

Dear Family Life and Life, Justice & Peace Ministers,

Today is the first full day of the 2014 Synod on the Family. I want to provide you with a few excerpts from the Vatican Information Service (VIS) as well as some other links to follow the synodal developments. At the end, I include a note of a special presentation on Feb. 19, 2015 - please save the date.

Excerpt from Vatican Information Service (VIS) - Pope Francis at the Synod: "This morning, in the presence of the Holy Father, the First General Congregation of the Synod of Bishops on "Pastoral challenges to the family in the context of new evangelization" took place in the Synod Hall. ... [Pope Francis said,] "A general basic condition is this: speak clearly. Let no one say, 'this can't be said, they will think this or that about me'. Everything we feel must be said, with parrhesia [boldness]. ... Therefore, I ask of you", insisted Francis, "these two attitudes of brothers in the Lord: speak with parrhesia and listen with humility. And do so with great tranquility and peace ..."

Excerpts from the Vatican Information Service (VIS) Summary of the Relatio ante disceptationem

Vatican City, 6 October 2014 - The "Report prior to discussion" presented this morning by Cardinal Peter Erdo, relator general, introduces the work of the Synod, emphasizing the main points in relation to which the discussion of the Assembly should develop. First and foremost, Cardinal Erdo's report encourages the family to be regarded with hope and mercy, proclaiming its value and beauty as, in spite of the many difficulties, it is not a "model off course"; we live in a world of mere emotions, he continues, in which life "is not a project, but rather a series of moments" and "stable commitment appears formidable" for humanity rendered fragile by individualism. But it is precisely here, faced with these "signs of the times", that the Gospel of the family offers itself as a remedy, a "true medicine" that is to be proposed by "placing oneself in the corner of those who find it more difficult to recognize and live it".

"... in the last part of the document, Cardinal Erdo focuses on the Gospel of life: existence is from conception to natural death, he remarks, and "openness to life is an essential part and intrinsic need of conjugal love, while nowadays, especially in the West, there are those who choose not to have children and those who would have them at any cost; "in both cases, the possibility of procreating a child is reduced to one's ability of self-determination. ..."

The full text in English of the "Relatio ante disceptationem" can be consulted at:

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/06/0712/03003.html>

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To follow developments during the Synod, here are some links:

- Pontifical Council on the Family (special menu on the Synod) - <http://www.familia.va/>
- Vatican Radio special coverage - <http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/tags/synod-on-family>
- Vatican Information Service - www.visnews.org

Save the Date - Feb. 19, 2015, The Mystery and Vocation of the Family: There will be an evening presentation to give married couples an opportunity to learn about current efforts in support of marriage, especially in the context of the two synods on the family and the World Meeting of Families. Location: St. Monica, Mercer Island. Other details coming soon.

In Christ's peace,
Jim

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"The Christian life...
is a gift, it is love,...
[it is] self-giving."

~Pope Francis