

## SUMMARY OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE FAMILY AND LIFE MOVEMENTS, ASSOCIATIONS AND GROUPS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE SYMPOSIUM

This summary—prepared under the direction of Msgr. Carlos Simon Vazquez, by Fr. Patrick Dubois (French and English), Mrs. Maria Carla Volpini (Italian), and Fr. Guillermo Gutierrez (Spanish)—points out the ten most recurrent themes in the documents sent in by the 82 movements that participated.

### **1) Marriage Preparation; Vocation to the Sacrament, Prayer Life and Family Spirituality.**

- The movements indicate that the Synod needs to pay more attention to marriage preparation, by deepening, from the outset, its vocational and ecclesial dimensions. Marriage preparation has to be presented specifically as a journey in quest of a vocation to the sacrament and to active participation in the life of the Christian community, and it must be diversified in accordance with the variety of the participants' initial situations.

- A good Christian marriage requires a strong experience of encounter with Jesus, through an intense prayer life and a spiritual project developed as a family, so that its members may listen to God's voice and grow together, with the awareness that living the sacrament of marriage fully implies a life of faith and Christian practice, a life of prayer nourished by the sacraments, especially those of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation.

- It is recommended that, in the process of marriage preparation, sufficient time be devoted to understanding and reflecting on what has been called "the theology of the body," which is the legacy left to us by John Paul II. Moreover, it is necessary for Christian couples to be able to permeate their family life and their home with Christian traditions and customs (prayers, signs, images and meals) that help them to consecrate their lives to God and to build the *domestic church*, generation after generation.

### **2) Wounded families: Mercy and Truth, According to the Law of Gradualness.**

- The different movements emphasize the urgent need for an attitude characterized by acceptance, love, understanding and compassion with respect to families that are suffering from different types of wounds and do not fully live the marital vocation. This requires maintaining a spirit of humility that allows us to know and lovingly accept the people involved and to open spaces of evangelization in all kinds of families. Understanding and mercy help to present clearly, without half measures and tones of condemnation, the truth of the Lord in the beauty of marriage, on the basis of the "desire of the family," which exists in each person. It is necessary, therefore, to propose paths and courses of Christian initiation and catechesis that lead back to the proclamation of the Kerygma and to reconciliation with a great spiritual strength.

- It is essential to create a ministry attentive to people attracted by persons of the same sex, and to be able to rely on skilled agents, who, with fidelity to the Magisterium, can accompany these people and their families. The Synod must clearly indicate the threat that the erroneously so-called "marriage" between persons of the same sex represents for marriage and the family according to God's plan.

- Moreover, it is crucial to pay special attention to the many families, men and women, injured by the drama of abortion, whose number has reached tens of millions. The severity of the judgment with respect to abortion must be accompanied by an "open arms" ministry for women and families who have been its victims.

### **3) The Gift of the Indissolubility of Marriage**

- Testimonies about people who have overcome the crisis of infidelity must be presented, showing God's saving action and the Spirit's anointing that, in consequence, radically transform the person, even if this is not obvious at first sight. The person's entire relational and affective being is permeated by the marital reality that responds to the original vocation of man and woman and, despite the mistakes, transforms human love into divine love, thus assuring that each person is saved and sanctified by the other, each one for and with the other.

- To discern the different pastoral situations, the criterion must be that of the sacred bond of marriage, which originates from the couple's freedom of self-giving and mutual acceptance. At the same time, with patience and love, those who question their imperfect love must be helped to rediscover the elements that lead the marital union to indissolubility, to the common good and to openness to life.

- Today, more than ever, it is urgent to show the consequences of breaking the marital promise, because propaganda often presents divorce as something transient, without assuming the drama that it entails for all those involved: children, spouses, family and friends.

In any case, it is necessary to point out that the gift of marital indissolubility is a constant gift that the Holy Spirit inspires and supports in the spouses so that they may imitate the love and mercy of the crucified Christ, in other words, that helps them to live the innate desire for exclusivity, loyalty, stability, the common good, procreation and the education of children, as a definitive commitment.

#### **4) Openness to Life, Natural Methods and Adoption**

- With awareness of the fundamental anthropological difference between the so-called natural methods and the artificial methods of fertility regulation, it is suggested to increase the formation, the promotion and the diffusion of the natural methods, which, in addition to meeting the logic of love open to life, assure fullness and happiness in marriage while helping the couple to take the responsibility of fertility together.

- It must never be forgotten that the natural methods—which are inherently open to life—are an effective antidote to the contraceptive mentality, abortion and the erotization of people and adolescents, and also provide stability to conjugal love against the risk of infidelity.

- It is recommended that the concept of fertility be extended to adoption; and strong support for the possibility of adoption, by simplifying of legal and social conditions, is requested.

- It is essential to create awareness about the consequences of the demographic changes in certain societies that are currently submerged by a "heavy demographic winter" and to fight against the contraceptive mentality by proclaiming the beauty of love open to life.

- Some groups have suggested replacing, in the *Lineamenta*, the title of the section: "The transmission of life and the challenge of falling birth rates" with "The Family: Sanctuary of Human Life." This new title presents the importance of the family as the privileged place where human life is protected and not just transmitted. Moreover, it also introduces other pastorally relevant issues, such as the elderly, large families, adoption, illness and suffering, and care in life's decline.

#### **5) The Different Stages of Life**

- Nowadays, providing a service attentive to childhood and adolescence is indispensable. Many adolescents do not have a family or are living in dysfunctional families; therefore, they need to be accompanied by "godmothers" and "godfathers," i.e. well-formed families, adults or teenagers, who welcome and

accompany them, by creating bonds of love that help them overcome their difficulties and emotional fragility.

- The need to promote the grandparents' vocation and to recognize and accompany the elderly adults has been stressed.

- The Synod should highlight that grandparents are, according to natural law and under the positive Divine law (e.g., in the fourth commandment), prominent collaborators of parents in the education of the children and, as baptized faithful, must be encouraged and supported so that they may be active agents of evangelization of the family.

## **6) The Challenge of Education and the Evangelizing Mission**

- The first condition for educating children is a healthy sense of detachment from the child, who is not an object that belongs to us.

- The various movements suggest that, in the face of the severe emotional fragility that affects people today, the urgency of affective formation and training of priests and pastoral agents for this service of accompaniment should be emphasized.

- Families must be reminded that they bear the primary responsibility for transmitting the faith to their members, especially from parents to children.

## **7) Brotherhood among Families**

- It is hoped that the Synod will call to welcome families and individuals, who, fleeing from poverty, persecution and war, emigrate in search of better living conditions.

- One key resource could be a reference point for examining the life and growth as a family, in small groups or communities of families promoted by movements and parishes.

- The creation of services attentive to motherhood and childhood, such as the FOC (Family Orientation Centers) and reception centers for families in need, is recommended.

- The movements and associations consider essential that the Synod strongly encourage the formation of family associations for social and political engagement, as well as the creation of family networks.

## **8) The Reality of Mixed Marriages, Ecumenism and Rapport with the Practice of the Eastern Churches.**

- Mixed marriages that have often experienced the pain of division among Christians can teach us how to grow together and how to live the truth of the hope of unity among Christians.

- The religious traditions, and especially Judeo-Christian tradition, now have the urgent task of the transmission and protection of the conjugal institution's genuine human character, which must be based on the promotion of family rights and religious freedom.

- In order to encourage confession and conversion, it has also been proposed that the discipline of the Latin Church be harmonized with that of the 21 Eastern Catholic Churches, where, in certain situations, priority is given to the path that must be followed, so that both the aspect of mercy and the individual scope of the healing penance imposed are emphasized, because often there is often talk about general situations, which does not in fact correspond to reality.

## **9) The Relationship between Priests and Married Couples**

- It has been shown that the involvement of married couples in the formation of future priests is positive, because they can help them to thoroughly understand the problems of the family and become able to accompany families and reflect on the concrete situations they encounter in the confessional.

- Spouses can collaborate in the human and emotional formation of future ministers (PDV 43-44). It must be remembered that the emotional maturity required for responding to the call to chastity in priestly celibacy and in consecrated life is also necessary for responding to the vocation to marriage.

- Care for the preparation of couples for marriage and of priests. This should occur not only in seminars and marriage preparation courses, but throughout life as well. The relationship between priests and families is positive for both, throughout the different stages of life.

## **10) The Natural Law and Change in Language.**

- Many movements have reiterated the great need for an in-depth study of the foundations of the natural law and their proper diffusion, for creating a new language to convey this reality.

- Along the same lines, they warn about the grave danger for evangelization, for marriage, for the family and for people's development, represented by the reductionist anthropology of gender ideology that certain groups want to spread in schools and that is invading the media and the public policies of many nations.