



**Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis**

**Consilium Internationale**

**FAMILY COMMISSION**

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## **CONCLUSIONS ON SYNOD OF THE FAMILY OCTOBER 2015**

***“The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world.”***

In this issue we continue reflecting on Part 1, Chapter 1, of the conclusions from the Synod of the Family, October 2015. We encourage you to read the document which can be found at : [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20151026\\_relazione-finale-xiv-assemblea\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20151026_relazione-finale-xiv-assemblea_en.html)

During the Synod the many challenges that the family and the human person face today were reflected on in many different contexts, (refer to Articles 5 - 10)

### **5. The Socio-cultural context**

Being aware of the major changes that the anthropological culture bring, some of them being that today individuals are less supported than in the past with social structures and that individualism weakens every family tie, however the conclusions remain firmly convinced that **THE FAMILY IS A GIFT OF GOD, THE PLACE WHERE HE REVEALS THE POWER OF HIS SAVING GRACE.** Even today God calls a man and a woman to marry, abides with them in their life as a family and offers himself to them as an ineffable gift.

*Gen 1: 27 - 28 God created man in His image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying , "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it."...*

*CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC) 2210 The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family. Civil authority should consider it a grave duty "to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality and promote domestic prosperity."*

General Constitutions Art 24.2 : In the fraternity:

- the spirituality of the family and of marriage and the Christian attitude towards family problems should be a theme for dialogue and for the sharing of experiences.

### **6. The religious context**

Although the Christian faith is strong and alive, in some regions of the world, there is a significant drop in the religious prevalence in society, which affects the lives of families. There is either a frantic quest of social success and economic prosperity or other forms of religion. Movements motivated by political and religious fanaticism, often hostile to Christianity, create instability and spread chaos and violence, causing much misery and suffering in the lives of families.

*CCC 2205 ... Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelising and missionary task.*

Rule Art 17. .. by living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.

### **7. The anthropological change**

In different cultures, relationship and sense of belonging are important values that shape the identity of individuals. The family offers the opportunity to the person to be realized and contribute to the growth of others in the wider society. The same Christian and ecclesial identity received at Baptism blossoms in the beauty of family life. In today's society we observe a multiplicity of challenges that manifest themselves to a greater or lesser extent in various parts of the world. In different cultures,

- many young people show resistance to the definitive commitments regarding relationships, and often choose to live with a partner or just to have casual relationships.
- The falling birth rate is a result of various factors, including industrialization, the sexual revolution, the fear of overpopulation, economic problems, the growth of a contraceptive mentality and abortion. The consumer society may also dissuade people from having children just to maintain their freedom and way of life.
- Some Catholics have difficulty in leading their lives in accordance with the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and the family, and seeing in the teaching the goodness of God's creative design for them.
- Marriage in some parts of the world is decreasing, while separations and divorces are not uncommon.

*CCC 2390 In a so-called free union, a man and a woman refuse to give juridical and public form to a liaison involving sexual intimacy. .... All these situations offend against the dignity of marriage; they destroy the very idea of the family; they weaken the sense of fidelity. They are contrary to the moral law. The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage.*

*CCC 2366 - Fecundity is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfilment. So the Church, which "is on the side of life" teaches that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life."*

*CCC 2367 Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. "Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life, and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfil this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility."*

GC 24.3 The brothers and sisters should collaborate with the efforts undertaken in the Church and in society to affirm both the value of fidelity and respect for life and to provide answers to the social problems of the family.

### **8. The cultural contradictions**

Although marriage and family enjoy high esteem and it is still the dominant idea that the family represents the safe haven of the deepest and most gratifying feelings, there is a certain vision of Feminism, denouncing motherhood as an excuse for the exploitation of women, moreover, it reports the growing tendency to perceive of the generation of a child as a mere tool for self-affirmation, to achieve by any means. There is also the ideology of "gender" that denies the difference and reciprocal nature of man and woman. It envisages a society without gender differences, and empties the anthropological foundation of the family.

*CCC 2378 A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift.....*

Rule Art 17.

In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ.

### 9. Conflicts and social tensions

The affective and spiritual quality of family life is seriously threatened by the proliferation of conflicts, from impoverishment and the migration process. Violent religious persecution, the burden of unjust economic and social policies, even in prosperous societies, tends to impact severely on child support, the care of the sick and the elderly.

Dependence on alcohol, drugs or gambling is sometimes an expression of these social contradictions and discomfort that follows the lives of families.

*CCC 2211 The political community has a duty to honour the family, to assist it, and to ensure especially:-*

- *the freedom to profess one's faith, to hand it on and raise one's children in it, with the necessary means and institutions;*
- *the right to private property, to free enterprise, to obtain work and housing, and the right to emigrate;*
- *in keeping with the country's institutions, the right to medical care, assistance for the aged, and family benefits;*
- *the protection of security and health, especially with the respect to dangers like drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc,....*

Rule Art 15

Let them individually and collectively, be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives.

### 10. Fragility and strength of the family

The family, the fundamental human community, in today's cultural and social crisis, is painfully being weakened and showing signs of its fragile nature. But the family is demonstrating its courage to confront the inadequacy and failure of institutions in the formation of the person, the quality of the social ties, and the care of the most vulnerable. It is therefore particularly necessary to properly appreciate the strength of the family, to be able to support its fragility. Such strength lies in the capacity to love and to teach to love. As wounded as the family may be, it can always grow beginning with love.

*CCC 2207 The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.*

GC Art 24,3 :The brothers and sisters should collaborate with the efforts undertaken in the Church and in society to affirm both the value of fidelity and respect for life and to provide answers to the social problems of the family.

In conclusion let us refer to St John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation of 1981, "Familiaris Consortio. " (*The role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*) St John Paul II says.... the family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many **profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture.** Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of

the institution of family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life. Finally, there are others who are hindered by various situations of injustice in the realization of their fundamental rights. (FC 1) The Church is convinced that **only by acceptance of the Gospel** are the hopes that man legitimately places in marriage and in the family capable of being fulfilled. (FC 3) **Willed by God in the very act of creation**, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ and have need of His graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginning", that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan. (FC 3)

**Questions for discussion:**

1. **Discuss the challenges that Christian families are facing today?**
2. **What is a "sexual revolution" and what are the consequences?**
3. **Is the meaning of relationship and marriage understood in your community? Explain.**
4. **How is "respect for life" challenged today?**
5. **What do we understand by Feminism, denouncing motherhood and exploitation of women?**

We finish the session by praying together.

**Prayer to the Holy Family**

Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
in you we contemplate  
the splendor of true love, to you, confidently we come.  
Holy Family of Nazareth, make our families also  
the Cenacle place of communion and prayer,  
genuine schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.  
Holy Family of Nazareth,  
let there never be families episodes  
of violence, of isolation and division;  
that anyone who has been hurt or offended  
may soon be comforted and healed.  
Holy Family of Nazareth, make aware to all  
the sacred and inviolable character of the family,  
of its beauty in God's plan.  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, hear and receive our prayer.  
Amen.

March 2016.-