordinary Synod. The synod fathers discussed the *Instrumentum Laboris* in small language groups and proposed amendments to the text. These amendments were submitted to a commission of ten cardinals and bishops, appointed by Pope Francis. This commission then drafted the *Final Report*. This report was submitted to the Holy Father who is expected to release an Apostolic Exhortation soon.

The content of the *Final Report* reflects the various philosophical and theological positions held by the contributors, that is, both the ten prelates who prepared the final draft and those who contributed to earlier versions such as the *Instrumentum Laboris*. It contains passages that reflect Catholic teaching alongside passages that are erroneous or ambiguous.

Voice of the Family has previously documented and analysed the concerted efforts by senior prelates to manipulate the synodal process to undermine Catholic teaching on human sexuality. Readers are referred to our previous publications: *The Extraordinary Synod: A Narrative Account, Analysis of the Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family* and *Analysis of the Instrumentum Laboris of the Ordinary Synod*. These publications can be downloaded from our website (www.voiceofthefamily.com), which also contains many other articles relating to the two synods.

In this analysis we will focus on the manner in which the *Final Report* continues to promote the heterodox agenda noted in our earlier publications. Whilst there are passages in the report which uphold Catholic doctrine this does not excuse error or ambiguity in other parts of the document. Catholic bishops have the responsibility to teach the Catholic faith and to uphold the natural moral law in a clear and authentic manner. If they draft and approve a document which includes passages that undermine or contradict the Catholic faith they are responsible for a grave breach of their duty to God and to the flock committed to their care. It is this violation of their duty, and the consequent threat to the integrity of the Catholic faith and to the authentic good of men, women and children worldwide, that we intend to discuss in this analysis. Lay Catholics cannot remain silent while the fundamental principles of the natural and supernatural order are undermined by those whose vocation it is to uphold and proclaim them.

In the first part of this analysis we will consider the underlying approach adopted in the report. In the second part we will expose the manner in which the report undermines or contradicts Catholic teaching on questions relating to the protection of human life, marriage and the family.

[1] Direct access to a document intended for the universal Church was thereby restricted, for nearly two months, to the Italian-speaking world. The practice of making Italian the official language of the proceedings at both synods was a grave injustice to those bishops without adequate knowledge of Italian. They were expected to vote on a final document despite not being able to read the text. Its contents were communicated to them by simultaneous translation – a method notorious for its unreliability. Italian may be the language of the Vatican bureaucracy but it is certainly not the language of the universal Church.

# PART I: THE APPROACH ADOPTED IN THE *FINAL REPORT*

## Chapter I: The Interpretative Key

In our previous analyses we identified the following statement, found in both the *Relatio Synodi* and the *Instrumentum Laboris,* as the "interpretative key" to understanding the approach adopted at the two synods. Both documents proclaimed that the principle "describing the synodal experience and indicating the task at hand" was "to read both the signs of God and human history, in a twofold yet unique faithfulness which this reading involves." [2] This "interpretative key" proclaimed that the task of the synod was to be faithful to two different sources of authority, (1) "the signs of God" and (2) the signs of "human history". If man must be faithful both to God and to "human history" it follows that whenever there is a clash between their mutual demands a compromise must be found. When this approach is adopted, the natural moral law is no longer regarded as immutable but rather as subject to change over the course of time. In both of our previous analyses we have argued that this approach could be clearly seen in the desire of the authors of those documents to bring Catholic teaching on life, marriage and the family into line with modern norms.

The *Final Report* of the Ordinary Synod repeats the assertion in a modified form. In paragraph 3 we read:

> *"In the span of two years, the Extraordinary General Assembly (2014) and the Ordinary General Assembly (2015) have undertaken the task of reading the signs of God and human history, in faithfulness to the Gospel."*[3] (*Final Report*, para. 3, sent. 3)

At first glance this formulation might seem preferable to that found in the earlier documents because of the assertion that "the task of reading the signs of God and human history" must be carried out "in faithfulness to the Gospel." However the authors of the report are drawing a distinction between the "signs of God" and the "Gospel" and it is unclear what precisely is signified by either term. It is troubling however that the report seems to treats the "Gospel" as something different from the Catholic religion. It states:

> *"The Church is called to provide guidance to families in their practice of religion so as to give it a Gospel orientation."* (*FR*, para. 6, sent. 8)

In other words it would seem that the authors consider that the practice of the Catholic religion does not necessarily imply possession of *"a Gospel orientation",* which in turn suggests that living according to the Catholic religion and living according to the gospel are not synonymous. This is a troubling distinction because while it is certainly possible for a person to profess the Catholic faith without a good interior disposition, it should never be suggested that the gospel of Jesus Christ is something distinct from the Catholic faith.

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[2] *Relatio Synodi of the Extraordinary Synod*, (October 2014), para. 3, *Instrumentum Laboris of the Ordinary Synod*, (June 2015), para. 3. See these documents for a longer account of the position explained briefly here.

[3] All quotations from the *Final Report* are in italics.

The closest statement that we get to a definition of what the authors mean by the *"Gospel"* is found in paragraph 57. The *"Gospel message",* they tell us, is about:

> *"the dignity of the person, his/her freedom and respect for his/her rights."* (*FR*, para. 57, sent. 5)

In paragraph 37 we read of the authors' desire that people experience the "*Gospel of the Family"* as:

> *"a response to the deepest longings of the human person, a response to his/her dignity and a response to complete personal fulfilment in reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness."* (*FR*, para. 37, sent. 16)

Paragraph 93 lists the following ways of witnessing to the gospel:

> *"solidarity with the poor; openness to a diversity of people; the protection of creation; moral and material solidarity with other families, especially the most needy; a commitment to the promotion of the common good, also through the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives; and putting into practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy"* (*FR*, para. 93, sent. 5)

The report therefore seems to understand the gospel primarily in terms of social justice and the service of man. Furthermore, in many contexts, phrases such as *"openness to a diversity of people"* would be understood as referring to the acceptance of homosexuality. The approach adopted by the report savours of naturalism, one of the key errors of our time, which either denies the existence of the supernatural order or denies divine intervention in nature as it now stands. The *Final Report* does, of course, make reference to the supernatural elements of the Catholic faith but they are secondary to its concern to tackle the purely temporal problems facing mankind.[4] It is particularly striking that a document purportedly addressing *"The vocation and mission of the family in the church and in the contemporary world"* does not make a single reference to the most important vocation and mission of the family: that the spouses assist each other and their children to attain union with God in this life and the next.

God must be the final end of every human being: union with God is attained in this life through sanctifying grace and brought to perfection in the next by man's union with God in the beatific vision of heaven. All who die without sanctifying grace will remain separated from God for all eternity in hell. The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children, intrinsic to which is raising children in the knowledge and love of God for the eternal salvation of their souls. Yet the synod report makes no mention of the final end to which family life is ordered: we read nothing of the beatific vision of heaven or the reality of eternal punishment. The synod's focus is relentlessly temporal.

[4] Naturalism is closely connected to immanentism, which is a key element of the heresy of modernism. This is discussed further in Chapter IV.

There are occasional references to the supernatural order but the Church's teaching is never expressed clearly. For example, there are a small number of references to "sin" but always as an abstract concept, except for a brief reference to *"the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:1-30) and the adulteress (cf. Jn 8:1-11)"* (para. 41, sent. 7). Of the current evils threatening the family that are referred to in the document, there is not one that is ever actually identified as a sin. Even abortion, one of the four sins that cry out to heaven for punishment, is referred to simply as a *"tragedy"* (para. 64, sent. 7). Great emphasis is placed on God's mercy (see paragraphs 34, 35, 36, 37, 41, 51, 55, 79, 85, 93) but God's justice is only mentioned once, in paragraph 55, and then in the context of its being surpassed by mercy. That sin offends God or that God punishes sin is nowhere recalled, indeed there is scarcely an allusion to this reality, contemplation of which ought to lead us to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

This naturalistic approach, which fails to speak of man's final end, leads to anthropocentrism. When God is not clearly identified as man's final end, the good of man, conceived in purely natural terms, takes His place. The anthropocentricism of the document is brought clearly into focus in paragraph 77 which, quoting Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium,* states:

> *"The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this 'art of accompaniment' which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5)"* (*FR*, para. 77, sent. 4)

In the passage of scripture cited Moses is commanded to remove his sandals in the presence of God. The ground is sacred not because of the presence of man but because of the presence of God. By applying this passage to man Pope Francis and the synod report are effectively asking us to approach man as if he were God.

The necessity of placing God, not man, at the centre of any attempt to reform human society was clearly taught by Pope Pius XI:

> "these manifold evils in the world [are] due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics: and we said further, that as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Saviour, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations. Men must look for the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ..."[5]

Unfortunately the authors of the *Final Report* have other conversions in mind than a return to the "rule of our Saviour". Paragraph 16 effectively calls for a *"real conversion"* to the modern ideology of ecology. It states that, in response to the encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, the Church *"collaborates"* in:

> *"a new ecological culture which includes a new mentality, new policies, new educational programmes, a new manner of living and a new spirituality."*(*FR*, para. 16, sent. 2)

[5] Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas,* (1925), No. 1.

The use of the word "collaborates" is an indication of the extent of the problem. Through its consistent endorsement of the environmental movement the Vatican is now effectively collaborating with the population control lobby who are working for the reduction of the global population, especially in third world countries, and for that reason are attempting to impose universal access to abortion and contraception.[6] We will discuss this collaboration in more detail in chapter XIII below. Here we will note the desire to conform to modern ideological preoccupations, which is manifested in this call for novelty in many different areas of the Church's life and which extends even to calling for a *"new spirituality",* an issue to which we will return below.

## Chapter II: Further evidence of the *Final Report's* approach to history

Part II, which is the report's discussion of the Church's teaching on the family, begins by stressing that:

> *"Discerning the vocation of the family in the variety of situations treated in the first part of this document requires a sure orientation in formation and guidance. The necessary direction to follow comes from the Word of God in human history, culminating in Jesus Christ who is the "the Way, the Truth and the Life" for every man and woman who make up a family.""* (*FR*, para. 35, sent. 1-2)

The *"Word of God"* is here presented as *"in human history"* and *"culminating in Jesus Christ"*. While this can certainly be given an orthodox interpretation, such as that the fullness of revelation came with Jesus Christ, it is also open to a heterodox interpretation, which would make the Word of God immanent in human history. This would not be reconcilable with the teaching of the Catholic Church that the Word of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity is eternal and transcendent. This truth is resplendent in the first words of St John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made." (Jn 1:1-3) God is not immanent *"in human history",* yet this error has been very influential in recent decades and has been expressed by figures who wield great influence in the Church at the present time, such as Walter Cardinal Kasper. [7] The ambiguity of the above paragraph is therefore of concern to us.

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[6] *"Climate agreement welcomed by pope but pro-lifers concerned about language",* 22 December 2015, *Voice of the Family,* [Accessed 3 February 2016], http://voiceofthefamily.com/climate-agreement-welcomed-by-pope-but-pro-lifers-concerned-about-language-that-promotes-abortion/. This post contains a list of twelve other articles that expose recent collaboration between the Vatican and the population control movement. We strongly recommend that readers familiarise themselves with this material.

[7] Walter Kasper has previously written that: "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 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

It is worth noting here that this approach to God and history was condemned by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the 1984 instruction on liberation theology. The CDF taught that when such theories are accepted:

> [3.]... History thus becomes a central notion. It will be affirmed that God Himself makes history. It will be added that there is only one history, one in which the distinction between the history of salvation and profane history is no longer necessary. To maintain the distinction would be to fall into "dualism". Affirmations such as this reflect historicist immanentism.
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> [...]
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> 4. Along these lines, some go so far as to identify God Himself with history and to define faith as "fidelity to history", which means adhering to a political policy which is suited to the growth of humanity, conceived as a purely temporal messianism.
>
> 5. As a consequence, faith, hope, and charity are given a new content: they become "fidelity to history", "confidence in the future", and "option for the poor." This is tantamount to saying they have been emptied of their theological reality.[8]

The *Final Report* of the synod reflects this approach both in its tendency towards immanentism, which we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, and in its "purely temporal messianism." We noted above that there is not a single reference to man's supernatural end. The passing references to "salvation" (mentioned twice in the text and once in a subtitle) and "redemption" (mentioned twice) are never specifically connected to sin or man's final destiny.

Attentive readers, reviewing the above extract from paragraph 35, might be put in mind of the theories of Teilhard de Chardin, who wrote of a universe engaged in a process of evolution that would ultimately converge at the "Omega point", which he identified with Christ. De Chardin's clearly heretical writings were condemned by the Holy Office under Pope John XXIII and many of the scientific theories on which he based his theology have since been discredited. His influence has however been significant among those who wish to see the adaptation of the Church to the modern world. One of the contemporary trends which he himself supported, as a result of his evolutionary philosophy, was eugenics. The eugenics movement not only brought forth the horrors witnessed under the Nazi regime but also contributed greatly to the emergence of the birth control movement, which advocated contraception and, later, abortion.

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the guarantor of the status quo and the enemy of the new." "Gott in der Geschicte", *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/.

[8] *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation",* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 6 August 1984, Section IX, Nos. 3-5.

In his influential work *The Phenomenon of Man* he stated:

> "And now, in the tumult of ideas that accompany the awakening of the mind, are we not undergoing physical degeneration? It has been said that we might well blush comparing our own mankind, so full of misshapen subjects, with those animal societies in which, in a hundred thousand individuals, not one will be found lacking in a single antenna... So far we have certainly allowed our race to develop at random, and we have given too little thought to the question of what medical and moral factors must replace the crude forces of natural selection should we suppress them. In the course of the coming centuries it is indispensable that a nobly human form of eugenics, on a standard worthy of our personalities, should be discovered and developed."[9]

Despite the fact that de Chardin's writings had previously been condemned, and despite his support for eugenics, Pope Francis cited his "contribution" in the encyclical letter *Laudato Si* in support of the claim that: "The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things."[10]

De Chardin's view of creation evolving towards Christ may well be reflected in paragraph 37 of the report, which begins:

> *"Since the order of creation is determined by its orientation to Christ, we must make distinctions in the grace of the covenant, without separating the different degrees by which God communicates to humanity. Because of the divine pedagogy, according to which the plan of creation is fulfilled through successive stages in the order of redemption, we need to understand the novelty of the Sacrament of Matrimony in continuity with natural marriage as it was in the beginning, based on the order of creation. From this perspective, we understand the salvific action of God, even in the Christian life. Because everything was done through Christ and for him (cf. Col 1:16), Christians 'gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows. At the same time, however, they need to look to the profound changes which are taking place among nations' (AG, 11)." (FR*, para. 37 sent. 1-4)

This passage was originally included in the *Relatio Post Disceptationem* of the Extraordinary Synod, the controversial text which first alerted many Catholics to the radical agenda being pursued at the synod. It has been included in all the synodal texts since that date (*Relatio Synodi, Lineamenta, Instrumentum Laboris, Relazione Finale*).[11] In these later texts pressure from advocates of orthodoxy has led to alterations in the sections that follow it and has blunted its impact, but it is worth quoting what we wrote in our analysis of the *Relatio Synodi*:

[9] Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man,* (English edition, London, 1958), p282.
[10] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si,* (2015), No. 83.
[11] The use of Italian and Latin names for documents by the Synod Secretariat has been inconsistent.

> "... it seems reasonably clear that the original interim report [*Relatio Post Disceptationem*] was using the 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 novelty and continuity', 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.'"[12]

The idea that the Church might return to the law of Moses on the question of divorce was certainly circulating amongst the heterodox clergy who sought to direct or influence the synodal process. Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, the president of the Polish bishops' conference and a defender of Catholic teaching, revealed that this error was proposed to the synod by at least one prelate, Luiz Cardinal Lacunza Maestrojuan, Bishop of David, Panama who said:

> "Moses drew near to the people and gave way. Likewise today, the 'hardness of hearts' opposes God's plan. Could Peter not be merciful like Moses?"[13]

It is possible that this is the agenda at work in paragraph 40 which places Moses's permission for divorce in the context of purported repeated changes in the nature of marriage and in the context of indissolubility not being a burden. This passage is discussed further in Chapter VIII on marriage.

## Chapter III: The natural law

The abolition of the concept of the natural law lies at the heart of the agenda of those manipulating the synodal process and it is inextricably connected to the desire to conform the teachings of the Church to the false principles of modernity. The original *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Extraordinary Synod stated that:

> "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."[14]

Furthermore it is stated that:

[12] Matthew McCusker, *Analysis of the Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family,* (Voice of the Family, December 2014).
[13] "Melkite Patriarch corrects Panamanian Cardinal", 8 October 2015, *Rorate Caeli,* [Accessed 8 February 2016], http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2015/10/melkite-patriarch-corrects-panamanian.html Cardinal Maestrojuan, who is bishop of a minor see, was made a Cardinal by Pope Francis in February 2014.
[14] *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Extraordinary Synod, 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".[15]

and

> "...respondents propose bringing the issue to public discussion and developing the idea of biblical inspiration and the 'order of creation,' which could permit a re-reading of the concept of the natural law in a more meaningful manner in today's world."[16]

All of the above statements reveal an extraordinary confusion about the difference between the natural and supernatural orders. There seems to be a complete failure to acknowledge or, perhaps, a deliberate attempt to obscure, the reality that man can obtain certain knowledge of truths of the natural moral law by the use of his natural reason. Indeed all men have the first principles of the natural law "written on their hearts" (Rm 2:15).[17] We must also note that to speak of an "order of creation" instead of the natural law would lead to a conflation of the natural and supernatural orders, because both of these are created.

The above quotes from the initial *Instrumentum Laboris* are important because they provide the context for the omission of any reference to the natural law in all the other documents produced during the synodal process, including the *Final Report* currently under discussion. This refusal to acknowledge the natural law would seem to be a central element of the strategy adopted by those controlling the synodal process.[18] For as long as an immutable natural moral law is accepted it will be impossible to complete the project of adapting Catholic teaching to the moral norms accepted by the modern west.

Marriage is a natural institution, which is raised to the level of a sacrament when entered into by two baptised persons. Discussion of the natural moral law is therefore essential to any attempt to explain and defend the true nature of marriage. Indeed, it is the rejection of the natural moral law in modern society that underlies the rejection of the authentic understanding of marriage.[19]

## Chapter IV: Modernism and conformity to modernity

This desire to bring the Church into conformity with the modern world is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, it is one of central principles of the heresy of modernism in its various forms. Alfred Loisy, one of the first modernist theologians, defined modernism in such terms.

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[15] Ibid.
[16] *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Extraordinary Synod, No. 30.
[17] ST II:I q. 91 a.2.
[18] The opinions held by Cardinal Baldisseri, Secretary General of Synod Secretariat, on the subject of the natural law are discussed in Edward Pentin, *The Rigging of a Vatican Synod? An Investigation into Alleged Manipulation at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family,* (Ignatius Press ebook, 2015), p44
[19] A short explanation of the natural moral law can be found in our earlier *Analysis of the Relatio Synodi of the Extraordinary Synod,* http://voiceofthefamily.com/anlysis-of-the-final-report-of-the-extraordinary-synod-on-the-family/. An accessible discussion of the natural law in the context of marriage can be found in Msgr. Ignacio Barreiro ,"The Universality of the Moral Law", *Human Life International,* 10 February 2016, http://www.hli.org/2016/02/the-universality-of-the-moral-law/.

He said: "The avowed modernists form a fairly definite group of thinking men united in the common desire to adapt Catholicism to the intellectual, moral and social needs of today."[20] He continued: "in reality all Catholic theology, even in its fundamental principles, the general philosophy of religion, divine law, and the laws that govern our knowledge of God, come up for judgment before this new court of assize"[21]. *Il programma dei modernisti, risposta all'enciclica di Pio X Pascendi dominici gregis* (The programme of the modernists: a response to the encyclical of Pius X, Pascendi dominici gregis), co-authored by a number of modernist thinkers, was equally honest: "our religious attitude is ruled by the single wish to be one with Christians and Catholics who live in harmony with the spirit of the age".[22]

The encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis* of Pope St Pius X synthesised the various elements of the heresy of modernism, exposing the underlying philosophical and theological errors and exploring the relationship between the various forms, manifestations and degrees of modernism. The teaching of this encyclical retains all its importance today for Catholics who oppose those prelates who, occupying offices within the structures of the Church, seek to conform the Church to the ideological principles underlying contemporary society and culture, which are incompatible with divine revelation and the natural law.

**Key tenets of the heresy of modernism**

The following summary of the key doctrines of modernism, as identified in the encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis*, is provided to assist readers unfamiliar with its tenets. It is of particular relevance to the following chapters.

**(1) Agnosticism**

Modernism is founded on agnosticism: it denies the ability of the human intellect to assent with certainty to the truth of any reality beyond the sensory order; "human reason is confined entirely within the field of *phenomena*, that is to say, to things that are perceptible to the senses, and in the manner in which they are perceptible; it has no right and no power to transgress these limits."[23] In this system human reason is "incapable of lifting itself up to God, and of recognising his existence, even by means of visible things."[24] It is therefore impossible for man to give absolute assent to any doctrine concerning God or the supernatural order.

[20] Alfred Loisy, *Simples réflexions sur le décret du Saint-office Lamentabili sane exitu et sur l'encyclique Pascendi dominici gregis,* (1908) English translation: Rev A. Vermeersch, "Modernism", *Catholic Encyclopedia,* (New York, 1911).
[21] Ibid.
[22] *Il programma dei modernisti, risposta all'enciclica di Pio X Pascendi dominici gregis,* (Rome, 1908). English translation: Vermeersch, "Modernism".
[23] Pope St Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, (1908), No. 6.
[24] *Pascendi*, No. 6.

This position is directly contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church that it is possible for the human intellect to assent with certainty to truths of the natural and supernatural order.[25] Man can, by the theological virtue of faith, assent with certainty to those truths revealed by God and taught authoritatively by the Catholic Church.[26] As well as solemnly defining these truths the First Vatican Council taught: "If anyone says that it is impossible for external signs to render divine revelation credible and that, therefore, men ought to be impelled towards faith only by each one's internal experience or private inspiration: let him be anathema."[27] As we will see, this error is exactly where the agnosticism of modernism leads.

Modernism denies the transcendent nature of the Catholic religion. In its place it proposes an immanent system in which religious experience must be explained solely with reference to the life of man, without reference to a supernatural order beyond it. This is the approach termed "vital immanence" by Pope St Pius X.[28]

### (2) Faith as sentiment

Pope St Pius X explained that the modernist, with his knowledge limited to purely sensible phenomena, is soon confronted by the boundary of what can be deemed "knowable". "In the presence of this unknowable" man is aware of "the need of the divine" which "excites in a soul with a propensity towards religion a certain special sentiment." This sentiment possesses, "implied within itself both as its own object and as its intrinsic cause, the reality of the divine" and "in a way unite[s] man to God." "It is" the Holy Father concluded "this sentiment to which modernists give the name of faith, and this it is which they consider the beginning of religion."[29]

### (3) Revelation and religion

The Catholic assents, by faith, to truths revealed by God to His Church but the modernist, as we have seen, cannot accept that truths beyond the sensory order are knowable. Of what then does a modernist consider that revelation consists? For the modernist the primary revelation is in fact the same sentiment that they identify as faith: "modernism finds in this *sentiment* not faith only, but with and in faith, as they understand it, *revelation*, they say, abides."[30] However this primary revelation belongs to the realm of feeling and emotion, rather than to reason. This feeling must therefore be analysed by the intellect, "by means of which man first transforms into mental pictures the vital phenomena which arise in him, and

[25] "If anyone says that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason by means of the things that are made, let him be anathema". First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, (1870), Canons on Revelation, No. 1.
[26] "By that faith, with the inspiration and help of God's grace, we believe that what he has revealed is true – not because its intrinsic truth is seen with the natural light of reason – but because of the authority of God who reveals it, of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived." First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*.
[27] First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Canons on Faith, No. 3.
[28] *Pascendi*, No. 7.
[29] *Pascendi*, No. 7.
[30] *Pascendi*, No. 8.

then expresses them in words."[31] These formulations are religious doctrine. All religious doctrines are therefore symbols of the primary revelation; it follows from this that all religions ultimately express the same truth and that none of these symbolic formulas are absolutely true.

### (4) Experience and the evolution of dogma

Religious doctrines, in the modernist system, are reflections on a sentiment that wells up from within the heart of man and not primarily truths taught by an external body, such as the Church. They are the result of the individual reflection of each man and woman, shaped by their unique experience. As each individual, and human society, is subject to change over the course of time consequently, "the formulae too, which we call dogmas, must be subject to these vicissitudes, and are, therefore, liable to change." Thus "dogma is not only able, but ought to evolve and be changed." [32]

The modernist therefore asserts the primacy of sentimental experience in religious matters. Experience, not assent to teaching proposed from without, is the source of religious doctrine.

### (5) The Church

If faith and revelation are both internal to man then the Catholic understanding of the Church must be false; she cannot provide man with divinely revealed truth nor bind his intellect by her teaching. What then is the role of the Church in the modernist system?

St Pius X explained that, for the modernist, the Church results from "the need of the individual believer, especially if he has had some original and special experience, to communicate his faith to others, and the need of the mass, when the faith has become common to many, to form itself into a society and to guard, increase, and propagate the common good."[33] The Church, as conceived by modernism, is therefore a union of individuals who wish to communicate their shared religious experiences and work together for the common good.

Now that we have summarised the key concepts of modernism we will proceed to examine the influence of such doctrines on the synod report. It is important to make clear that we are not suggesting that the authors of the report adhere to all the above tenets of modernism. However, we do suggest that the *Final Report* reveals the influence of such ideas and often reflects an approach that is closer to the heresy of modernism than to the Catholic faith.

## A modernist approach to the "pastoral challenge"?

The first part of the *Final Report* of the Ordinary Synod is intended to be an examination of the contemporary realities facing the family or, as the subtitle puts it, "The Church Listening

[31] *Pascendi*, No. 11.
[32] *Pascendi*, No. 12.
[33] *Pascendi*, No. 23.

to the Family." This section concludes, in paragraph 34, by suggesting an appropriate response to the "pastoral challenge" faced by the Church. The paragraph states:

> *"A reflection able to pose the important questions on being human is productive in articulating the most profound aspirations of humanity. The great values of marriage and the Christian family are a response to the search inherent in human existence, even at a time characterized by individualism and hedonism. People ought to be received with understanding and sensitivity to their real-life situations and to learn how to continue their search for meaning in life. Faith inspires a desire for God and to feel fully part of the Church, even in those who are experiencing failure or are in very difficult situations."* (*FR*, paragraph 34, sentences 1-3)

**Accompanying or teaching?**

This paragraph is redolent of the modernist approach outlined above. First, let us note that we are presented with man who possesses *"the most profound aspirations"*, and is engaged in *"the search inherent in human existence"*. The Church is presented as responding by helping people *"learn to continue their search for the meaning of life."* There is no indication here that the Church actually knows the *"the meaning of life"* and can share it with man, despite the fact that she possesses infallible knowledge of man's final end and all the means to attain it. Indeed, as we discussed earlier, the authors chose not to mention man's final end even once in its more than twenty-four thousand words. The implication of the passage is that the Church helps man to continue a search which has no ultimate conclusion. Readers will note the similarity of this approach to that described in section (1) and (5) above.

This image of the Church as accompanying man on a search, rather than leading him to a destination, is also found in paragraph 77:

> *"For the Church, staying close to the family as a companion on the journey means to assume an attitude which is wisely nuanced. Sometimes, staying close and listening in silence is needed; at other times, moving ahead and pointing the way; and at still other times, the appropriate action is to follow, support and encourage."* (*FR*, para. 77, sent. 2-3)

The impression given by the report, here and in the passage quoted above, is of a search that each individual carries out for himself without authoritative and binding teaching and direction from the Church. This is a very different approach to that of St Paul who taught:

> "How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent, as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things! But all do not obey the gospel. For Isaias saith: Lord, who hath believed our report? Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom 10:14-17)

Human nature is good and is ordered towards the good. However, original sin has darkened the human intellect and weakened the human will. St Thomas Aquinas expressed man's fallen state thus:

> "...original justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parent, as already stated; so that all the powers of the soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called a wounding of nature... Therefore in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance; in so far as the will is deprived of its order of good, there is the wound of malice; in so far as the irascible is deprived of its order to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness; and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence."[34]

These four wounds, ignorance, malice, weakness and concupiscence, make it practically impossible for man to advance very far down the path of knowledge and virtue without divine assistance. Supernatural knowledge and virtue are absolutely unattainable without divine grace. Yet, by cooperating with this grace, man can truly fulfil Christ's command to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt 5:8) It follows from man's dependence on supernatural assistance that it is very far from sufficient for the Church merely to be *"a companion on the journey"* who limits herself to *"pointing the way"* in the manner described in paragraphs 34 and 77 above. Rather mankind requires a Church which teaches truth clearly, condemns error firmly and governs and directs the faithful authoritatively.

Paragraph 34 is also ambiguous when it presents the "*great values of marriage and the Christian family"* as being a *"response to the search inherent in human existence".* This calls to mind the modernist approach that considers religious doctrines to be the result of man's movement towards the "unknowable" rather than assent to an objective reality. Marriage and the family, much less the Christian family, do not emerge as a response to man's search, rather man humbly accepts them as a fundamental element of God's ordered creation. The report would have been on firmer ground if it had said that marriage and the family are desired by man in accordance with the inclinations that God has inscribed in his human nature.

**Feeling part of the Church vs being part of the Church**

In paragraph 34 we find the statement that "*Faith inspires a desire for God and to feel fully part of the Church"*. This approach to faith has much more in common with modernism than with the teaching of the Catholic Church. Faith is presented in this paragraph as a movement of the heart rather than a movement of the intellect; it is presented as inspiring desire for God and a desire to feel part of the Church. The Catholic Church on the other hand, as stated above, considers faith to be an intellectual assent to revealed truth which leads to actual membership of the Church and not just a state in which one is able to *"feel fully part of the*

[34] ST I:II q.85 a.3.

*Church."* Readers will recognise an approach to the Church similar to that explained in section (5) above and an approach to faith similar to that outlined in section (2).

A false notion of faith is also found in paragraph 74 which, treating of interreligious marriages, states that:

> *"To deal constructively with differences in the order of faith, attention needs to be given to the persons who make up the marriage, not only in the period before the wedding."* (FR, para. 74, sent. 2)

This statement is not compatible with the Catholic doctrine that faith is assent to the revelation made by God to the Catholic Church. There is therefore only one faith. There cannot be *"differences in the order of faith"* in interreligious marriages because this implies multiple true revelations. However the phrasing adopted by the report is perfectly compatible with the modernist position that faith is a sentiment that moves the heart towards the "unknowable". As seen above, the modernist considers all religions to be legitimate revelations, which symbolise the primary revelation. The practice of calling false religions "faiths", which has become very widespread, reflects a modernist understanding of the nature of faith.

**The emphasis on individual experience over assent to revealed truth**

Paragraph 34 emphasises human experience (see section 4 above). We are informed (i) of the importance of a "*reflection able to pose the important questions on being human"* in *"articulating the most profound aspirations of humanity",* (sent. 1) (ii) that *"[p]eople ought to be received with understanding and sensitivity to their real-life situations"*, (sent. 3) (iii) that special attention must be given to *"those who are experiencing failure or are in very difficult situations",* (sent. 4) (iv) that *"pastoral care is to take into account the diversity of real-life situations"* (sent. 6) and (v) that *"everyone needs to be understood"* (sent. 9). These are all admirable sentiments with which no one would disagree (except to point out *"understanding and sensitivity"* should never give the impression that sin, which is an offence against the infinite goodness of God, could ever be condoned). However, aware as we are of the consistent attempts, made during the synodal process, to exploit people's difficulties as a means of undermining the doctrine of the Church, we must ask why a summing up of the *"pastoral challenge"* faced by the Church places so much emphasis on subjective experience and difficult situations and none at all on the role that objective truth must play in determining authentic pastoral care.

This approach is also that adopted in the closing paragraph of Part II, which purports to summarise the teaching of the Church on the family, and which begins:

> "*The Church starts from the real-life situations of today's families, all in need of mercy, beginning with those who suffer most."* (*FR*, para. 55, sent. 1)

This is an erroneous approach. The Church should always start from consideration of God and of the objective order, natural and supernatural, that he has established; only an approach founded on objective reality can actually help families. The *Final Report* has in any case failed to meet its own ideal; it states that the Church must begin "*with those who suffer most"* yet the document in fact ignores many of those who suffer most. Certain groups, such as migrants and the "divorced and remarried" receive a great deal of attention, while other groups, such as unborn children facing abortion or children whose psychological, intellectual and social development is being damaged by corrupting educational programmes, are ignored or scarcely acknowledged. This is exactly the sort of misjudgment that results from beginning with one's own subjective consideration of *"real-life situations",* informed, it seems, by ideological preoccupations and a desire to gain the approval of the world, rather than with consideration of the objective reality.

## Chapter V: Justice and mercy

After the initial section quoted above, paragraph 34 continues immediately with a quote from Pope Francis's bull *Misercordiae Vultus,* which opened the "Year of Mercy". The passage selected by the authors stresses the importance of God's mercy. They then proceed to identify a number of groups that need special attention and conclude:

> *"Everyone needs to be understood, bearing in mind that situations far from the life of the Church are not always desired; oftentimes, they are created, and, at times simply endured. From the vantage point of faith, no one is excluded: all are loved by God and are important in the Church's pastoral activity."* (*FR*, para. 34, sent. 11-12)

This is a problematic conclusion not only because of what it says but also because of what it omits. Certainly the gospel is to be preached to everyone, and everyone is called to repentance and new life in Christ, nonetheless those who refuse to respond to this call are indeed excluded from full participation in the life of the Church and will be excluded from the beatific vision of God for all eternity. The entire paragraph speaks only of God's mercy and the need to pay attention to difficult circumstances. At no point does it speak of God's justice, the reality of sin or the destructive consequences of sin both for the sinner and for the whole of society. Most of all, it fails to give any sense of the horror of sin, which is an offence against the infinite goodness of God. The authors would have done better to bear in mind the teaching of Blessed John Henry Newman:

> "The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say, should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse."[35]

[35] Bl. John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua,* Chapter 5, [Accessed 10th March 2016], http://www.newmanreader.org/works/apologia65/chapter5.html.

It is also important to note that mercy is a virtue only when it conforms to justice. St Thomas Aquinas explains that mercy:

> "signifies grief for another's distress. Now this grief may denote, in one way, a movement of the sensitive appetite, in which case mercy is not a virtue but a passion".[36]

This passion can move a person either to truly merciful acts, or to sin, depending on whether or not it is "ruled in accordance with reason".[37] St Thomas continues:

> "Hence Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5) that 'this movement of the mind' (viz. mercy) 'obeys the reason, when mercy is vouchsafed in such a way that justice is safeguarded, whether we give to the needy or forgive the repentant.'"[38]

Any act that is contrary to justice can never be merciful, because it is conformity to justice that gives an action its merciful character:

> "Since justice is a cardinal virtue, other secondary virtues, such as mercy, liberality and the like are connected with it... Wherefore to succor the needy, which belongs to mercy or pity, and to be liberally beneficent, which pertains to liberality, are by a kind of reduction ascribed to justice as to their principal virtue."[39]

Sentences 11 and 12 of paragraph 34 leave the false impression that there are situations where Catholics live *"far from the life of the Church*" that are unavoidable. In reality only mortal sin separates a Catholic from fully participating in the life of the Church and mortal sin is always a freely willed act. The grace to remain free from sin is always offered to those who seek it, however difficult the situation may be. St Paul taught:

> "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you 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 Council of Trent taught that:

> "no one, how much soever justified, ought to think himself exempt from the observance of the commandments; no one ought to make use of that rash saying, one prohibited by the Fathers under an anathema, that the observance of the commandments of God is impossible for one that is justified. For God commands not impossibilities, but, by commanding, both admonishes thee to do what thou are able, and to pray for what thou art not able, and aids thee that thou mayest be able; whose commandments are not heavy; whose yoke is sweet and whose burden light. For, whoever are the sons of God, love

[36] ST II-II q. 30 a. 3
[37] Ibid
[38] Ibid
[39] ST II-II q.58 a.11

Christ; but they who love him, keep his commandments, as Himself testifies; which, assuredly, with the divine help, they can do."[40]

Once more the *Final Report* neglects the supernatural order and remains preoccupied with temporal considerations.

## Chapter VI: Changing the Church's traditional terminology

The primary purpose of preaching and catechesis in the Catholic Church is the transmission of revealed truth. Throughout the synodal process the Church's traditional language, which clearly and precisely expresses her teaching, was a particular target for "progressive" clerics. For example, certain bishops wanted the Church to stop using language such as "intrinsically disordered" as regards homosexuality, despite such terminology already having been used in authoritative teaching documents. This was one of many suggested changes that were associated with the calls for a "language of inclusion".[41] This desire for new language and terminology found expression in paragraph 56 of the report:

> *"The language to be adopted must be meaningful. Proclamation has to make people experience the Gospel of the Family as a response to the deepest longings of the human person, a response to his/her dignity and a response to complete personal fulfilment in reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness. It is not only a question of norms, but announcing the grace which provides the ability to live the goods of the family. Today more than ever, transmitting the faith requires a language which is able to reach everyone, especially young people, so as to communicate the beauty of love in the family and make people understand the meaning of terms such as self-giving, conjugal love, fidelity, fruitfulness and procreation. This need for a new and more appropriate language initially enters in introducing children and adolescents to the topic of sexuality. Many parents and people who are involved in pastoral work have difficulty finding an appropriate yet respectful language to bring together the biological and complementary natures of sexuality which enrich each other through friendship, love and the self-giving of a man and a woman."* (*FR*, para 56, sent 14-19)

The implication of this extract, which is that the language used by the Church up to this point has not been *"appropriate"*, has not been sufficiently *"meaningful"* or has not been *"able to reach everyone",* is simply unsustainable. It is refuted by the very success of the Church over the centuries, including today, to reach people of every nation and background. If the authors of the report were genuinely interested in learning from *"real-life experiences"* they would notice that the Church today is experiencing growth and revival precisely where traditional expression of doctrine is retained.

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[40] *Decree on Justification*, Council of Trent, Session VI (promulgated 13th January 1547).

[41] For more information see "The Church cannot change her teaching on homosexuality", 13 October 2015, *Voice of the Family,* [Accessed 9 February 2015], http://voiceofthefamily.com/the-church-cannot-change-its-language-about-homosexuality/.

The purpose of language is to convey meaning. It is necessary for words to express a clear and generally accepted meaning if they are to be understood by the listener or reader. This is particularly important for the Church, which has the duty of transmitting intact the deposit of faith "delivered once to the saints." (Jude 1:3) In order to transmit the content of that divine revelation unchanged she must make use of clear and precise terminology, which retains a stable meaning. Precise theological and philosophical language, developed over the centuries and embedded in the teaching of popes, councils, fathers, doctors and saints, cannot easily be altered or abandoned without altering the content of what is being taught. Pope Paul VI expressed this truth well in his encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei,* in which he taught that:

> "... the rule of language which the Church has established through the long labour of centuries, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and which she has confirmed with the authority of the Councils, and which has more than once been the watchword and banner of orthodox faith, is to be religiously preserved, and no one may presume to change it at his own pleasure or under the pretext of new knowledge."[42]

# PART II: LIFE, MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

## Chapter VII: Gender theory

Human beings are divided into two sexes, male and female. Before the 1950s the word "gender" was mostly used in the context of grammar; its use as a synonym for "sex" was rare. However in 1955 John Money, a psychologist, "sexologist" and early proponent of "gender reassignment" surgery, proposed the distinction between biological sex and socio-cultural gender. Recent decades have seen the development of the ideology of "gender theory", which posits that there are many more "genders" than just the two "sexes" of male and female. For example, the widely used social network Facebook now lists 58 "genders" for users, including children, to choose from. Such an approach is also being adopted by governments. Children in Brighton in the United Kingdom were recently sent a questionnaire from the government's Children's Commissioner asking them to choose between 25 different "genders" including "tri-gender", "demi-boy", "gender fluid", "genderqueer" and the "in the middle of boy and girl."[43] The promotion of "gender theory" is also closely associated with the promotion of homosexuality.[44]

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[42] Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei,* 3 September 1965, No. 24.

[43] "Are you 'tri-gender'? Teens given 25 options in survey", *Christian Institute,* 28 January 2016, [Accessed 10 February 2016], http://www.christian.org.uk/news/are-you-tri-gender-teens-given-25-options-in-sex-survey/

[44] For example, the National Union of the Teachers in the United Kingdom recently approved a motion that stated that "Conference believes that schools should be places that allow students and staff to be free from homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, to enjoy a positive educational experience. Conference demands that a future government must tackle the embedded homophobia, biphobia and transphobia that exists in schools and create a positive climate of understanding about sexuality and gender fit for the 21st century. This must include a commitment to make it easier to discuss ideas about sexuality and gender so that students and teachers are more confident to identify as LGBT and work in schools without fear of prejudice." Patrick McAleenan, "It's time gay relationships were part of the school curriculum", *The Telegraph,* 7 April 2015,

Pope Benedict XVI condemned "what is put forward today under the term "gender" as a new philosophy of sexuality" in his 2012 Christmas address the Roman Curia. He said:

> "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 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... 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."[45]

This false distinction between "sex" and "gender" has however been endorsed by the Ordinary Synod in its *Final Report*. Paragraph 58 states:

> *"According to the Christian principle, soul and body, as well as biological sex (sex) and socio-cultural role of sex (gender), can be distinguished but not separated."* (*FR*, para 58, sent. 8)

In this paragraph the synod effectively endorses a profoundly false and damaging ideology. The authors do not explain how a concept unknown before the mid-twentieth century can be *"according to the Christian principle"*. Nor is it clear what conclusion they wish to be drawn from their equation between "soul and body" and "sex" and "gender". The implication may be that "sex" relates to "body" and "gender" relates to "soul". In other words, a person may have a body that is either male or female, but a soul which is neither. If this was the case the synod would be endorsing a dualistic separation of soul and body, which is compatible with erroneous modern philosophies, but incompatible with Catholic philosophy and theology.

Paragraph 8 makes the erroneous claim that:

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[Accessed 11 March 2016], http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/relationships/11519235/Its-time-gay-relationships-were-part-of-the-school-curriculum.html

[45] Pope Benedict XVI, *Christmas Address to the Roman Curia,* 21 December 2012.

> *"According to our faith, the difference between the sexes bears in itself the image and likeness of God"* (*FR*, para. 8, sent.8)

This is false because the image of God in man belongs to the intellectual soul, which men and women share.[46] The image and likeness of God is in men and women in the same manner. The statement above is precisely the opposite of the truth: the difference between the sexes does not bear, in itself, the image and likeness of God.

The authors justify this error by making reference to the following statement from a Wednesday audience of Pope Francis during which he stated that:

> *"man alone is not the image of God nor is woman alone the image of God, but man and woman as a couple are the image of God."* (*FR*, para. 8, sent.9)

The authors seem to interpret this statement of the Holy Father to mean that only man and woman together can be considered the "image and likeness" of God. On the contrary each and every individual man is made in the image and likeness of God and each and every individual woman is made in the image and likeness of God.[47] Adam, before Eve was created, was the "image and likeness" of God.

Paragraph 8 reveals the contradictions at the heart of the document. This passage issues a protest against:

> *"'gender' ideology which denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without gender differences*, *thereby removing the anthropological foundation of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative guidelines which promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female."* (*FR*, para 8, sent 6)

Here we see evidence of two contradictory approaches being adopted by those entrusted with writing the report. Unfortunately none of the authors of the report has publicly repudiated the document, thus implicitly giving their assent to the false understanding of "gender" asserted in paragraph 58. The inclusion of this statement is a clear attempt to bring Catholic teaching into line with modern "gender ideology" and undermines the condemnation in paragraph 8, almost to the point of making it redundant.

## Chapter VIII: Marriage

### The indissolubility of marriage

The Catholic Church teaches that a ratified and consummated sacramental marriage cannot be dissolved by any human authority; such a marriage ends only with the death of one of the spouses.

[46] ST I q.93 a.6.
[47] ST I q.93 a.4.

All the synodal documents have sought to undermine this doctrine.[48] The *Final Report* seeks to open the way to the reception of Holy Communion by "divorced and remarried" Catholics, particularly in paragraphs 84, 85 and 86, as we will discuss in detail later in this analysis. In this section we will discuss other parts of the document that undermine the indissolubility of marriage or reveal an unclear understanding of marriage.

The first paragraph of the document quotes Pope Francis's homily at the Opening Mass of the Synod. It states:

> *"God 'joins the hearts of two people who love one another, he who* [sic] *joins them in unity and indissolubility. This shows that the goal of a conjugal life is not simply to live together for life, but to love another for life! In this way Jesus re-establishes the order which was present in the beginning.'"* (*FR*, para 1. sent. 13-15)

The primary "goal of a conjugal life" is in fact the procreation and education of children.[49] Unfortunately the Holy Father omitted this crucial point, which sacred scripture makes clear was essential to the *"order which was present in the beginning"*. The book of Genesis tells us:

> "And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them. And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen 1:27-28)

There is also a lack of precision in the Holy Father's statement that God *"joins the hearts of two people who love one another, he who* [sic] *joins them in unity and indissolubility".* In fact, God joins in an indissoluble union two people who give true consent to marriage. The marriage would be valid even if the two individuals did not *"love one another",* in the sense that most people will understand this term. For example, an arranged marriage would be valid if the two parties gave true consent, even if they had a strong emotional antipathy towards each other and would not otherwise have chosen to marry. We must also point out that the continuation of an indissoluble union is not dependent on the continuation of the emotion of love or even the continuation of the willing of the other spouse's good.

The same paragraph states: *"The couple and conjugal life are not abstract realities; they remain imperfect and vulnerable."* This leads the authors to *"want to heed their real-life situations and challenges, and accompany and illuminate them with the love of the Gospel."* This seems to ignore the fact that abstraction is the way in which the human intellect comprehends the truth about the nature of things. This applies also to the nature of marriage. Each individual married couple shares in the same form of marriage, which has the same nature and properties for each. There is no way of truly helping people without reference to these truths. The discomfort with *"abstract realities"* puts us in mind of the agnosticism of modernism, which denies the ability of the human intellect to assent to truths obtained by the process of abstraction.

[48] See our early analyses as listed in the Introduction.
[49] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii,* 31 December 1930, No. 17.

Paragraph 40 identifies *"three basic stages in God's plan"* (sent. 2) for marriage. The first is *"the family of origin, when God, the Creator, instituted the primordial marriage between Adam and Eve"* (sent. 3). The second is *"its historical form in the tradition of Israel, this union, wounded by sin, underwent several variations: between monogamy and polygamy, between stability and divorce and between reciprocity and subordination of woman to man"* in which context Moses granted *"the possibility of divorce"* (sent. 6-7). The third state is that in which: *"the reconciliation of the world took place with the coming of Saviour, not only restoring the original divine plan but leading the history of God's people to a new fulfilment."*(sent. 8) The paragraph concludes with the remark:

> *"Above all, the indissolubility of marriage (Mk 10:2-9) is not meant to be a burden but a gift to those who are united in marriage."* (*FR*, para. 40, sent 9)

It is interesting to reflect on why the authors chose to place this sentence in the context of the *"several variations"* of the *"historical form"* of marriage. If indissolubility is *"above all"* to be experienced as *"a gift"* and not as *"a burden"* does this mean that certain consequences of indissolubility can be ignored or overridden when it is experienced as *"a burden"*?

**Natural and sacramental marriage**

The first subject heading in Chapter III of the *Final Report* is:

*"Marriage in the Order of Creation and the Fullness of the Sacrament"*

Let us first note that in this heading the authors have chosen to refer to *"marriage in the order of creation"* rather than natural marriage. This is entirely consistent with the statement from the original *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Extraordinary Synod, which we quoted in the section on natural law above, which proposes:

> *"developing the idea of biblical inspiration and the 'order of creation,' which could permit a re-reading of the concept of the natural law"*

As we warned above, this leads to a conflation of the natural and supernatural orders, both of which are created by God. The clear distinction between natural marriage and sacramental marriage therefore becomes confused.

The authors' confusion is apparent in this utterly incoherent statement:

> *"In addition to true natural marriage, positive elements are present in the forms of marriage in other religious traditions."* (*FR*, para. 47, sent. 7)

There are only two forms of marriage: natural marriage and sacramental marriage. All marriages between two baptised persons are sacramental. All marriages between two unbaptised persons, or one baptised person and one unbaptised person, are natural marriages. Any valid marriages contracted by the *"forms of marriage in other religious traditions"* is either a *"true natural marriage"* or a sacramental marriage, there is no third form. The distinction that the authors make between *"true natural marriage"* and *"the forms of marriage in other religious traditions"* is therefore without meaning. We might further note

that reference only to *"positive elements"* of other religious traditions is unbalanced without reference also to the negative elements.

**Subordination in marriage**

In the section on "gender" above we discussed problematic statements made by the Holy Father in his general audience of 15th April 2015. A further ambiguous statement in the Holy Father's address is quoted by the authors of the *Final Report* in paragraph 45:

> *"The difference between man and woman is not meant to stand in opposition, or to subordinate, but is for the sake of communion and generation..."* (*FR*, para. 49, sent. 6)

The Holy Father's words seem to be contrary to the Church's traditional teaching. Men and women share a fundamental equality as regards their final end: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ." (Gal 3:28) However there is a certain subordination of women to men, which was established at the creation: "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." (1 Cor 11:8-9; cf. Gen 2:21-23)

In his letter to the Ephesians St Paul expanded on this teaching: "Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." (Eph 5:21-24). St Paul repeats this teaching in his letter to the Colossians: "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them." (Col 3:18-19).

We must note a further problematic statement. In paragraph 39 it is stated that:

> *"The woman participates, therefore, in the same reality of the man, represented symbolically by the rib, or by the same flesh, as proclaimed in the song of the man's love: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23)."*

While use of the word "symbolic" could refer to a historical event which also symbolises something else it would seem, at the very least, that the passage is ambiguous. If the authors mean that Eve was not in fact created from Adam's rib they are contradicting the authoritative teaching of Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical letter *Arcanum,* which asserts the reality of Eve's creation from the side of Adam:

> "Our wish is rather to speak about that family union of which marriage is the beginning and the foundation. The true origin of marriage, venerable brothers, is well known to all. Though revilers of the Christian faith refuse to acknowledge the never-interrupted doctrine of the Church on this subject, and have long striven to destroy the testimony of all nations and of all times, they have nevertheless failed not only to quench the powerful light of truth, but even to lessen it. We record what is to all known, and cannot be doubted by any, that God, on the sixth day of creation, having made man from the slime of the earth, and having breathed into his face the breath of life, gave him a companion, whom He miraculously took from the side of Adam when he was locked in sleep. God thus, in His

most far-reaching foresight, decreed that this husband and wife should be the natural beginning of the human race, from whom it might be propagated and preserved by an unfailing fruitfulness throughout all futurity of time."[50]

In 1909 the Pontifical Biblical Commission rejected as an error the notion that the first three books of Genesis were not "accounts of actual events" but were rather "allegories and symbols without any foundation in objective reality." Furthermore it specifically condemned the opinion that "the literal historical sense be called in doubt in the case of facts narrated in the same chapters which touch the foundations of the Christian religion: as are, among others... the formation of the first woman from the first man..."[51]

The authority of these decrees was established by Pope St Pius X in *Praestantia Scripturae* on 18 November 1907:

"We now declare and expressly enjoin that all without exception are bound by an obligation of conscience to submit to the decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, whether already issued or to be issued hereafter, exactly as to the decrees of the Sacred Congregations which are on matters of doctrine and approved by the Pope; nor can anyone who by word or writing attacks the said decrees avoid the note both of disobedience and of rashness or be therefore without grave fault."[52]

It is important that all ambiguity about the creation of Eve from Adam is avoided because it was in this very context that marriage was instituted by God. The passage reads:

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him'... So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; and she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed." (Gen 2:18, 20-25)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, based his teaching on this passage from Genesis when he defended the indissolubility of marriage against the Pharisees. The gospel of St Matthew records that:

"Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female and said "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?" So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has put together let no man put asunder.'" (Mt 19:3-6)

[50] Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum,* 10 February 1880.
[51] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Concerning the Historical Character of the First Three Chapters of Genesis*, 30 June 1909.
[52] Pope St Pius X, *Praestantia Scripturae,* 18 November 1907.

St Paul presupposed the truth of the text in Genesis when he stated: "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man" (1 Cor 11:8) and “God made the whole human race from one” (Acts 17:26). The creation of Eve from Adam is the common doctrine of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, including the Common Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas, who considers it to be of central importance to the Church's understanding of marriage. He taught that "when all things were first formed, it was more suitable for the woman to be made from man" for the following reasons:

> "First, in order thus to give the first man a certain dignity consisting in this, that as God is the principle of the whole universe, so the first man, in likeness to God, was the principle of the whole human race. Wherefore Paul says that "God made the whole human race from one" (Acts 17:26).
>
> “Secondly, that man might love woman all the more, and cleave to her more closely, knowing her to be fashioned from himself. Hence it is written (Genesis 2:23-24): 'She was taken out of man, wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.' This was most necessary as regards the human race, in which the male and female live together for life; which is not the case with other animals.
>
> “Thirdly, because, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. viii, 12), the human male and female are united, not only for generation, as with other animals, but also for the purpose of domestic life, in which each has his or her particular duty, and in which the man is the head of the woman. Wherefore it was suitable for the woman to be made out of man, as out of her principle.
>
> “Fourthly, there is a sacramental reason for this. For by this is signified that the Church takes her origin from Christ. Wherefore the Apostle says (Ephesians 5:32): 'This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church.'”[53]

St Thomas also explains the central importance of the Eve's creation from the Adam's rib as opposed to some other part of his body:

> "It was right for the woman to be made from a rib of man.
>
> “First, to signify the social union of man and woman, for the woman should neither "use authority over man," and so she was not made from his head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man's contempt as his slave, and so she was not made from his feet.
>
> “Secondly, for the sacramental signification; for from the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross the Sacraments flowed--namely, blood and water--on which the Church was established."[54]

[53] ST I q.92 a.2
[54] ST I q.92 a.3

## Chapter IX: Admission of the "divorced and civilly remarried" to Holy Communion

Paragraphs 84, 85, and 86 of the *Final Report* treat of the *"pastoral accompaniment"* of the *"divorced and civilly remarried".* In a variety of ways the authors use these paragraphs to prepare the way for the admission of those living in public adultery to Holy Communion without amendment of life.

**"Integration" and "exclusion"**

Paragraph 84 states:

> *"The baptized who are divorced and civilly remarried need to be more integrated into Christian communities in a variety of possible ways, while avoiding any chance of scandal. The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care, a care which might allow them not only to realize that they belong to the Church as the Body of Christ, but also to know that they can have a joyful and fruitful experience in it."* (*FR*, para 84, sent. 1-3)

It also states:

> *"Their participation can be expressed in different ecclesial services which necessarily requires discerning which of the various forms of exclusion, currently practiced in the liturgical, pastoral, educational and institutional framework, can be surpassed."* (*FR*, para 84, sent. 5)

The above paragraphs use the terms "integration" and "exclusion". These terms, along with "social exclusion" are used a number of times throughout the *Final Report*. They are sociological terms that are very widely used, including by powerful international bodies such as the United Nations. Consequently they have generally accepted meanings. The UN, which has a department dedicated to pursuing "social integration", defines the concept as follows:

> "The goal of social integration is to create 'a more stable, safe and just society for all', in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on the principles of embracing – not coercing or forcing – diversity and using participatory processes that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives."

It continues:

> "Social integration represents the attempt not to make people adjust to society, but rather to ensure that society is accepting of all people." [55]

The concept of "social exclusion" is closely related to "social integration". One major English dictionary gives the following very succinct definition of "social exclusion":

> "the failure of society to provide certain individuals and groups with those rights and benefits normally available to its members, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training, etc"[56]

This concept is often used by the United Nations, and other bodies, to pursue the "homosexual rights" agenda and to argue, for example, that homosexuals have a right to marry, or to adopt children, on the grounds that these opportunities are open to other members of society.

The following statements are examples of such usage:

> "Many of the people we work with are **excluded** from development opportunities specifically because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, contributing to the staggering levels of inequality around the world."[57]

> "I am outraged that we still have to fight prejudice, stigma, discrimination, **exclusion**, criminalization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, not only in their homes, but in their streets, police stations and court rooms."[58]

> "LGBT young people too often face rejection by their families and communities who disapprove of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This can result in high rates of homelessness, **social exclusion**, and poverty."[59]

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[55] These two quotes are taken from the "working definition" of social integration found in the *Final Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration,* produced by the Division for Social Policy and Development United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It can be read downloaded at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2008/Paris-report.pdf.

[56] "Social Exclusion", *Collins English Dictionary,* [10th February 2015], http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/social-exclusion.

[57] Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, "Statement for International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia", 17 May 2013, *United Nations Development Programme,* [Accessed 10th February 2016], http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2013/05/16/helen-clark-statement-for-international-day-against-homophobia-and-transphobia.html.

[58] Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme, quoted in "Countries must repeal laws that discriminate against LGBT individuals – UN officials", 17 May 2013, *UN News Centre*, [Accessed 10th February 2016], http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44931#.Vrt1IvmLTIU.

[59] "Discriminated and made vulnerable: Young LGBT and intersex people need recognition and protection of their rights International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia", 17 May 2015, *Office of the High Commissioner (United Nations Human Rights),* [Accessed 11 February 2015], http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15941&LangID=E.

The authors of the *Final Report* are therefore using language which is often used in a manner contrary to Catholic teaching, rather than making use of the clear and precise theological language that the Church has always used. Nowhere in these paragraphs do we encounter the words, "repentance", "sin", "confession", "absolution" or "amendment of life." It seems that they are putting into practice their earlier call for a "new language" and it is the ideological language of the modern world. In the absence of clarification as to the meaning of terms such as *"integration"* and *"exclusion",* and in the absence of a clear restatement of Catholic teaching, the report opens up the dangerous possibility of the Church's teaching being interpreted through the lens of modern sociology, rather than the according to the traditional doctrine of the Church.

We must emphasise that the usage of the words *"integration"* and *"exclusion"* in paragraph 84 of the synod report is strikingly reminiscent of the way it is used in documents produced by bodies such as the United Nations. We are given the impression that the *"divorced and civilly remarried"* are to be treated as an excluded group who must be integrated into the community as they are, after the manner of the United Nation's definition. This definition make it clear that "integration" is not about making "people adjust to society" but making sure that "society is accepting of all people".

Furthermore the claim that the Church practices *"different forms of exclusion"* in her *"liturgical, educational, pastoral, and institutional"* life implies that the Church has, up until this point, acted unjustly towards the *"divorced and civilly remarried".* This is the reasonable conclusion of the claim that it is *"necessary"* to *"discern"* which of these *"forms of exclusion"* can *"now be overcome".* Note that the report does not ask *if* there are any *"forms of exclusion"* that need to be overcome but rather *which* need to be overcome. In other words, the synod report assumes the necessity of at least some form of further *"integration"* of the *"divorced and civilly remarried"* into the liturgical, educational, pastoral and institutional life of the Church to correct the *"forms of exclusion"* previously practiced. It is perhaps in this context that we can make sense of the "apology" offered by Cardinal Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster (England) in his pastoral letter.[60] Cardinal Nichols wrote:

> "Our final document of the Synod, which we presented to Pope Francis for his consideration, speaks often of this 'pathway of accompaniment', of that 'reverential listening', which is the first act of mercy, of the work of 'discernment', of wanting to come close to the reality of so many lives in their difficulties and trials. During the Synod

[60] Detailed information about Cardinal Nichols's opposition to Catholic teaching on homosexuality and links to his positions on contraception, the rights and status of the human embryo, sex education and Holy Communion for the "divorced and remarried" can be found at "Cardinal who supports LGBT radicals is moderator of English-speaking synod group", 9 October 2016, *Voice of the Family,* [Accessed 11 February 2015], http://voiceofthefamily.com/cardinal-who-supports-lgbt-radicals-will-moderate-english-speaking-synod-group/.

discussions, many wanted us to express, humbly, a word of regret and apology that this often has not been the path we have taken. I am glad to do so now."[61]

The report gives the impression that the "divorced and civilly remarried" are no longer to be seen as individuals who, in a wide variety of circumstances, have fallen into sin and need to seek mercy from God but rather as a minority group suffering "exclusion", that needs to be "integrated" without any amendment of life on their part.

Such an approach is impossible to reconcile with the only authentic *"key"* to the *"pastoral accompaniment*" of those guilty of adultery, which was provided by Our Lord Jesus Christ: "Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more." (Jn 8:11)

Finally, we would note the risk of scandal posed by integrating individuals living in public mortal sin into the *"liturgical, educational, pastoral, and institutional"* life of the Church without amendment of life. Bishop Athanasius Schneider has made the following apt remarks on this subject:

> "There should remain a salutary area of exclusion (non-admittance to the Sacraments and to the public liturgical and catechetical offices) in order to remind [the "divorced and remarried" of] their real, serious and dangerous spiritual state and, at the same time, to promote in their souls the attitude of humility, obedience and of longing for the authentic conversion.
>
> ...
>
> They can receive the sacrament of Penance, which was called in the Tradition of the Church "the second baptism" or "the second penance," only if they sincerely break with the habit of the adulterous cohabitation and avoid public scandal in an analogous manner as do the catechumens, the candidates to the Baptism. The *Final Report* omits to call the divorced and remarried to the humble recognition of their objective sinful state, because it omits to encourage them to accept with the spirit of faith the non-admittance to the Sacraments and to the public liturgical and catechetical offices. Without such a realistic and humble recognition of their own real spiritual state, there is no effective progress towards the authentic Christian conversion, which in the case of the divorced and remarried consists in a life of complete continence, ceasing to sin against the sanctity of the sacrament of marriage and to disobey publicly the Sixth Commandment of God."[62]

**"Living members" of the Church?**

[61] Vincent Cardinal Nichols, "Pastoral Letter on the Synod on the Family", 1 November 2015, *Diocese of Westminster,* [Accessed 11 February 2015], http://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/homilies/pastoral-letter-on-the-synod-on-the-family-1/.

[62] Bishop Athanasius Schneider, Interview with Rorate Caeli, Rorate Caeli, 25 November 2015, [Accessed 10 March 2016], http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2015/11/rorate-exclusive-bishop-athanasius.html.

Paragraph 84 of the *Final Report*, speaking of the "divorced and civilly remarried", states that:

> *"Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members"* [*FR*, para. 84, sent. 5]

This statement is contrary to Catholic teaching on the effects of mortal sin. The Catholic Church, with reference to the life of grace, draws a clear distinction between "living members" and "dead members" of the Church. The Catechism approved by Pope St Pius X in 1908 gives clear definitions of these terms:

> *25 Q.* Who are the living members of the Church?
> *A.* The living members of the Church are the just, and the just alone, that is, those who are actually in the grace of God.
>
> 26 *Q.* And who are the dead members?
> *A.* The dead members of the Church are the faithful in mortal sin.[63]

Married Catholics who separate from their spouses and enter into a civil marriage with another party are committing adultery. Adultery is an objectively grave sin. If it is committed with full knowledge of its gravity and full consent of the will it will be a mortal sin, that is, it will kill the supernatural life of grace in the soul. We cannot, of course, make the judgment that every married person who has entered into a second, adulterous, union is subjectively guilty of mortal sin but we can expect an ecclesiastical document to reflect the objective nature of the sin under discussion. Such a document should clearly affirm that, except in individual cases where the subjective imputability of the sin has been lessened, the *"divorced and civilly remarried"* are not *"living members of the Church".* This is the truly pastoral and merciful approach because it opens up the opportunity for people to repent and truly transform their lives with the assistance of divine grace.

To refer to the *"divorced and civilly remarried"* as *"living members of the Church"* deceives them about the real state of their souls and fails to provide the guidance and instruction that might lead to genuine repentance and thus to eternal life. It can also easily be used to provide an opening for the reception of Holy Communion by the *"divorced and civilly remarried"* without true repentance and amendment of life, as we will now explain.

The Catholic Church draws a clear distinction between the "sacraments of the living" and the "sacraments of the dead". The Catechism of Pope St Pius X once again gives us the necessary clear distinctions. It teaches us that:

> "the sacraments which confer first sanctifying grace, and render us friends of God, are two: Baptism and Penance"

[63] *Catechism of St Pius X*, 1908 (English edition, 1911), [Accessed 11 February 2016], http://www.ewtn.com/library/catechsm/piusxcat.htm.

and these sacraments

> "are on that account called sacraments of the dead, because they are instituted chiefly to restore to the life of grace the soul dead by sin."

There are then those sacraments:

> "which increase grace in those who already possess it are the other five: Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony, all of which confer second grace."

These sacraments:

> "are on that account called sacraments of the living**,** because those who receive them must be free from mortal sin, that is, already alive through sanctifying grace."[64]

We can see from this that the appropriate sacraments for "living members of the Church" are: Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

The appropriate sacrament for "dead members" of the Church is Penance (Confession). (Baptism, which is also a sacrament of the dead can, by its very nature, only be received by those who are not yet members of the Church.)

By referring to the *"divorced and civilly remarried"* as "*living members of the Church"* the synod report implies that it is appropriate for them to be admitted to Holy Communion.

**The gifts of the Holy Spirit**

Paragraph 84 makes the following claim about the *"divorced and civilly remarried":*

> *"They are baptized; they are brothers and sisters; the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts and talents for the good of all."* (*FR*, para. 84, sent. 3)

This is a theological error and a means of opening the way to the reception of Holy Communion by those living in public adultery.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost "are perfections of man, whereby he is disposed so as to be amenable to the promptings of God."[65] There are seven such gifts: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord (Is 11:2-3).

Human beings can be "moved" to act either from within, by the use of reason, or from without, by God. The habitual ordering of a human faculty to act in accordance with reason is

[64] *Catechism of St Pius X*, 1908 (English edition, 1911), [Accessed 11 February 2016], http://www.ewtn.com/library/catechsm/piusxcat.htm.
[65] ST I-II q.68 a.2.

called a "virtue"; "the moral virtues are habits, whereby the powers of appetite are disposed to obey reason promptly."[66] The habitual disposition to be moved by God is granted by the gifts of the Holy Ghost; "the gifts of the Holy Ghost are habits whereby man is perfected to obey readily the Holy Ghost."[67]

The gifts of the Holy Ghost dwell habitually, though in different degrees, in all souls that are in the state of sanctifying grace. The gifts are not present in any soul in the state of mortal sin.[68] God does indeed offer actual graces to souls in mortal sin, but they are graces that lead to repentance. Once a person has been reconciled to God through the sacrament of penance or through perfect contrition the gifts of the Holy Ghost will dwell once more in their heart.

By stating, of those living in public adultery, that *"the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts"* the authors of the report are effectively denying that adultery is a mortal sin.

We will even go as far as to say that they are encouraging the "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost", of which St Augustine taught:

> "against this gift of free grace the impenitent heart speaks; impenitence itself therefore is the blasphemy against the Spirit which shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that to come. For indeed he speaks the evil word against the Holy Spirit either in his thought, or with his tongue, who by his hard and impenitent heart treasures up for himself wrath against the day of wrath. Such impenitence truly has no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come, for penitence obtains forgiveness in this world which shall hold in the world to come... Why then is that impenitence which is never forgiven, spoken of as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit only? Forasmuch as he who falls under this sin of impenitence seems to resist the gift of the Holy Spirit, because in that gift is conveyed remission of sin."[69]

By implying that public adulterers are in the state of sanctifying grace and have no need to repent the synod report encourages impenitence. Thus the authors of this report act directly contrary to their responsibility as pastors: rather than lead souls to heaven they encourage them along the path to hell.

**Imputability**

Sin is a freely chosen act contrary to right reason, that is, to the eternal law of God. The imputability of sin can be diminished by lack of full knowledge of the nature of the act committed or by a lack of full consent of the will. Consequently the *Final Report*, in paragraph 85, sentences 7-12, encourages pastors to take into account that not all those living in public adultery are necessarily fully culpable for their sin. The discussion of imputability is

[66] ST I-II q.68 a.3.
[67] Ibid.
[68] ST I-II q.68 a.5.
[69] St Augustine, *Sermon 71* quoted by St Thomas Aquinas in *Catena Aurea: Gospel According to St Matthew,* (London, 1854).

flawed however because it does not draw attention to the duty of pastors to lead people to the truth. A person may well have reduced culpability for sins committed in the past but that is not a reason to permit such a state to continue in the future: even if a person is entirely free from personal sin they are still acting in a manner objectively contrary to right reason. All disordered acts, even when not subjectively sinful, are contrary to the will of God and are harmful to the individual and to society. Pastors therefore have the duty to enlighten consciences and assist people to live according to the law of God.

The authors of paragraphs 84, 85 and 86 themselves fail to restate the Church's teaching on the subject under discussion. This is particularly noticeable with regard to the selective quotation from paragraph 84 of Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio.* Raymond Cardinal Burke has commented on this as follows:

> "...the quotation from no. 84 of *Familiaris Consortio* is misleading. At the time of the 1980 Synod of Bishops on the Family, as throughout the history of the Church, there has always been pressure to admit divorce because of the painful situations of those in irregular unions, that is, those whose lives are not in accord with the truth of Christ on marriage, as He clearly announced it in the Gospels (Mt 19, 3-12; Mk 10, 2-12). While, in no. 84, Pope Saint John Paul II acknowledges the different situations of those who are living in an irregular union and urges pastors and the whole community to help them as true brothers and sisters in Christ by virtue of Baptism, he concludes: 'However, the Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried.' He then recalls the reason for the practice: 'the fact that 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.' He also rightly notes that a different practice would lead the faithful 'into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage.'"[70]

A similar point can be made about the 24 June 2000 declaration of the *Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts*, which is cited in order to support the assertion that *"the judgment of an objective situation should not lead to a judgment on 'subjective imputability'"* (*FR*, para 85, sent. 8). However the central teaching of this document, that unrepentant public adulterers cannot receive Holy Communion, is nowhere referred to.

We must also note that no reference is made to the two important documents produced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that consider this question thoroughly. The neglected documents are *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and remarried members of the faithful* (14 September 1994) and *Concerning some objections to the Church's teaching on the reception of Holy Communion by divorced and remarried members of the faithful* (1st January 1998).

[70] Edward Pentin, "Cardinal Burke: Final Report Lacks Clarity on Indissolubility of Marriage", *National Catholic Register*, 26 October 2015, [Accessed 11th February 2016], http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/cardinal-burke-final-report-lacks-clarity-on-indissolubility-of-marriage.

## Chapter X: Artificial methods of reproduction

In paragraph 33 the *Final Report* discusses artificial methods of reproduction and notes that the phenomenon:

> *"has occurred recently as an absolute novelty on the stage of humanity and is increasingly becoming more common. This situation has profound implications in the dynamics of relationships, in the structuring of social life and in legal systems which intervene to attempt to regulate practices already in place and various situations."* (*FR,* para. 33, sent. 3)

The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Ordinary Synod simply noted this phenomenon without stating that such practices were gravely immoral. The *Final Report* of the synod, quoted above, also fails to state the teaching of the Church on artificial methods of reproduction, limiting itself to noting human life must be protected from the moment of conception.

This reaffirmation of the inviolability of human life is important but is far from adequate. IVF, and other artificial methods of reproduction, would remain morally wrong even if no human embryos were destroyed as part of the process. The fundamental reason why such methods are wrong is because they separate of procreation from the sexual act.

The authors of the *Final Report* have chosen not to restate this teaching and consequently give the impression that the only issue at stake is that of protection of the human embryo. Indeed their omission is made even more striking by the fact that they make reference to the CDF instruction *Donum Vitae*'s teaching on the inviolability of human life while ignoring that document's teaching on the impermissibility of separating procreation from the sexual act. Furthermore, the more recent CDF document, *Dignitatis Personae*, which is dedicated to these questions, is not referenced at all.

What motive lies behind the choice not to restate the fundamentals of the Church's teaching on artificial methods of reproduction? We suggest that, given the general acceptance of such practices in the modern west, the authors of the report, in obedience to the approach outlined earlier on this document, wish to bring the Church's teaching in line with modern norms.

## Chapter XI: Contraception

The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Ordinary Synod constituted a clear attempt to undermine the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae* on the intrinsic immorality of contraceptive methods, which separate the procreative and unitive ends of the sexual act. An "appeal" signed by nearly 60 experts in the field of sexual ethics stated that paragraph 137 of the *Instrumentum Laboris*:

> "addresses a key document of the modern Magisterium, *Humanae Vitae*, in a way that both calls the force of that teaching into question and proposes a method of moral discernment that is decidedly not Catholic. This approach to discernment contradicts what has hitherto been taught by the Magisterium of the Church about moral norms,

conscience, and moral judgment, by suggesting that a well-formed conscience may be in conflict with objective moral norms."[71]

In the *Final Report* this paragraph has been replaced by an entirely new text, paragraph 63, but serious problems remain.

Paragraph 63 states that:

> *"The choice of responsible parenthood presupposed the formation of conscience, which is 'the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There each one is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of the heart' (GS,16)."* (*FR*, para. 63, sent 12-13)

We must take issue with describing conscience in these words, without any further clarification. The impression given of conscience here is that of a mystical faculty, a mysterious voice speaking to a person from within. In reality conscience is not a faculty at all but an act.[72] It is the judgment of the practical intellect as to whether an action that is it to be committed or omitted, or that has been committed or omitted, is in accordance with right reason, that is to say, with reality, with the natural and supernatural order created by God. All men possess knowledge of the first principles of the natural law, which are "written on their hearts" (Rom 2:15). Formation of conscience is therefore concerned with developing the habit of making judgments about our posited actions or omissions that accord with the natural law and the teachings of the Church. It requires assenting to an objective order rather than following a sentiment that wells up "*in the depths of the heart"*. The authors' approach to conscience is similar to their approach to faith: both are redolent of modernism as defined in Part I of this analysis.

Paragraph 63 also fails to present the Church's authoritative teaching that, as Pope Paul VI taught in *Humanae Vitae*, "any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means" is "absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children".[73]

This omission is particularly noticeable when we consider that the document does state:

> *"For the sake of this dignity of conscience, the Church strongly rejects the forced State intervention in favour of contraception, sterilization and even abortion. The use of methods based on the "laws of nature and the incidence of fertility" (HV, 11) are to be encouraged, because "these methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them and favour the education of an authentic freedom"* (*FR*, para 63, sent. 15-16)

[71] "An Appeal: Recalling the Teaching of Humanae Vitae (and Veritatis Splendor)", 9 October 2015, *First Things,* [Accessed 4 February 2016], http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/09/an-appeal.
[72] **"**Conscience can be laid aside. But a power cannot be laid aside. Therefore conscience is not a power... Properly speaking, conscience is not a power, but an act." St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I q.7 a.12.
[73] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae,* (25 July 1968), No. 14.

The report *"strongly rejects"* only *"forced State intervention in favour of contraception"* and *"encourages"* natural methods of spacing births.[74] What then is its position on contraceptive use that is freely chosen? For what motive does the report remain silent on this point?

We consider such silence to be unjustifiable. The use of contraception is one of the major catalysts for the spread of abortion and artificial methods of reproduction and also immoral forms of sexual activity including fornication, adultery and homosexual practices.

As a result of contraceptive use, and the accompanying contraceptive mentality, 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 method of birth control.

The use of contraception is also linked to abortion in a much more direct way: many forms of contraception can act as abortifacients, that is, they cause the destruction of the newly conceived human embryo. Furthermore by separating the procreative and unitive ends of the sexual act contraception encourages the idea that sexual activity can be engaged in independently from a union ordered towards the procreation and education of children, i.e marriage. Use of condoms also enables people to engage in sexual acts with a reduced fear of contracting sexual transmitted diseases. In these ways contraception contributes to heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity and to the acceptance of homosexual unions.

In his encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* Pope Paul VI warned that rejection of the natural moral law on the question of contraception would have serious consequences for individuals and for society. He predicted that it would: (1) "open wide the way for marital infidelity" and "a general lowering of moral standards", (2) incite the young to break the moral law by seemingly making it "easy for them to break that law", (3) cause men to "forget the reverence due to a woman" and "reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires" and (4) "give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife" in order to pursue policies of population control.[75] All of Paul VI's warnings have been vindicated.

It is also important to realise that the rejection of the Church's teaching on contraception is one of the major catalysts for the widespread rejection of the Church's teaching authority by many who profess to be Catholic but who have fallen away from the authentic faith and practice of the Church.

Finally, we must note that while the document encourages the use of natural methods of *"family planning"* it does not restate the teaching of Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* that recourse to such methods is only morally licit if "there are well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances."[76] The use of the term *"family planning"* in the report is itself

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[75] *Humanae Vitae*, No. 17.
[76] *Humanae Vitae*, No. 17.

problematic: it is a term generally used to refer to provision and promotion of abortion and contraception.

A document that fails to address the many problems discussed above cannot accurately claim to have engaged with the pastoral challenges facing the family. By avoiding the subject the authors of this report have, once again, preferred conformity to the mores of the modern world, to confronting the reality facing the family.

## Chapter XII: Parents as primary educators

The *Final Report* states:

> *"Moreover, the family, while remaining the primary place for formation (cf. Gravissimum Educationis, 3), cannot be the only place for formation in matters of sexuality. In this regard, true and proper pastoral programmes of support need to be devised, targeting both individuals and couples, with particular attention given to young people at the age of puberty and adolescence..."* (*FR*, para. 58, sent. 5-6)

This undermines the teaching of the Catholic Church that the family *can* be the only place for teaching sexuality to their children, including *"young people at the age of puberty and adolescence."*

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* Pope John Paul II repeated the authentic teaching of the Church when he taught:

> "Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents."[77]

In *Mit Brennender Sorge* Pope Pius XI taught:

> "Parents… have a primary right to the education of the children God has given them in the spirit of their Faith, and according to its prescriptions. Laws and measures which in school questions fail to respect this freedom of the parents go against natural law and are immoral."[78]

According to this teaching parents can choose to educate their children in sexual matters entirely at home, or they can involve places of education if they so choose. It is unacceptable to assert that the family *"cannot be the only place for teaching sexuality"* in the context where "*particular attention"* is *"given to young people at the age of puberty and adolescence".* The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that "*young people at the age of*

[77] Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, (1981), No. 37.
[78] Pope Pius XI, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, (1937), No. 31.

*puberty and adolescence"* must be educated in sexuality somewhere outside the family. This is an extremely dangerous statement to make given the current threats posed to parental rights in this area in many parts of the world.

We must further note that it is in this context that the report asserts as a truth *"according to Christian principle"* that *"soul and body, as well as biological sex (sex) and socio-cultural role of sex (gender), can be distinguished but not separated"* In other words the author of this passage is specifically linking the need for institutions outside the family to deliver *"formation in matters of sexuality"* to children with an attempt to promote "gender theory".

This is not the first attack on the rights of parents and children that has emanated from within the Vatican during the current pontificate. Voice of the Family has previously reported on workshops held in the Vatican, under the auspices of the Pontifical Academy of Science (PAS) in November 2015 to discuss how to use children as "agents of change" to implement environmentalism and "sustainable development." At this event representatives of Pope Francis met with some of the world's leading proponents of population control, such as Dr Jeffrey Sachs, special advisor to Ban Ki-Moon to discuss common action. In its briefing for the event the Pontifical Academy of Science warned against "parents" and "agencies" that "basing themselves on religious principles, oppose scientific evidence to the detriment of children."[79] The PAS continued by asserting "that schools will have to absorb the UN Sustainable Development Goals, proclaimed in the fall of 2015, and to reconsider their science education in order to deal with interdisciplinary, complex issues which demand a new vision." The Sustainable Development Goals include calls for universal access to "reproductive health", that is, universal access to abortion and contraception, as we explain in more detail below.

## Chapter XIII: Ecology

Paragraph 16, under the title "Ecology and the Family" calls on the Church to embrace the ecological movement.

> *"The Church, in response to papal teaching, wants people to thoroughly re-examine the overall orientation of the global system. From this vantage point, she collaborates in the development of a a* [sic] *new ecological culture which includes a new mentality, new policies, new educational programmes, a new manner of living and a new spirituality."* (FR, para. 16, sent. 1)

We noted above that the Vatican's collaboration with the environmental movement is leading to collaboration with the promotion of abortion and contraception.

[79] Pontifical Academy of Science, *Children and Sustainable Development: A Challenge for Education,* briefing for workshop held in the Vatican from 13-15 November 2015. It can be read at http://www.casinapioiv.va/content/dam/accademia/booklet/booklet_children.pdf.

The Paris climate agreement, which was welcomed by Pope Francis, contains language designed to promote abortion. The agreement, reached on 12th December 2015, begins by:

> "Welcoming the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'"

It also states that:

> "Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights... as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity".

The Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs), which determine the United Nations international aid strategy for next 15 years, use the terms "gender equality" and "empowerment of women" to advance access to abortion and contraception. Goal 5 of the SDGs is to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". This goal includes the following target, to be achieved by 2030:

> "Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences."[80]

The United Nations Population Fund states that "sexual and reproductive health" includes access for all to "the safe, effective, affordable and acceptable contraception method of their choice", which includes methods of contraception that can be abortifacient.[81] The Population Fund also supports other methods of abortion, stating: "where abortion is legal, national health systems should make it safe and accessible."[82] Abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood, funded by some of the world's wealthiest nations, openly consider abortion and contraception as integral to "sexual and reproductive health" including in materials aimed at children.[83]

To put it simply: Pope Francis has welcomed an agreement that promotes universal access to contraception, which includes abortifacient drugs and devices, and which uses language that can be used to promote other forms of abortion.

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[80] "*Climate agreement welcomed by pope but pro-lifers concerned about language",* 22 December 2015, *Voice of the Family,* [Accessed 3 February 2016], http://voiceofthefamily.com/climate-agreement-welcomed-by-pope-but-pro-lifers-concerned-about-language-that-promotes-abortion/.

[81] "Sexual and Reproductive Health", *United Nations Population Fund,* [Accessed 5 February 2015], http://www.unfpa.org/sexual-reproductive-health#.

[82] Ibid.

[83] "A Teen Guide to Sexual and Reproductive Health", *Planned Parenthood,* [Accessed 5 February 2015], https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/7114/0042/4153/Taking_Care_of_You_2010_with_hyperlinks.pdf.

Nobody who wishes to remain faithful to the Catholic Church and to protect unborn children can assent to such an approach. Nor can we collaborate in establishing a "new mentality", "a new manner of living" or "a new spirituality". The Church is a perfect society: she already possesses all the means necessary to accomplish her task of leading souls to God. The Church has no need of "a new mentality" for she already possesses "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). She proposes the one true "manner of living", which is that by which we know, love and serve God through the practice of the natural and supernatural virtues, through the reception of the sacraments and through a life of prayer. She possesses the one true "spirituality", namely that which leads souls to union with God through the infused virtues of faith, hope and charity.

# CONCLUSION

Bishops of the Catholic Church have the duty, conferred upon them by Our Lord Jesus Christ, to teach the gospel in its integrity. The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in October 2014 and the Ordinary Synod of Bishops held in Rome in October 2015 have both failed to fulfil this mandate by approving final documents that pursue an approach that runs contrary to the Catholic faith.

The *Final Report* of the Ordinary Synod gravely endangers the most vulnerable members of the human family through its omissions and through the distortions of Catholic doctrine that we have analysed in this document. The document undermines Catholic teaching on marriage, abortion, contraception, artificial methods of reproduction, parental rights and the very nature of human beings as men and women. This is a result of the adoption of a false approach that regards the natural moral law and the teachings of the Catholic Church as subject to evolution and change over the course of time.[84]

It is clearly the duty of all who are concerned about the protection of the family and its most vulnerable members to resolutely oppose the approach adopted by both synods. Any prelate, no matter how exalted his position, who abuses the prerogatives of his office to promote positions contrary to divine revelation or the natural law, or to pursue actions that threaten the wellbeing of children and the family, must expect to face unrelenting opposition. To fail to oppose doctrines and actions harmful to the integrity of the Catholic faith and to the family, because of a false sense of obedience, would be a grave betrayal of our duty of fidelity to God and to the weakest amongst us.

Matthew McCusker

**Voice of the Family**

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[84] This should not be confused with the legitimate understanding of development of doctrine as a deepening of the Church's understanding of her unchanging teaching over the course of time: "The intelligence, then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning." St Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium,* [Accessed 10 March 2016], http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3506.htm.