**Task 1: Looking at Jesus in the History of Salvation**

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| Synod Paragraph | 14 | The words of eternal life, which Jesus gave to his disciples, included the teaching on marriage and the family. Jesus’ teaching allows us to distinguish three basic stages in God's plan for marriage and the family. In the beginning, there is the original family, when God the Creator instituted the first marriage between Adam and Eve as the solid foundation of the family. God not only created human beings male and female (*Gen* 1:27), but he also blessed them so they might be fruitful and multiply (*Gen* 1:28). For this reason, “a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and the two become one flesh” (*Gen* 2:24). This union was wounded by sin and became the historical form of marriage among the People of God, for which Moses granted the possibility of issuing a bill of divorce (cf. *Dt* 24:1ff.). This was the principal practice in the time of Jesus. With Christ’s coming and his reconciling a fallen world through his redemption, the period begun by Moses ended. |
| VaticanQuestion | 10 | ***What is being done to demonstrate the greatness and beauty of the gift of indissolubility so as to prompt a desire to live it and strengthen it more and more?*** |
| Notes |  |  |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 2: The Family in God’s Salvific Plan**

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| Synod Paragraph | 14 | The words of eternal life, which Jesus gave to his disciples, included the teaching on marriage and the family. Jesus’ teaching allows us to distinguish three basic stages in God's plan for marriage and the family. In the beginning, there is the original family, when God the Creator instituted the first marriage between Adam and Eve as the solid foundation of the family. God not only created human beings male and female (*Gen* 1:27), but he also blessed them so they might be fruitful and multiply (*Gen* 1:28). For this reason, “a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and the two become one flesh” (*Gen* 2:24). This union was wounded by sin and became the historical form of marriage among the People of God, for which Moses granted the possibility of issuing a bill of divorce (cf. *Dt* 24:1ff.). This was the principal practice in the time of Jesus. With Christ’s coming and his reconciling a fallen world through his redemption, the period begun by Moses ended. |
| VaticanQuestion | 11 | ***How can people be helped to understand that a relationship with God can assist couples in overcoming the inherent weaknesses in marital relations? (cf. n. 14) How do people bear witness to the fact that divine blessings accompany every true marriage? How do people manifest that the grace of the Sacrament sustains married couples throughout their life together?*** |
| Notes |  | *How can we help people understand better the power of a relationship with God in marriage and of the grace of the Sacrament in their lives?* |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 3: The Truth and Beauty of the Family**

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| Synod Paragraph | 25 | The Church looks with concern at the distrust of many young people in relation to a commitment in marriage and suffers at the haste with which many of the faithful decide to put an end to the obligation they assumed and to take on another. These lay faithful, who are members of the Church, need pastoral attention that is merciful and encouraging and that adequately distinguishes situations. Young people who are baptized should be encouraged to understand that the Sacrament of Marriage can enrich their prospects of love and that they can be sustained by the grace of Christ in the Sacrament and by the possibility of participating fully in the life of the Church. |
| VaticanQuestion | 22 | ***What can be done so that persons in the various forms of union between a man and a woman “in which human values can be present” might experience a sense of respect, trust and encouragement to grow in the Church’s good will and be helped to arrive at the fullness of Christian marriage?*** |
| Notes |  | *How do we help those who live together outside ‘Sacramental marriage’ to grow towards Christian marriage?* |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 4: Pastoral Care for Couples Civilly Married or Living Together**

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| Synod Paragraph | 40 | While continuing to proclaim and foster Christian marriage, the Synod also encourages pastoral discernment of the situations of a great many who no longer live this reality. Entering into pastoral dialogue with these persons is needed to distinguish elements in their lives that can lead to a greater openness to the Gospel of Marriage in its fullness. Pastors ought to identify elements that can foster evangelization and human and spiritual growth. A new element in today’s pastoral activity is a sensitivity to the positive aspects of civilly celebrated marriages and, with obvious differences, cohabitation. While clearly presenting the Christian message, the Church also needs to indicate the constructive elements in these situations that do not yet or no longer correspond to it. |
| VaticanQuestion | 31 | ***The pastoral accompaniment of couples in the initial years of family life — as observed in synodal discussion — needs further development. What are the most significant initiatives already being undertaken? What elements need further development in parishes, dioceses or associations and movements?*** |
| Notes |  | *What more can we do to help couples in the early years of their married lives?* |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 5: Caring for Wounded Families**

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| Synod Paragraph | 44-54 | 44. The necessity for courageous pastoral choices was particularly evident at the Synod. Strongly reconfirming their faithfulness to the Gospel of the Family and acknowledging that separation and divorce are always wounds that cause deep suffering to the married couple and to their children, the synod fathers felt the urgent need to embark on a new pastoral course based on the present reality of weaknesses within the family, knowing oftentimes that these are more “endured” with suffering than freely chosen. These situations vary because of personal, cultural and socio-economic factors. Therefore, solutions need to be considered in a variety of ways, as suggested by Pope St. John Paul II (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 84).45. All families should, above all, be treated with respect and love and accompanied on their journey as Christ accompanied the disciples on the road to Emmaus. In a particular way, the words of Pope Francis apply in these situations: “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). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting a closeness and compassion which, at the same time, heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169).46. A special discernment is indispensable for pastorally guiding persons who are separated, divorced or abandoned. Respect needs to be primarily given to the suffering of those who have unjustly endured separation, divorce or abandonment, or those who have been forced by maltreatment from a husband or a wife to interrupt their life together. To forgive such an injustice that has been suffered is not easy, but grace makes this journey possible. Pastoral activity, then, needs to be geared towards reconciliation and mediation of differences, which might even take place in specialized “listening centres” established in dioceses. At the same time, the synod fathers emphasized the necessity of addressing, in a faithful and constructive fashion, the consequences of separation or divorce on children, in every case the innocent victims of the situation. Children must not become an “object” of contention. Instead, every suitable means ought to be sought to ensure that they can overcome the trauma of a family break-up and grow as serenely as possible. In each case, the Church is always to point out the injustice that very often is associated with divorce. Special attention is to be given in the guidance of single-parent families, so that women who have to bear alone the responsibility of providing a home and raising their children can receive assistance.47.A great number of synod fathers emphasized the need to make the procedure in cases of nullity more accessible and less time-consuming, and, if possible, at no expense. They proposed, among others, the dispensation of the requirement of second instance for confirming sentences; the possibility of establishing an administrative means under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop; and a simple process to be used in cases where nullity is clearly evident. Some synod fathers, however, were opposed to these proposals, because they felt that they would not guarantee a reliable judgment. In all these cases, the synod fathers emphasized the primary character of ascertaining the truth about the validity of the marriage bond. Among other proposals, the role which faith plays in persons who marry could possibly be examined in ascertaining the validity of the Sacrament of Marriage, all the while maintaining that the marriage of two baptized Christians is always a sacrament.48. With respect to marriage cases, the streamlining of the procedure, requested by many synod fathers, in addition to the preparation of a sufficient number of persons - clerics and lay people - primarily dedicated to this work will require increased responsibility of the diocesan bishop. This work could be done through specially trained counselors who would be able to offer free advice to the concerned parties on the validity of their marriage. This work could be done in an office or by qualified persons (cf. *Dignitas Connubii*, art. 113, 1).49. Divorced people who have not remarried, who oftentimes bear witness to their promise of faithfulness in marriage, ought to be encouraged to find in the Eucharist the nourishment they need to sustain them in their present state of life. The local community and pastors ought to accompany these people with solicitude, particularly when children are involved or when they are in serious financial difficulty.50. Likewise, those who are divorced and remarried require careful discernment and an accompaniment of great respect. Language or behavior that might make them feel an object of discrimination should be avoided, all the while encouraging them to participate in the life of the community. The Christian community’s care of such persons is not to be considered a weakening of its faith and testimony to the indissolubility of marriage, but, precisely in this way, the community is seen to express its charity.51. The synod father also considered the possibility of giving the divorced and remarried access to the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Various synod fathers insisted on maintaining the present discipline, because of the constitutive relationship between participation in the Eucharist and communion with the Church as well as her teaching on the indissoluble character of marriage. Others proposed a more individualized approach, permitting access in certain situations and with certain well-defined conditions, primarily in irreversible situations and those involving moral obligations towards children who would have to endure unjust suffering. Access to the sacraments might take place if preceded by a penitential practice, determined by the diocesan bishop. The subject needs to be thoroughly examined, bearing in mind the distinction between an objective sinful situation and extenuating circumstances, given that “imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1735).52. Some synod fathers maintained that divorced and remarried persons or those living together can have fruitful recourse to a spiritual communion. Others raised the question as to why, then, they cannot have access to sacramental Communion. As a result, the synod fathers requested that further theological study in the matter with a view to making clear the distinctive features of the two forms and their connection with the theology of marriage.53. The problems relative to mixed marriages were frequently raised in the interventions of the synod fathers. The differences in the matrimonial regulations of the Orthodox Churches creates serious problems in some contexts, which require due consideration from the point of view of ecumenism. Analogously, the contribution of the dialogue with other religions would be important for interreligious marriages.54. Some families have members who have a homosexual tendency. In this regard, the synod fathers asked themselves what pastoral attention might be appropriate for them in accordance with Church teaching: “There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family.” Nevertheless, men and women with a homosexual tendency ought to be received with respect and sensitivity. “Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided”(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, 4.) |
| VaticanQuestion | 35 | ***Is the Christian community in a position to undertake the care of all wounded families so that they can experience the Father’s mercy? How does the Christian community engage in removing the social and economic factors which often determine this situation? What steps have been taken and what can be done to increase this activity and the sense of mission which sustains it?*** |
| Notes |  | *How can we respond compassionately to people in wounded situations?**How do we engage in removing the social and economic factors that often determine the situation?* |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 6: Pastoral care of Persons with Homosexual Tendencies**

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| Synod Paragraph | 54 | Some families have members who have a homosexual tendency. In this regard, the synod fathers asked themselves what pastoral attention might be appropriate for them in accordance with Church teaching: “There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family.” Nevertheless, men and women with a homosexual tendency ought to be received with respect and sensitivity. “Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided”(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, 4.) |
| VaticanQuestion | 40 | ***How can the Christian community give pastoral attention to families with persons with homosexual tendencies? What are the responses that, in light of cultural sensitivities, are considered to be most appropriate? While avoiding any unjust discrimination, how can such persons receive pastoral care in these situations in light of the Gospel? How can God’s will be proposed to them in their situation?*** |
| Notes |  | *How can we respond better to people of same-sex attraction and their families?* |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 7: The Role of Family in Evangelization**

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| Synod Paragraph | 60-61 | 60. The Church assumes a valuable role in supporting families, starting with Christian Initiation, by being welcoming communities. More than ever, these communities today are to offer support to parents, in complex situations and everyday life, in their work of raising their children, accompanying children, adolescents and young people in their development through personalized pastoral programmes, capable of introducing them to the full meaning of life and encouraging them in their choices and responsibilities, lived in the light of the Gospel. Mary, in her tenderness, mercy and maternal sensitivity can nourish the hunger of humanity and life itself. Therefore, families and the Christian people should seek her intercession. Pastoral work and Marian devotion are an appropriate starting point for proclaiming the Gospel of the Family. 61. These proposed reflections, the fruit of the synodal work that took place in great freedom and with a spirit of reciprocal listening, are intended to raise questions and indicate points of view that will later be developed and clarified through reflection in the local Churches in the intervening year leading to the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, scheduled for October 2015 to treat *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World*. These are not decisions taken nor are they easy subjects. Nevertheless, in the collegial journey of the bishops and with the involvement of all God’s people, the Holy Spirit will guide us in finding the road to truth and mercy for all. This has been the wish of Pope Francis from the beginning of our work, when he invited us to be courageous in faith and humbly and honestly to embrace the truth in charity. |
| VaticanQuestion | 46 | ***How can parents and the Christian family be made aware that the duty of transmitting the faith is an intrinsic aspect of being a Christian?*** |
| Notes |  |  |
| Response |  |  |

**Task 8: Please add your comments on any other paragraph or issue here.**

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| **Synod Paragraph** | **Issue** | **Comment** |
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**Gatherings in Pastoral Areas to reflect on**

**The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World**

**in preparation for the Synod of Bishops in October 2015**

Please note that the questions and paragraphs offered in this pack are

to encourage reflection by members of Parish Pastoral Councils and others involved in family ministry.

Anybody is most welcome to offer a comment on any paragraph from the *Lineamenta*,

or on any other issue related to the work of this Synod.

The full text of the *Lineamenta* is available on the diocesan website, armagharchdiocese.org or may be obtained by contacting the Office of Pastoral Renewal and Family Ministry at 042 9336649 or parishandfamily@gmail.com

Anyone wishing to make an individual submission is most welcome to do so, to:

Office of Pastoral Renewal & Family Ministry,

Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre, The Demesne, Dundalk, Co. Louth.

The deadline for receipt of comments is 1st March 2015

**It would be most helpful if you could read the selected paragraphs from the Extraordinary Synod,**

**and the Questions offered to aid with reflection on these paragraphs,**

**before attending the gathering in your local Pastoral Area.**

**The gatherings are open to all.**