



Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis
Consilium Internationale
FAMILY COMMISSION
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CONCLUSIONS OF SYNOD ON THE FAMILY, OCTOBER 2015

PART 2 -Chapter II

The Family in the Socio-Economic context

Last April 8th, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia* (AL) of the holy Father Pope Francis on love in the family, based on the conclusions of the last Synod, was published¹. The importance of the family for the Society as a whole and for the Church in particular can never be over-emphasized. In fact, “The family is “the vital cell of society”. For that reason, “The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church” (AL 31). Chapter two of the Conclusions of the Synod (n° 11- n° 16), presents a global view of the socio-economic context of the family today.

First, there is the natural principle that “**The Family as the Irreplaceable Resource of Society.**” “The family is a school for human enrichment [...] and the foundation of society” (GS, 52). This implies that if the family is destabilized, the society cannot stand. “Families foster the solid bonds of unity on which human coexistence is based, and, through the bearing and education of children, they ensure the future and the renewal of society.” (n°12).

But in what socio-economic context does the family find itself today?

It is a context marked by “**widespread uncertainty and ambiguity**” (Al 33). There is a predominant wrong conception of freedom; “It is easy nowadays to confuse genuine freedom with the idea that each individual can act arbitrarily, as if there were no truths, values and principles to provide guidance, and everything were possible and permissible” (AL 34). “There is a failure to realize that only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a plenary role to play in society as a stable commitment that bears fruit in new life” (AL 52). For this reason, Churches mission of evangelization is very urgent with respect to the family.

It is a context marked in many areas by **loneliness and insecurity**. “In cultures where relationships are weakened by an egotistical manner of living, loneliness is increasingly becoming more common. A general feeling of powerlessness in the face of oppressive socio-economic situations, increasing poverty and a lack of employment require people increasingly to seek work far from the family in order to provide for its needs, thereby causing prolonged separation which weakens relations and isolates family members from each other” (n°13). “Families, in particular, suffer from problems related to work, where young people have few possibilities and job offerings are very selective and insecure” (n°14).

¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Poverty and Exclusion: “Everywhere, certain religious and social groups of persons can be found on the margins of society: immigrants, gypsies, the homeless, displaced persons, refugees, the untouchables in the caste system and those who are suffering from diseases which carry a social stigma” (N° 15). In these difficult situations, many people find refuge in family ties. “Despite the enormous difficulties they face, many poor and marginalized families strive to live their daily lives with dignity, relying on God who does not disappoint and does not abandon anyone” (N°15).

The Economy and Growth: Generally, “economic constraints prohibit a family’s access to education, cultural activities and involvement in the social life” (N° 14). The result is an impoverishment of the society which does not make use of its human resources and potential. None the less, “Material resources and economic conditions affect the family in two ways, by either contributing to its growth and solidity or by impeding its strength, unity and cohesion” (N° 14).

What appears to most people as economic or political crisis today, is barely a symptom of the deep **human crises**; “The human person, has been removed from the centre and replaced by something else. Because idolatrous worship is devoted to money” (N° 15). The inevitable result is various kinds of social exclusion, “which often make the poor invisible to society”, which is worsened by “the prevailing culture and the media” (n° 15).

The way forward:

Policies Favouring the Family: A prime way for authorities to nurture healthy families is to issue policies favouring the family. “The authorities responsible for the common good must be seriously committed to the primary good of society, namely, the family” (n°12). “The State has the responsibility to create conditions and legislation to guarantee the future of younger generations and to assist them in fulfilling their desire to form a family” (n° 13). For example, “Workdays are long and oftentimes made more burdensome by extended periods away from home. This situation does not help family members to gather together or parents to be with their children in such a way as to nurture their relationships each day” (n°14).

Ecology and family: Even in the ecological concern, the family cannot be left out; “The family, ... should be adequately protected” (n° 16). Exploring aspects of an “integral ecology” must include not only the environment, but also human, social and economic conditions for a sustainable development and the stewardship of all creation. The big question is: “who is making an effort to strengthen marriages, to help married couples overcome their problems, to assist them in the work of raising children and, in general, to encourage the stability of the marriage bond?” (AL 52). The Church is continuously showing her great concern for the family and encouraging all her sons and daughters and all people of goodwill to help the family.

Christian witnessing on the beauty and divine wisdom hidden in marriage and in the family is of prime importance in such a context as seen above. “As Christians, we can hardly stop advocating marriage simply to avoid countering contemporary sensibilities, or out of a desire to be fashionable or a sense of helplessness in the face of human and moral failings” (AL 35). The strength of the family “lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. For all a family’s problems, it can always grow, beginning with love” (AL 53).

Guidelines for sharing in fraternity:

1. Read together OFS Rule 17.
2. How does the socio-economic context presented above apply to your context?
3. How do you contribute in the pastoral strategies of the Church to help the family in your context?

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.

May 2016.-