



## 2015 Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

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

### **QUESTIONS ON THE LINEAMENTA**

*re-arranged for consultations by Dioceses in Canada*

#### **I Better Identifying the Reality**

*During the extraordinary Synod in 2014, there was an effort to better determine the reality of families today and to identify the challenges the Church must deal with when accompanying families along their journey of life. The following questions attempt to foster a deeper reflection on this reality in order to better determine and identify the challenges we face.*

1. For each of the following themes, indicate its impact on families and whether the Church's reflections are addressing this challenge:
  - a) The challenges posed to the family by **cultural changes** [1];
  - b) The analysis of the aspects (positive or negative) of the **anthropological and cultural changes** affecting families [2];
  - c) The challenge posed by **cultural relativism** in secularized society and the consequent rejection, on the part of many, of the model of family formed by a man and woman united in marriage and open to life [4];
  - d) The challenge of the proliferation of **common-law unions** [22];
  - e) The more specific cultural context in which the **local Church** (the diocese) is implicated [1];
  - f) The identification of common (positive) elements in cultural **pluralism** [2];
  - g) The identification of **marriage and family values** that young people and married couples strive to realize in their lives [8];
  - h) The sense of the **presence of God** in the lives of families [1];

- i) **Teaching** sound interpersonal relationships [1];
  - j) Difficulties linked to the attention given to **children**, the **elderly** and family members who are **ill** [1];
  - k) The development of **social and economic policies** useful to the family [1];
  - l) The rapid evolution in our society which demands a constant attention to the language of **pastoral communication** [24];
  - m) The challenges resulting from **mixed marriages or interreligious marriages** [39];
2. In our pastoral activity, what are our best practices – practices that have had an impact and that could be examples to other communities – in our efforts towards:
- a) **Supporting and strengthening families of believers** living in fidelity [3];
  - b) Reaching those who are **distant** from the Church (or who feel that they are) [6];
  - c) Fostering and **appreciating the “desire to form a family”** planted by the Creator in the heart of every person, especially among young people, including those in family situations which do not correspond to the Christian vision [6];
  - d) Using the teaching of **Sacred Scripture** in pastoral activity on behalf of families [7];
  - e) Appreciating **popular wisdom** about natural marriage which is fundamental for culture and society [19];
  - f) Being present as Church to families in **extreme situations**, and preventing these situations [3];
  - g) Collaborating with **political and social institutions** for the good of the family [26];
  - h) (In our **marriage preparation** programs...) Highlighting the vocation and mission of the family according to faith in Jesus Christ while proposing an authentic ecclesial experience [28];
  - i) (In our programs of **Christian Initiation**...) Presenting openness to the vocation and mission of the family [29];

- j) Welcoming the contribution of **witness** and **support** that can be brought by families, associations, and family movements [30];
  - k) Pastorally accompanying couples in the **initial years** of family life [31];
  - l) Effectively proclaiming and promoting **openness to life** as well as the beauty and dignity of becoming a mother or father, in light, for example, of *Humanae Vitae* by Blessed Pope Paul VI [41];
  - m) Emphasizing, in catechesis, **maternity** or **paternity** as the response to a vocation... what formation is offered so that it might effectively guide the consciences of married couples? [43]
  - n) Combating the scourge of **abortion** and fostering an effective culture of life [44];
  - o) Integrating the family into the **formation of priests and other pastoral workers** [23].
3. How are our Christian families...
- a) **Bearing witness**, for succeeding generations, to a progressive growth in affective maturity? [5]
  - b) Directly involved in the **formation** of priests and other pastoral workers? [23]
4. How are our Christian communities...
- a) **Pastorally involved** in the situations of couples living in irregular situations? [33]
  - b) Assisting in **discerning** the positive and the negative elements in the life of persons united in a civil marriage so as to guide and sustain them on a path of growth and conversion towards the Sacrament of Matrimony? [33]
  - c) Caring for wounded families so that they can experience the Father's **mercy**? [35]
  - d) Giving pastoral attention to families with persons with **homosexual tendencies**? [40]
  - e) Living an effective **solidarity** and subsidiarity (the capacity to respond at their own level) in order to support a generous maternity/paternity with the necessary structures and tools? [42]

*Open Question: Does the description of the reality of the family presented in the Relatio Synodi (the Lineamenta) correspond to what we observe in the Church and in society today? What missing aspects could be integrated? (Preliminary Question in the official Vatican version)*

## **II Bringing About Pastoral Conversion**

*The Synod clearly opted for a pastoral approach that accents the positive: accompaniment, mercy, and the goodness of the Good News. It thus echoes the call of Pope Francis to all involved in the Church when it invites them to a pastoral conversion. The following questions are intended to encourage reflection on the various elements essential to such a conversion.*

1. In keeping with divine pedagogy, **what human pedagogy** needs to be taken into account – so as to have a clearer perspective on what the Church’s pastoral ministry should be as a couple’s life together matures and could lead to marriage in the future? [9]
2. How can people be helped to **understand that no one is beyond the mercy of God**? How can this truth be expressed in the Church’s pastoral activity towards families, especially those which are wounded and fragile? [20]
3. In the case of those who have not yet arrived at a full understanding of the gift of Christ’s love, how can the faithful express a **friendly attitude and offer trustworthy guidance** without failing to proclaim the demands of the Gospel? [21]
4. 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? [22]
5. In proclaiming the Gospel of the Family, how can the conditions be created so that **each family might actually be what God wants it to be** and that society might acknowledge the family’s dignity and mission? What “pastoral conversion” and what further steps towards an in-depth examination are being done to achieve this? [25]
6. In light the Church’s teaching, in which the primary elements of marriage are unity, indissolubility and openness to life, what criteria are taken into consideration for a **proper pastoral discernment** of particular situations (e.g., couples living common-law, in a civil marriage, etc.)? [32]

7. In a particular way, what responses can be given to the problem posed by the persistence of **traditional forms of marriage** [for example, in some immigrant communities], such as marriage by stages or arranged by families? [34]
8. With regard to the **divorced and remarried**, pastoral practice concerning the sacraments needs to be further studied, including assessment of the practice of

Orthodox churches and taking into account “the distinction between an objective sinful situation and extenuating circumstances.” What are the frames of reference in which to proceed? What steps are possible? What suggestions can be offered to resolve forms of undue or unnecessary impediments? [38]

9. While avoiding any unjust discrimination, how can **family members with homosexual tendencies** receive pastoral care in light of the Gospel? How can God’s will be proposed to them in their situation? [40]

*Open Question: Are there any other elements essential for pastoral conversion in family ministry not identified by the Synod?*

### **III Proclaiming the Good News**

*Too often, the teaching of the Church is understood as a set of rules imposed from without or as a code of conduct considered by many to be out of touch with modern reality. The participants in the extraordinary Synod, on the other hand, saw in this teaching a source of personal fulfilment and a path of vitality and hope. But how can we concretely translate this conviction into a language that will reach men and women today? This reflection is behind the following questions.*

1. Can certain **marriage and family values** be highlighted in our teaching? What sinful aspects are to be avoided and overcome? [8]
2. What initiatives can lead people to understand the **value of an indissoluble and fruitful marriage** as the **path to complete personal fulfilment**? [17] What can be done to show that the family has many unique aspects for experiencing the joys of human existence? [18]
3. 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? [10]
4. How can people be made to understand that **Christian marriage** corresponds to the original plan of God and, thus, one of **fulfilment** and not confinement? [12]

5. How can people be helped to understand that a **relationship with God** can assist couples in overcoming the inherent weaknesses in marital relations? 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? [11]
6. How can an effective testimony be given to the **priority of grace** in a way that family life is conceived and lived as welcoming the Holy Spirit? [24]
7. The Lord looks with love at the Christian family and through him the family grows as a true community of life and love. How can a **familial spirituality** be developed and how can families become places of new life in Christ? (cf. n. 21) [15]
8. How can the family be seen as a “**domestic Church**” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), as both subject (which evangelizes) and object (which is evangelized) of the work of evangelization in service to the Kingdom of God? [13]
9. How can an awareness of this **missionary task** of the family be fostered? [14]
10. What **initiatives in catechesis** can be developed and fostered to make known and offer assistance to persons in living the Church’s teaching on the family, above all in surmounting any possible discrepancy between what is lived and what is professed and in leading to a process of conversion? [16]
11. Which steps in the **catechesis of Christian initiation** touching on the vocation and mission of the family are seen as most urgent? [29]
12. How is the **relation between Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist and marriage** proposed? [29]
13. 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? [46]

*Open Question: In general, how can we transmit the Church’s teaching on marriage, family, and sexuality as truly good news for men and women today?*

#### **IV Paths of Action**

*Synods attempt not only to deepen the thought of the Church on particular points of doctrine and practice, but also to propose concrete paths of action and engagement. The goal of the following questions is to elicit suggestions for actions that could be undertaken in the Church following the upcoming Synod.*

1. How might the **formation of ordained ministers** be improved concerning these themes? What qualified persons are urgently needed in this pastoral activity? [5]
2. What role can be played by **family associations** in the collaboration of social and civil institutions on behalf of the family? How can this collaboration be sustained even in a bold repudiation of the cultural, economic and political processes which threaten the family? [26]
3. How can relations between **family, society and civil life** be fostered for the benefit of the family? How can the support of the State and the international community be fostered on behalf of the family? [27]
4. How can **marriage preparation** be renewed and improved in order to highlight the vocation and mission of the family according to faith in Jesus Christ, proposing it as an authentic ecclesial experience? [28]
5. What emphasis is given to the **character of the catechumenate** (before the celebration) **and mystagogy** (after the celebration) which is often a part of marriage preparation? How can the community be involved in this preparation? [29]
6. How can those living in **common-law unions** be helped to choose marriage? [33]
7. How can the Christian community minister to the **divorced and re-married**? [38]
8. How does the Christian community engage in removing the **social and economic factors** which often threaten to break apart families? What steps have been taken and what can be done to increase this activity and the sense of mission which sustains it? [35]
9. How can the identification of shared pastoral guidelines be fostered at the level of the **particular Church** (the diocese)? In this regard, how can a dialogue be developed among the various particular Churches *cum Petro et sub Petro* (united with the Pope, under his leadership)? [36]
10. How can the procedure to determine **cases of nullity** be made more accessible, streamlined and possibly without expense? [37]
11. How can dialogue be promoted with the sciences and biomedical technologies in a way that respects the **human ecology of reproduction** (the ethical dimension of the questions surrounding conception and birth)? [41]
12. How can **adoption and foster-parenting** be encouraged as a powerful sign of fruitful generosity? How can the care and respect of children be promoted? [42]

13. Fulfilling their educational mission is not always easy for parents. Do they find solidarity and support from the Christian community? What suggestions might be offered in formation? What steps can be taken so that the **role of parents as primary educators of their children** might also be recognized at the socio-political level? [45]

*Open Question: Are there other paths of pastoral activity that could be considered by the Synod? What would you like the Church to undertake or to improve after the next Synod?*