

Bishops of Benin on ad Limina visit - 21 April 2015
Intervention of H.E. Msgr. Eugene Houndekon,
Bishop of Abomey and Vice President of the Episcopal Conference

The family, the fundamental cell for both the Church and society, is recognized and celebrated in Benin; it is at the base of the transmission of the authentic human and Gospel values. The sacrament of marriage is a well-received pastoral reality; yet, there are cultural obstacles from which the family suffers, and this prevents some spouses from accomplishing their desires, for example founding the couple's life on faith in Christ.

The family is primarily responsible for the religious education of children; parents are the first catechists of their children.

The pastoral orientation in all the dioceses of Benin is focused on the re-appropriation of the Gospel and the integral development of the human person; and this essential orientation is maintained through the protection of life, with special attention to family ministry, education and the works of the social service. In accordance with the socio-cultural reality of each people, the dioceses have certain special characteristics and face the pastoral challenges today in different ways.

Last year's Extraordinary Synod of Bishops has mobilized the diocesan pastoral teams on the family, and the Bishops have backed this pastoral commitment, by sending Letters on the topic of family in view of the XIV Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held next October. The institutes for formation have been directed to make Christian couples the efficient subjects of the family's evangelization. It should however be noted that certain difficulties disrupt the well-being of the family: the increasing number of attempts to divorce, the choice of separation made by some, the frequency of new forms of union, or the decision to only get married civilly, thus renouncing religious marriage for various reasons. This also concerns polygamy, forced marriage and the mistreatment of women as well as the problem of children called "sorcerers" (the mentally ill are considered sorcerers, bearers of doom).