



ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND

IN OREGON

Office of The Archbishop

MEMORANDUM

To: Pastors, Administrators and Pastoral Administrators
From: Archbishop Alexander K. Sample
Date: February 12, 2015
Subject: Consultation on the Family for the Upcoming Synod

Many of you are aware that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, through the Office of the Synod of Bishops, has requested a consultation with the People of God on marriage and family life issues. This consultation will aid in the preparation of an *Instrumentum laboris* (guiding document) for the upcoming General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October. The theme of the consultation and the synod is: *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World*. Bishops and Superiors General across the globe are being asked to consult with their people and report on their findings.

At the recent Presbyteral Council meeting (Jan. 22) I made a joint decision with the priests to summarize the forty-six, multiple part questions from the *Lineamenta* in order to facilitate the consultation. Attached is the consultation tool we will be using in the Archdiocese of Portland. I am asking all parish priests to hold at least one listening session in their parishes. The input received on the fourteen questions provided in the consultation tool should be summarized and returned to me.

The turnaround time for the consultation is, regrettably, very short due to its many stages. Your assistance in carrying out the consultation quickly and effectively is requested. All summarized input from the consultation must be received by my office by **5:00 p.m. on March 13, 2015**. I must in turn compile all of the information and send a report to the USCCB by March 20.

Apart from the listening sessions, please also make available to your parishioners a copy of the consultation tool. This can be done as an insert in the parish bulletin or by providing a link to the homepage of the archdiocesan website (www.archdpdx.org) where we will post the consultation tool. Please ask parishioners and groups to return their responses to you for summary.

Summarized input from the consultation can be sent to my office via e-mail or fax: rjohnson@archdpdx.org or Fax 503-234-2545.

For your information, I will also be consulting with other institutions and groups within the Archdiocese of Portland, including the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council.

If you have any questions about the consultation, please contact Todd Cooper, Acting Director of the Department of Pastoral Ministries at 503-233-8386 or tcooper@archdpdx.org.

Thank you.

CONSULTATION ON MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE

Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon

The Vocation and Mission of the Family In the Church and the World

Questions Relating to the Work of the Synod

Part I

Listening: The Context and Challenges of the Family

The Social & Cultural Context

Family life has changed due to challenges such as divorce, single-parenthood, economic pressures, secularization and individualism.

1. In the midst of these cultural challenges, what are we doing to reawaken an awareness of God's presence in family life? How can we, as the Church, identify and truly accompany struggling families on their journey? How can the Church help to prevent some of these struggles?
2. To what extent do we reach out to those on the periphery? What can the Church do to support and strengthen those Christian families and marriages striving to be faithful?

Social norms have shifted, and fewer people accept the model of family which is based on lifelong marriage between a man and a woman that is open to new life.

3. What are we doing to promote and give witness to the beauty of lifelong marriage and the gift of children so that others feel compelled and invited to live out this model of marriage and family life? How can the Church promote this vision amongst young people, including those whose own family situations don't correspond with the Christian vision?

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Part II

Looking at Christ; The Gospel of the Family

Understanding God's Plan for Marriage & Family

Love is at the heart of the family. Through his Church, Christ bestows on marriage and the family the grace to witness to the love of God and live a life of communion. When we fix our gaze on Christ, new possibilities open up.

4. How can we help couples encounter the mercy and love of Christ so they may experience a loving relationship with God that will assist them in remaining committed to their marriage and family for life? How can we help people recognize the sustaining grace that comes from the sacrament of marriage?
5. What can we do to help people understand that Christian marriage corresponds to the original plan of God and that the true aims of marriage and family will lead to complete personal fulfillment? How can we help men and women understand their unique contribution to marriage and family life as a part of God's plan for salvation?

The Lord looks with love at the Christian family and through him the family grows as a true community of life and love.

6. How can families be helped to live out everything that marriage and family is meant to be? How can families grow together spiritually? How can families be witnesses of love? How can we help families live out their call to be a "domestic church"?

No one is beyond the mercy of God. As members of the Church, we are called to love and minister to all, including our brothers and sisters who live in situations that are not in accord with God's design.

7. Without failing to proclaim the demands of the Gospel, how can we express a friendly attitude toward those who are living together outside of marriage, are civilly married, or who are divorced and remarried outside the Church? How do we respect and invite all to an encounter with the mercy and love of Jesus, especially those who may be wounded and fragile?

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Part III

Confronting the Situation: Pastoral Perspectives

Marriage and family play a vital role in the formation of society. The collaboration of social and civil institutions on behalf of the family is important.

8. In the face of cultural and political threats to marriage and family, how can we promote strong marriages and family-centered values in society? How can we help society understand the family's dignity and mission?

The Church is called to guide engaged couples in their preparation for marriage and help them understand the vocation and mission of the family. The Church is also called to accompany married couples in their initial years of marriage.

9. What do engaged couples need from the Church in marriage preparation? How can marriage preparation be renewed and improved? How can the entire Christian community be involved in this preparation?
10. How can the Church and the entire Christian community support and accompany couples in their early years of marriage? What kind of pastoral support should be offered to them? How can married couples and families be encouraged in their journey and vocation?

Many people are unable to live out - or do not fully understand or accept - God's plan for marriage and family. As a result, the Church is confronted with many difficult pastoral situations regarding marriage and family life.

11. What is being done to minister and reach out to those who are living together or are in civil marriages? How can we guide them on a path that would lead to sacramental marriage? How can the Church continue to journey with and extend mercy and understanding to those who are divorced or divorced and remarried? How can we support single parent families?

The Church must avoid any unjust discrimination toward those who experience same-sex attraction.

12. How can we accompany and provide effective pastoral outreach to those with same-sex attraction and their families, especially in light of the Gospel? How can God's plan be proposed to them in their situation?

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The transmission of life and raising of children is a fundamental element in the vocation and mission of the family.

13. How can we promote the beauty and dignity of becoming a mother and father?
What can we do to foster a culture that is open to children?

The duty of transmitting the faith is an intrinsic part of being Christian. Families are called to be witnesses of Christ in the world. Fulfilling their educational mission is not always easy for parents.

14. What can the Church do to better support parents as the primary educators of their children? Do parents find solidarity and support from the Christian community? How can parents raise children to be joyful and faithful Christians who will pass on the faith to the next generation?