

III. Questions

The following series of questions allows the particular Churches to participate actively in the preparation of the Extraordinary Synod, whose purpose is to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the pastoral challenges facing the family today.

1. The Diffusion of the Teachings on the Family in Sacred Scripture and the Church's Magisterium

- a) Describe how the Catholic Church's teachings on the value of the family contained in the Bible, *Gaudium et spes*, *Familiaris consortio* and other documents of the post-conciliar Magisterium is understood by people today? What formation is given to our people on the Church's teaching on family life?
- b) In those cases where the Church's teaching is known, is it accepted fully or are there difficulties in putting it into practice? If so, what are they?
- c) How widespread is the Church's teaching in pastoral programmes at the national, diocesan and parish levels? What catechesis is done on the family?
- d) To what extent — and what aspects in particular — is this teaching actually known, accepted, rejected and/or criticized in areas outside the Church? What are the cultural factors which hinder the full reception of the Church's teaching on the family?

2. Marriage according to the Natural Law

- a) What place does the idea of the natural law have in the cultural areas of society: in institutions, education, academic circles and among the people at large? What anthropological ideas underlie the discussion on the natural basis of the family?
- b) Is the idea of the natural law in the union between a man and a woman commonly accepted as such by the baptized in general?
- c) How is the theory and practice of natural law in the union between man and woman challenged in light of the formation of a family? How is it proposed and developed in civil and Church institutions?
- d) In cases where non-practicing Catholics or declared non-believers request the celebration of marriage, describe how this pastoral challenge is dealt with?

3. The Pastoral Care of the Family in Evangelization

- a) What experiences have emerged in recent decades regarding marriage preparation? What efforts are there to stimulate the task of evangelization of the couple and of the family? How can an awareness of the family as the "domestic Church" be promoted?
- b) How successful have you been in proposing a manner of praying within the family which can withstand life's complexities and today's culture?
- c) In the current generational crisis, how have Christian families been able to fulfill their vocation of transmitting the faith?
- d) In what way have the local Churches and movements on family spirituality been able to create ways of acting which are exemplary?

e) What specific contribution can couples and families make to spreading a credible and holistic idea of the couple and the Christian family today?

f) What pastoral care has the Church provided in supporting couples in formation and couples in crisis situations?

4. Pastoral Care in Certain Difficult Marital Situations

a) Is cohabitation *ad experimentum* a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage?

b) Do unions which are not recognized either religiously or civilly exist? Are reliable statistics available?

c) Are separated couples and those divorced and remarried a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage? How do you deal with this situation in appropriate pastoral programmes?

d) In all the above cases, how do the baptized live in this irregular situation? Are they aware of it? Are they simply indifferent? Do they feel marginalized or suffer from the impossibility of receiving the sacraments?

e) What questions do divorced and remarried people pose to the Church concerning the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation? Among those persons who find themselves in these situations, how many ask for these sacraments?

f) Could a simplification of canonical practice in recognizing a declaration of nullity of the marriage bond provide a positive contribution to solving the problems of the persons involved? If yes, what form would it take?

g) Does a ministry exist to attend to these cases? Describe this pastoral ministry? Do such programmes exist on the national and diocesan levels? How is God's mercy proclaimed to separated couples and those divorced and remarried and how does the Church put into practice her support for them in their journey of faith?

5. On Unions of Persons of the Same Sex

a) Is there a law in your country recognizing civil unions for people of the same-sex and equating it in some way to marriage?

b) What is the attitude of the local and particular Churches towards both the State as the promoter of civil unions between persons of the same sex and the people involved in this type of union?

c) What pastoral attention can be given to people who have chosen to live in these types of union?

d) In the case of unions of persons of the same sex who have adopted children, what can be done pastorally in light of transmitting the faith?

6. The Education of Children in Irregular Marriages

a) What is the estimated proportion of children and adolescents in these cases, as regards children who are born and raised in regularly constituted families?

b) How do parents in these situations approach the Church? What do they ask? Do they request the sacraments only or do they also want catechesis and the general teaching of religion?

c) How do the particular Churches attempt to meet the needs of the parents of these children to provide them with a Christian education?

d) What is the sacramental practice in these cases: preparation, administration of the sacrament and the accompaniment?

7. The Openness of the Married Couple to Life

a) What knowledge do Christians have today of the teachings of *Humanae vitae* on responsible parenthood? Are they aware of how morally to evaluate the different methods of family planning? Could any insights be suggested in this regard pastorally?

b) Is this moral teaching accepted? What aspects pose the most difficulties in a large majority of couple's accepting this teaching?

c) What natural methods are promoted by the particular Churches to help spouses put into practice the teachings of *Humanae vitae*?

d) What is your experience on this subject in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance and participation at the Eucharist?

e) What differences are seen in this regard between the Church's teaching and civic education?

f) How can a more open attitude towards having children be fostered? How can an increase in births be promoted?

8. The Relationship between the Family and the Person

a) Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the human person. How can the family be a privileged place for this to happen?

b) What critical situations in the family today can obstruct a person's encounter with Christ?

c) To what extent do the many crises of faith which people can experience affect family life?

9. Other Challenges and Proposals

What other challenges or proposals related to the topics in the above questions do you consider urgent and useful to treat?