Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

If the glass is half full, what would you do then?
And if the glass is half empty, would you respond differently?
How much does how we see things affect what we think and are willing to do?
What factors are necessary for change for the better to happen?
Matthew 22:35-40 New International Version (NIV)

35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:
36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’
38 This is the first and greatest commandment.
39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’
40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
The Synod on the Family to reconvene in October 2015

The following document has been sent as the formal and official response of the Interchurch Families International Network (IFIN) to the Secretariat of the Synod on the Family. This well crafted document clearly articulates the pastoral needs of the family and especially of interchurch families.

Many thanks to Ruth Reardon, Melanie Finch and Thomas Knieps, who have so diligently worked to create this document. This statement is extremely important for our churches, all of our churches, as they seek to address the pastoral needs of all Christians in the Twenty First Century and as they move forward toward their stated goal of seeking and creating Christian Unity.

~ M.J. Glauber

Response to the 2015 Synod on the Family from the Interchurch Families International Network

The Interchurch Families International Network (IFIN) gives a voice to interchurch families at global level, bringing together associations and groups of interchurch families from different parts of the world. Following the Second Vatican Council, with its more positive attitude towards mixed marriages, national and regional groups and associations began to come together in many European countries, beginning in the 1960s (France, Italy, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany and Austria), and later developed also in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. At a multi-lingual world gathering held at Rome in 2003 representatives came from eleven different countries and three continents; it adopted the paper Interchurch Families and Christian Unity, which is still the most comprehensive statement in brief format of the self-understanding of interchurch families, the contribution they feel they can make to Christian unity, and the kind of pastoral understanding they need if they are to fulfil their potential (available in English, French, German and Italian at http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/rome-document/rome-document). IFIN is also in touch with interchurch couples and families in countries where groups and associations do not yet exist, including Africa.

SUMMARY OF THE IFIN RESPONSE

I. Mixed and interreligious families
This submission to the Synod suggests that the Instrumentum Laboris should devote a special section with a clear heading to mixed (Christian) and interreligious families (1).

It notes that marriages with ‘disparity of cult’ are now called ‘interreligious marriages’, and suggests that more specific terminology should be given to ‘mixed marriages’ (between baptised Christians), e.g. ‘interchurch marriages’ in English, and similar expressions which have gained currency in other languages. ‘Interchurch families’ seems to be a suitable parallel description to ‘interreligious families’ (2).

II. The vocation and mission of interchurch families in the Church and in the contemporary world
The particular vocation of interchurch families is described (3). Like other Christian families, they are called to mirror the reconciling love of God in Christ, on the pattern of Christ’s love for his Church. In the covenant of marriage they form one church at home, but in their case their
domestic church is related to two as yet separated ecclesial communions. Thus interchurch families embody Christian unity. Simply by their existence interchurch families can offer a visible sign of unity, and by their involvement in the life of two churches can help to bring them together.

The mission of interchurch families is set out (4). The first witness of the partners is to one another. As their love and mutual understanding grows, they have practical experience of a ‘hierarchy of truths’, an ‘exchange of gifts’ and ‘receptive ecumenism’. They share with their children the particular riches of both their ecclesial communions, stressing unity in diversity. They bring together their extended families and their local congregations in important family celebrations such as baptism. They undertake local ecumenical responsibilities, stimulating common prayer, study together and joint service to the community. They demonstrate on a family scale the conditions in which growth into unity becomes possible. In this way they exemplify and anticipate some of the attitudes and actions that the churches also need as they strive to grow closer together.

Interchurch families need wise pastoral understanding if they are to fulfil their vocation and mission to be a sign and means of visible unity within their churches (5). Sometimes church legislation and attitudes seem to be pulling the partners apart, rather than strengthening their unity. What they need above all is a pastoral understanding that will focus on building up their marriages in respect for the unity and equality of the partners.

The paper then deals with particular pastoral issues. First, there is need for marriage preparation and follow-up adapted to interchurch partners (6). The contribution that interchurch couples themselves can make to marriage preparation should be valued, and pastoral support given to the work of interchurch family groups.

The pre-nuptial ‘promise’ required from the Catholic partner can still cause pastoral problems, and appear to deny the shared responsibility of parents for the religious upbringing of their children (7). Interchurch families ask whether a pre-nuptial ‘promise’ in any form need be required; might it not be sufficient to remind Catholics of their responsibilities as parents, and ascertain that they seriously desire to share their faith with their children, without requiring that this be expressed in juridical terms?

Interchurch parents sometimes have difficult decisions to make about their children’s religious education (8). They ask for respect for parental decisions on the baptism and upbringing of their children, and support for the whole family unit as they seek to walk forward together in growing unity.

Some interchurch families experience a serious spiritual need and deep desire for on-going eucharistic sharing (9). Interchurch families would therefore ask for an explicit statement that interchurch spouses who express a real need and desire for eucharistic sharing, and who fulfil the criteria for admission, can be allowed to receive communion alongside their Catholic partners on an on-going basis, whenever they are at mass together.

Interchurch families are greatly encouraged when their ecclesial communions see them not as problems, but as pioneers of Christian unity. They need pastoral understanding and support to liberate them to give this witness to the best of their ability (10). As they are welcomed in their family units into both their communities, the gift of ecclesial communion that they offer on a small scale to their churches will be more clearly seen. They ask for the kind of pastoral care that will welcome them as family units, while recognising that they also have loyalties to another ecclesial community.
I. MIXED AND INTERRELIGIOUS FAMILIES

1. Special attention to mixed (Christian) and interreligious families
A preliminary question in the final section of the Lineamenta for the Synod on the Family 2015 asks whether the description of the various familial situations corresponds to what exists in the Church and society today, and what missing aspects should be included.

We would like to point to the very restricted space given to mixed marriages (between baptised Christians) and interreligious marriages, and also to the fact that they are not given a specific heading in the text.

In Part I, ‘Listening: the Context and Challenges of the Family’, there is a clear recognition of the existence of many mixed and interreligious marriages. It speaks of their ‘inherent difficulties in terms of jurisprudence, Baptism, the upbringing of children and the mutual respect with regard to difference in faith’. It is recognised that in these marriages there can be ‘a danger of relativism or indifference’. However, it states, there can also be ‘the possibility of fostering the spirit of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue’ (7).

Yet in the rest of the Relatio there seems to be nothing about the pastoral care of mixed (Christian) and interreligious families. (There is simply a reference to the fact that the matrimonial regulations of the Orthodox Churches create serious problems in some contexts (54); nothing else.) Should not the particular difficulties and potential of such marriages be given specific consideration? Should not these families be helped to foster the spirit of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, rather than allowing them to fall into relativism or indifference through neglect?

In Part III, ‘Pastoral Perspectives’, the Relatio states that the problems relating to mixed marriages were frequently raised in the interventions of the synod fathers in 2014 (54). But this passing reference is hidden away at the end of the section entitled ‘Caring for Wounded Families (persons who are Separated, Divorced and Not Remarried, Divorced and Remarried and Single-Parent Families)’. This does not seem to be a suitable heading under which to address the specific needs of mixed (Christian) and interreligious families.

Similarly, in the list of questions given in the final section of the Lineamenta, the question on mixed and interreligious marriages comes under the heading of ‘Caring for Wounded Families (Separated, Divorced and Not Remarried, Divorced and Remarried, Single-Parent Families)’. It asks: ‘Does current legislation provide a valid response to the challenges resulting from mixed marriages or interreligious marriages? Should other elements be taken into account?’ (q.39). Again, this question seems to bear no relation to the heading.

We ask that a specific section in the Instrumentum Laboris should be devoted to mixed (Christian) and interreligious families’, with its own clear heading.

2. Similarities, differences and terminology
Within that heading, there are some questions that affect both mixed marriages (between baptised Christians) and interreligious marriages. One is that of the pre-marital promise required from the Catholic partner to do all that is possible for the Catholic baptism and upbringing of any children of the marriage. This can cause pastoral difficulties in both. Would it not be sufficient to ensure that Catholic partners were reminded before marriage of their responsibility to share their
Response to the 2015 Synod on the Family from the Interchurch Families International Network

faith with their children? Similarly, both mixed (Christian) and interreligious couples need special attention during the period of marriage preparation; they will both have to face particular situations and decisions that do not arise in the marriages of two Catholics. Should not this be considered in the section on ‘Guiding Engaged Couples in their Preparation for Marriage’ and in the following one on ‘Accompanying Married Couples in the Initial Years of Marriage’, or else in the proposed new section?

Although there are certain similarities between mixed marriages (between baptised Christians) and interreligious marriages, there are also big differences, and the two will need to be considered separately. If the Catholic Church gives permission or dispensation for them, it recognises both kinds as valid marriages, and therefore to be supported. However, the marriage of a Catholic with a baptised Christian of another church or ecclesial community is recognised as a fully sacramental marriage. The partners ‘share the sacraments of baptism and marriage’ (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 160). What is said of Christian marriage in Part II of the Relatio, ‘Looking at Christ – the Gospel of the Family’, applies to all mixed marriages between baptised Christians. The kind of pastoral care needed for mixed Christian marriages on the one hand and interreligious marriages on the other is therefore different. Indeed, it is recognised in Part I (7) that mixed marriages can promote Christian unity, while interreligious marriages can contribute to interreligious dialogue.

The distinction between the two has long been canonically recognised by the terminology of ‘mixed religion’ and ‘disparity of cult’. In the preparatory papers for the Synod the expression ‘disparity of cult’ has now been replaced by ‘interreligious marriage’. We would like to suggest that it may be time to revise the terminology for mixed marriages (between Christians). For a long time couples have disliked being called ‘mixed marriages’, which is an ambiguous term which can apply to many kinds of mixity, including interracial and interreligious marriages. When such couples have come together in groups and associations for mutual support they have used other terminology to identify themselves. In English-speaking regions they call themselves ‘interchurch families’, in German-speaking regions ‘konfessionsverbindende Familien’, in French-speaking regions ‘foyers mixtes interconfessionnels’, and in Italy ‘famiglie miste interconfessionali’.

We ask that consideration should be given to revising the terminology ‘mixed marriages’ when it refers to mixed marriages between baptised Christians. ‘Interchurch families’ seems to be a suitable parallel description to ‘interreligious families’.

II. THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF INTERCHURCH FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

3. The vocation of interchurch families

There are many kinds of mixed (Christian) families where the spouses ‘share the sacraments of baptism and marriage’ (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 160). Here we are mainly speaking of those who would intentionally call themselves ‘interchurch families’. Husband and wife both retain their original church membership, but so far as they are able they are committed to live, worship and participate in their spouse’s church also. As parents they exercise a shared and equal responsibility under God for the religious and spiritual upbringing of their children, and they teach them by word and example to appreciate both their Christian traditions. There is no blueprint for interchurch families; each is unique, and makes its own conscientious decision about the way in which it lives out its two-church character. But as the couple and family strive to build up the unity of their own ‘intimate communion of life and love’, their own ‘domestic church’, they intentionally...
situate their efforts within the wider ecumenical commitment of the churches to which they belong. They believe that this is what God is calling them to do.

They did not choose this path for themselves. For many it was not easy to come to a decision that God was calling them to marry someone from another ecclesial communion. They have often been strongly discouraged by church authorities and by their families, and in some places by the society in which they live. Yet it was often the deep Christian faith of the other that attracted them to one another. As one Canadian Catholic wife put it: ‘God gave me all I had asked for in a spouse – only I had forgotten to say he must be a Catholic’. And a Protestant wife from New Zealand said the same: ‘only I didn’t ask that he shouldn’t be a Roman Catholic’.

But once the decision to throw in their lot with one another for life has been made, they want to share all that is of value in each other’s lives, and as Christian marriage partners this includes especially the riches of their respective ecclesial communions. When they meet, the two individuals often share the mutual ignorance and prejudice of their fellow church members. But because they love and respect one another, and try to forgive each other’s weaknesses, they grow to love and respect each other’s churches. Just as ‘your family’ becomes ‘my family too’, so ‘your church’ becomes ‘my church too’, and their children take their places naturally in ‘our churches’. By learning to live in the traditions of one another’s communities they realise that not all differences are church dividing, but many are complementary and can lead to the enrichment of diversity. They want to share their joy in this discovery with their fellow Christians. Thus a vocation to marriage becomes also a vocation to promote Christian unity.

Interchurch families, like other Christian families, are called to mirror the reconciling love of God in Christ, on the pattern of Christ’s love for his Church. In the covenant of marriage they form one church at home, but in their case this domestic church is related to two as yet separated ecclesial communions. Thus interchurch families embody Christian unity. Simply by their existence interchurch families can offer a visible sign of unity, and by their involvement in the life of two churches can help to bring them closer to one another. They can form a connective tissue helping in a small way to bring the churches together in the one Body of Christ. Their domestic church can become a visible and prophetic sign of the unity to which all Christians are called – an imperfect sign, because of human weakness and frailty, but all the same a real sign that can be recognised in their mutual love and forgiveness, in the way that they share the whole of life with one another as they strive to help each other forward on their journey to the Father’s house.

4. **The mission of interchurch families**

Christian married partners are called to bring one another to perfection in the love of God. Their first witness is to one another. Because they love one another they want to understand one another, and they keep on asking questions. So many spouses have said: ‘I am a better Catholic (or whatever) because I am married to a Christian of another tradition. I have had to think through and articulate my faith in a way I would never have done otherwise.’ One Anglican wife reflected: ‘I don’t suppose many engaged couples spend an evening discussing what it means to ask the prayers of a saint, what incense is for, or what the word “priest” really means. We still share, and we are still growing in knowledge and respect for each other’s churches.’ Interchurch partners have practical experience of the ‘hierarchy of truths’, as they discover the many Christian resources they have in common. They also understand, from their daily life together, that ‘exchange of gifts’ which comes from sharing with one another the specific riches of their respective traditions. They practised ‘receptive ecumenism’ before it had a name.

Continued on the next page
Interchurch partners are sometimes able to draw their own families of origin into an ecumenical orbit too. Their parents may at first be shocked by their son or daughter’s choice, but be won over by the human and Christian qualities of their daughter- or son-in-law. They are enriched by being drawn into a wider ecumenical context. Instead of battling over which family is going to control the religious upbringing of their grandchildren, both can come to rejoice together in the broader perspective in which the children’s Christian initiation takes place.

The primary responsibility for the Christian upbringing and education of children rests with their parents. Interchurch parents, like all Christian parents, are together the first teachers of their children. From their earliest years they give witness to them by their actions and their words of the self-giving and reconciling love of God. It is natural that both parents will want to share with their children the treasures of the particular ecclesial communion in which they personally are members. They have to work out how to do this together, stressing unity in diversity rather than treating difference as a threat which will pull them apart. Many interchurch children grow up feeling at home in the traditions of both their parents, and feel themselves privileged rather than confused to have been brought up in this way. ‘I’m lucky, not weird’, said one child in Northern Ireland.

Interchurch spouses can also help to make links between the church communities to which they belong. As they join in the life and worship of their partner’s church, they can come to appreciate the distinctive witness of that community and to feel welcome there. Sometimes they accept a particular office or responsibility in the congregation of their partner’s church, such as teaching the children, leading youth work, singing or belonging to the music group, joining the welcome team. They can become ‘one of us’, not simply ‘one of them’. As mutual understanding grows, prejudices can melt away. When there are important family celebrations, both ministers and both congregations are sometimes invited to participate. On the occasion of a baptism, for example, a shared celebration can demonstrate and make real, in a way that no amount of talking could do, the fact that it is the One Baptism that is celebrated in different communions.

Indeed, the Catholic Church has recognised the mission that interchurch families can be asked to undertake within their church communities. In Cardinal Kasper’s Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism (2007), he writes that they can ‘be called upon to play a role in organising or leading ecumenical groups who gather for prayer and the study of Scripture, or for the support of other mixed marriage families; be given a particular responsibility in the preparation of ecumenical prayer services, both during the Week of Prayer and throughout the year; be invited to study and make known the Church’s teaching concerning the promotion of Christian unity and developments resulting from ecumenical dialogue.’

Interchurch families can also, as domestic churches, demonstrate to their church communities the conditions under which growth into unity becomes possible. In marriage their love is not content with a parallel separate existence, but yearns for, and therefore promotes, growth into deeper and deeper unity. Their marriage covenant gives formal expression to this love, and provides a support and framework that encourages it to grow and deepen. Living together under the same roof enables them to share each other’s daily life and activity, and get to know one another at a deep level. They share their resources, and make decisions together on how these are to be used for the good of the whole family and of their neighbours. They say they are sorry and ask for forgiveness when things go wrong. The parents share responsibility for their children’s education, and celebrate their Christian development (baptism, first communion, confirmation or profession of faith) in as united a way as possible. They are hospitable to others, and sensitive to the needs of each, so that nobody is obliged to act against their conscience. If the churches could assume some of these attitudes and
actions, so essential if interchurch families are to flourish, their walk together on the road to Christian unity might become smoother.

5. Pastoral understanding for interchurch families

The particular problems that face interchurch families stem from the fact that the two churches represented in their one domestic church are themselves divided. Happily, since Vatican II the Catholic Church has been committed to promoting Christian unity, and this has made it possible for mixed couples to be seen in a far more positive light than was the case earlier. Instead of being simply dismissed as a problem, they have increasingly been seen as having a potential to contribute to Christian unity. This was already recognised (though hidden in a negative formulation) in the Apostolic Letter *Matrimonia Mixta* issued by Pope Paul VI in 1970: ‘Mixed marriages do not, except in some cases, help in re-establishing unity among Christians.’ They came to be appreciated as living ecumenism in a particularly intimate way: ‘You live in your marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian unity’, said Pope John Paul II in 1982. In 2006 Benedict XVI declared that the decision to found a mixed Christian family ‘can lead to the formation of a practical laboratory of unity’. Indeed, the *Relatio* of the 2014 Synod on the Family, in its brief reference to mixed Christian marriages, said that they have the potential to foster the spirit of ecumenism (7).

But this does not happen automatically, and in spite of these positive words, there are still areas in which church legislation seems to be pulling the partners in an interchurch marriage apart, rather than strengthening their unity. Interchurch families cannot fulfil their vocation and mission to be a sign and means of visible unity within their churches unless they are welcomed, understood and supported by their extended families, their local congregations and their pastors. The role of the clergy is vital, and many have not been prepared for it. It would be helpful if further education on the pastoral care of interchurch families could be included in all seminaries, especially if some of the input is given by interchurch couples. Where this has been done, it has proved very positive.

What interchurch families need above all is a pastoral understanding that will focus on building up their marriage in respect for the unity and equality of the partners. In some parts of the world, for example in Africa, this may mean opposing the social pressure for a woman to be obliged to join the church of her husband – and this not only when it is the wife who is the Catholic. In other parts of the world it may mean extending more generously the provisions for eucharistic sharing in the case of some interchurch spouses. In his final address to the 2014 Synod, Pope Francis spoke of the year ahead as one in which ‘to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families.’ It is as a small contribution to that work that the Interchurch Families International Network would like to refer especially to particular pastoral issues that affect interchurch and mixed families.

6. The need for marriage preparation adapted to interchurch and mixed partners

In the past interchurch couples were treated as a problem when they presented themselves for marriage, unless they were prepared to accept without demur all the conditions laid down by the Catholic Church: the Catholic was to work for the ‘conversion’ of his or her partner, and both were to promise that all the children of the marriage would be brought up as Catholics. Even so, the wedding would be a second-class affair, taking place in the sacristy without music or flowers. Those days have gone. But some Catholic pastors still prefer to be faced with a non-practising Christian who will not cause difficulties rather than a devout Anglican or Lutheran. It is a problem to many pastors when they meet with prospective partners whose expectations, particularly over such issues as the religious upbringing of children and admission to communion, seem to conflict with existing church law and existing pastoral norms. If they react by presenting the Church’s position in an authoritarian and unsympathetic way, the couple will feel unwelcome and may be turned away from the Church. Listening
and trying to understand is crucial. Only after that can the Church’s position be explained in a way that will help the couple to realise that getting married across denominational boundaries may not be quite as straightforward as they may have thought.

It is not easy, and sometimes impossible because of distance, for the pastors of both communities to come together with the couple before a marriage to exercise joint pastoral care. Where it is possible, it is the ideal, and will reassure the couple that both their churches are involved in their marriage, and are concerned for the good of their future family. It will often benefit not only the couple and their families of origin, but also the ecumenical relationship of the two pastors.

Much marriage preparation nowadays is undertaken by lay married couples, who sometimes work according to a syllabus prepared at national or diocesan level. It is important that the needs of interchurch and mixed couples should be specifically addressed. It is even better, of course, if this can be done in the context of local churches working together in joint preparation for marriage. One of the most helpful ways of preparing for an interchurch marriage has proved to be the opportunity to talk with married couples who are further ahead on the road, and if prospective partners can be put in touch with groups of such couples this should be done.

Interchurch couples are increasingly involved in marriage preparation themselves, either in ecumenical or denominational contexts. Since so many couples who present themselves for marriage in some parts of the world are mixed couples, an interchurch family presence on the marriage preparation team has often proved very valuable. It can give mixed couples of many different kinds the feeling that they will not be regarded as second class marriages, and can open up wide discussion on how to cope with major differences in marriage and family life. It can witness to the importance of not allowing religion and spirituality to become a no-go area between the couple and in the family, and thus impoverishing relationships which could, rather, be immensely enriched by sharing on a deep level.

Like other married couples, interchurch couples also need to be sustained and encouraged in the years following their marriage. Interchurch family groups are a lifeline for some couples, and groups are very grateful for the support both of their Catholic priests and also of pastors from other churches. In such groups mutual support can be given, experiences can be shared, interchurch family spirituality can be developed, the challenges of interchurch parenting can be discussed, the fruits of ecumenical dialogue can be received, and the vocation and mission of interchurch families can be explored together. Interchurch children too can share their experiences and develop their faith journeys with their peers, and as they grow older, can reflect with the adults on their situation; in their turn they can take on a teaching role, to the great benefit of their parents. They have much to teach their parents, their extended families, and their churches. Teenagers claim that it is not they who are confused: ‘It is you of former generations who have been confused in accepting and perpetuating the divisions of the churches. Christ willed only one Church.’

Interchurch families therefore ask for pastoral attention to be given to the way in which interchurch couples are prepared for marriage, and that the contribution that interchurch couples can make to marriage preparation should be valued. They would ask for such care to be extended to the period after their marriage, and for encouragement and support to be given to interchurch family groups.

7. The ‘promise’ required by the Catholic Church before marriage
The religious and spiritual upbringing of their children is not easy for parents today, and
interchurch parents will face challenges that same-church parents do not have. It is right that they should think carefully about them before they marry, and of how they will try to use them as opportunities rather than problems. But experience suggests that it is not wise to press them to make a final decision on the baptism and upbringing of possible future children before marriage. A spouse cannot know how he or she will feel when a baby actually arrives.

Of course an absolute promise by both partners to baptise and bring up all the children as Catholics has not been required by the Catholic Church since 1970. However, the Catholic's obligation to ‘make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power so that all offspring are baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church” (CIC 1983, can. 1125 §1), is still interpreted in some places as equivalent to the former promise of both partners. In any case it appears to drive a wedge between the couple, and to envisage a struggle in which the Catholic must do all that is possible to ‘win'. Of course interchurch couples are grateful that it is now recognised that the partner who is a member of another church may well feel a conscientious obligation to bring children up in his or her church. It is also pointed out that the unity of the marriage is paramount, and that if this is threatened the Catholic partner will not be penalised if children are brought up in the other church (cf. Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 142, 148, 150-151).

But couples can still experience the ‘promise’ as imposing a unilateral demand on a relationship that they are striving to make fully mutual, and many interchurch partners feel that it is unfair and divisive. It can be presented in a way that appears to deny the shared responsibility of parents for the religious upbringing of their children. As such it seems to some Catholics entering marriage to deny the relationship of equality that is required both in ecumenical relationships (par cum pari) and in marriage. Unfortunately the intention behind the promise is not always explained to them in a way they can understand. A refusal to make the promise in these circumstances can lead to Catholics feeling rejected by their Church and to great tensions in family and church relationships.

It can be a bad witness to all who are concerned for the well-being of the couple, many of whom will not be practising Christians. One fiancée realised the scandal of it when she was talking to a friend about the pre-marriage difficulties she was experiencing. ‘I'm glad I'm not a Christian if it causes all these problems when you want to get married', said her friend.

In many countries the episcopal conferences have helped by modifying the wording of the promise over the years. In England and Wales the phrase 'as God’s law requires' has been replaced by ‘within the unity of our partnership’. The Austrian form of the promise includes the word ‘conscience’. In Ireland all Catholics getting married have to make a promise about the religious upbringing of their children, whether they are marrying Christians from other churches or not. In France mixed couples can express their intentions about the baptism and upbringing of their future children in their own words.

Interchurch families would like to ask whether a pre-nuptial ‘promise’ in any form need be required; might it not be sufficient to remind Catholics of their responsibilities as parents, and ascertain that they seriously desire to share their faith with their children, without requiring that this be expressed in juridical terms?

8. The baptism and upbringing of children

Interchurch parents would ask that the sometimes difficult decisions that they have to make about their children’s upbringing should be respected and supported by their pastors, even if they cannot always be fully approved. What many want – as do many of their children as they grow older – is that the stages of Christian initiation should be celebrated as far as possible as ecumenical events.
in which both churches play at least some recognisable part. If both their pastors take part in the celebration of their wedding, it seems natural that both should come together in celebrating the birth and baptism of their child. Only one minister normally performs the actual baptism, but the other can share in various parts of the rite, and the couple are able to feel that both their churches are supporting them as parents. Sometimes the fact of the baptism is recorded in the registers of the two churches of the parents, which gives them a similar reassurance. In some countries a common Certificate of Christian Baptism has been produced listing the churches that have agreed to accept it as evidence of Christian baptism. It is difficult to over-estimate the joy that a shared celebration of baptism can bring to some couples, their wider families, their friends, and to their pastors and congregations as well. As a priest from Northern Ireland reflected after he had taken part in two recent shared celebrations of baptism in interchurch families: 'I came away from these experiences utterly convinced of the unsurpassable value of time spent in mutual preparation by both clergy in a spirit of co-operative partnership.'

When it comes to confirmation, it is possible for the minister and congregation of one church to take a significant role in a confirmation in another church. This is very important to some interchurch children, who have experienced their Christian nurture within two church communities. Some have arranged a Profession of Faith in which they can witness for themselves to the commitment they are making to Christ in the context of the two communities which have shared in their journey of faith. The family life of interchurch families is immeasurably strengthened when they know they have the support of both their pastors and their two congregations.

When a family member dies, whether a spouse, parent or child, the family equally needs this kind of support. Some interchurch family funerals have given a particularly poignant and joyful witness to Christian unity and shared resurrection hope, as well as being a great comfort to the family members grieving the loss and celebrating the life of a much-loved partner, parent, child or relative.

Interchurch families would therefore ask for respect for parental decisions on the baptism and upbringing of their children, and support for the whole family unit as they seek to walk forward together in growing unity.

9. The experienced need for on-going eucharistic sharing in some interchurch families

For some interchurch parents, it is the time when their child comes to receive First Communion that has been a culminating point in their desire to receive communion together. They may have longed to share communion together as a married couple, but when a child questions why their baptised parent from another community will be excluded, or hesitates to receive communion at all if both parents cannot receive with him or her, the pain is compounded and their dilemma seems to have no answer. They realise that they cannot fully witness to their child what they are actually living in the unity of their domestic church. The scandal of our divided churches becomes all too apparent to the child and can become a stumbling block. They try to explain the situation as best they can. 'I don’t think that’s a very good rule', responded one child to her Anglican mother, 'because it tears families apart'. One Italian couple was very moved by the story of a French child, distressed that his Protestant mother was not receiving communion with him at his First Communion, who kept part of the host he had received for himself and brought it to his mother for her to share. For twenty years, when the Italian couple were at mass together, they acted ‘according to the teaching of that unknown child’. Stories of a young child who has spontaneously divided his or her host to share with a mother have come from different countries and continents.
Interchurch families are grateful that exceptional eucharistic sharing is now recognised as appropriate in the case of some of those couples and families who ‘share the sacraments of baptism and marriage’; the other baptised spouse can be admitted to communion where there is a real need and desire, a free request, and Catholic eucharistic faith. But there is a general uneasiness about the present situation, because there is so much diversity of practice, from country to country, from diocese to diocese, from parish to parish. Some interchurch spouses who express their spiritual need and desire for eucharistic sharing are still told this is not possible. Others to their great joy are admitted to communion on an on-going basis. Yet others are told that they can be admitted only on rare occasions, and that some occasions are not ‘exceptional’ enough. This can be a real cause of scandal in some congregations.

Official and unofficial permissions are given at all levels and decisions are made that cannot be talked about. This is a bad witness. Interchurch families often find it difficult to speak about their experiences openly, for fear of compromising others. They feel they must protect clergy whose pastoral concern sometimes leads them to go beyond the letter of the law, at least as it is interpreted where they live. Interchurch families would like more freedom to witness to the joy of eucharistic sharing together, allowed because of their serious need and desire in their privileged situation of commitment to one another in their domestic church.

They feel that their ecumenical witness is hindered in the present situation, either because they are bearing the crushing burden of being unable to share communion except on rare occasions, or because they are unable to share openly their joy at being able to receive communion together. Some feel that they have to make a choice on the one hand between keeping a low profile locally and receiving communion together discreetly, for the sake of family unity, and on the other playing a full part in the local ecumenical scene – where they may have a great deal to offer. All Christians are called to suffer on account of the divisions that are contrary to the will of Christ, but if growing understanding between the churches can help to avoid unnecessary suffering and enable a stronger witness from interchurch families, is this not to be celebrated with joy? The witness of truly interchurch families is a living gift offered to the churches by those who have experienced sacramental communion in both baptism and marriage (and in the Eucharist where possible), through which Christ builds up their domestic church. Their witness to spiritual ecumenism and ecumenical reception is vital. The loss is great when they feel they must remain quiet about their situation.

Not all partners in interchurch marriages wish to share communion; they may have very different eucharistic beliefs or think of communion as an individual relationship with God. But for those who do so desire, sharing communion can transform their life and witness. Indeed, the urgent need for on-going eucharistic sharing may well be felt most by those ‘exceptional cases’ who in their mixed marriages ‘help in re-establishing unity among Christians’ (*Matrimonia Mixta*). Christian marriage is not a series of special occasions, but an on-going daily commitment to becoming ever more fully an intimate community of life and love, a domestic church. Exceptional eucharistic sharing is needed throughout an interchurch marriage to sustain this communion in Christ, to express and to deepen it. As one interchurch couple put it: ‘For us, the Eucharist is what binds and strengthens us as a couple and a family, and gives us any hidden strength we may have in order to bear Christ’s love into our beautiful but broken world.’ Recognising the need for on-going eucharistic sharing in those interchurch families who deeply desire it would be a clear sign of the importance that the Catholic Church attaches to the marriage covenant and to supporting marriage and family life.
Interchurch families would therefore ask for an explicit statement that interchurch spouses who express a real need and desire for eucharistic sharing, and who fulfil the criteria for admission, can be allowed to receive communion alongside their Catholic partners on an on-going basis, whenever they are at mass together.

10. **The pastoral care that is prepared to welcome interchurch families as a unit, while respecting the fact that they also have loyalties to another ecclesial community**

   If interchurch families are received in each other’s churches with an understanding welcome, then their interchurch character and commitment can become a gift and a visible sign of hope for their churches on their path to unity. In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI stressed the responsibilities of their respective church communities, if interchurch homes were to be able to be authentic ‘laboratories of unity’. These communities would need ‘mutual goodwill, understanding and maturity in faith’, he said, with ‘full respect for the rights and responsibilities of the spouses for the faith formation of their own family and the education of their children’.

   Interchurch families are greatly encouraged when their ecclesial communions see them not as problems, but as pioneers of Christian unity. They bring both gifts and challenges to their churches; both are to be welcomed. Interchurch families are called to witness by their lives, their actions and their words to the fundamental and growing unity of all Christian people, and to share a common life in the Church for the reconciliation of our churches. They need pastoral understanding and support to liberate them to give this witness to the best of their ability. When they receive such understanding they are encouraged in faithfulness to their vocation, and in their witness to Christian unity. They are also strengthened in their mission to those ‘mixed marriage’ couples who feel rejected by the Catholic Church.

   Pope John Paul II said that ‘the Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realisation of ecclesial communion’ (**Familiaris Consortio**, 21). As interchurch families are welcomed in their family units into both their communities, the gift of ecclesial communion which they reveal and realise will become more evident, and they will become more effectively a connective tissue helping in a small way to bring the churches together in the one Body of Christ.

   Interchurch families ask for the kind of pastoral understanding that will welcome them as family units, while at the same time recognising that they also have loyalties to another ecclesial community, and respecting their particular ecumenical vocation and mission.
Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

A Book Review of “Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America” by Barbara Ehrenreich

Barbara Ehrenreich, who wrote “Nickeled and Dimed, On (Not) Getting By in America” also wrote “Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America.” Ehrenreich observes that we, as Americans, have been told that being positive is the key to success and prosperity. Ehrenreich exposes the downsides of positive thinking; she explains how an over emphasis on positive thinking tends to create a scenario that results in personal self-blame and the denial of reality on a national level.

Ehrenreich’s book is divided into the following chapters:
- Smile or Die: The Bright Side of Cancer;
- The Years of Magical Thinking,
- The Dark Roots of American Optimism;
- Motivating Business and the Business of Motivation;
- God Wants You to Be Rich;
- Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness;
- How Positive Thinking Destroyed the Economy;
and
- Postscript on Post-Positive Thinking.

One example that Ehrenreich gives pertains to students. Rather than recognizing that learning something new requires some trial and error, students tend to believe that they are either capable or not capable. Ehrenreich observes that in reality some kind of effort is essential for learning. Initial failure most likely will occur in any or all newly taken on endeavor. Subsequent efforts that refine the action may produce the desired outcome.

Ehrenreich observes that if students believe they have what it takes or that they will never be able to learn something new and how this impacts the effort that students are able to put into learning something new. Effort is important.

Patients with Cancer are urged to keep a positive attitude so they can get better. Ehrenreich observes that being able to heal from a serious Cancer may not always be possible, but that this

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↑Sometimes all that we can get is a limited view of the whole image, but we know that there is much more out there. View of Central Park in New York City that is but a glimpse of the whole.
is not a character flaw of the patient although patients may be made to feel that they haven’t done enough.

The same concept has been applied to financial success. Ehrenreich posits that the recent economic recession/depression arose from an excessive use of positive thinking that allowed lenders and borrowers to buy homes for which they actually had no way to pay off the loans.

I found the book, “Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America” by Barbara Ehrenreich to be quite thought provoking. For this reason, I am highly recommending this book to you so that you can draw your own conclusions and make your own observations. I found a copy of it at our local public library.

My personal thoughts or conclusions, that came about in response to reading the concepts that Ehrenreich presents, ultimately brought me to consider a common expression in the U.S.A., “Do you see the glass as being half empty or half full?”

As I was sitting in a local restaurant recently, the waiters kept refilling our water glasses. It became clear to me that the waiters had been directed to keep the water glasses filled for their customers. Although fast food restaurants are an exception; it is a common practice in the U.S.A, in sit down restaurants, for the waiters to keep the water glasses filled. Keeping water glasses filled is such an ordinary practice here that it could be overlooked. It was while I was reading this book that I began

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Sunset over the Hudson River:
Sometimes life can give us glimpses of a greater world far beyond the one that we may know and with which we are familiar. So we may find solutions that exist that may have eluded us before, and we may be able to find those solutions if we are able to consider the positive potential and good that may exist beyond what we usually see and consider.

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Continued on the next page
to reflect on the question, “Do you see the glass as being half empty or half full?” Seeing the glass as being half full would usually be considered as a positive viewpoint, I thought. On the other hand, if the glass is perceived to be half full, it is less likely that it will be refilled so that it becomes completely full, I thought. While if the glass is perceived to be half empty, the waiter is more likely to come over to refill the glass. I believe that this briefly sums up the point that Ehrenreich wants to make.

Ehrenreich gives concrete examples for the conclusions she draws from her research. I found her book, “Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America” to be most thought provoking. In the “Notes” at the back of her book, Ehrenreich lists all of the reference books that contributed to her research for writing this book; the list is substantial and impressive.

Implications For Interchurch Families and For Those Who Give Us Pastoral Care; Inspired by “Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America” by Barbara Ehrenreich

Will the children of Interchurch Families become Confused?
Interchurch Families are created by two spouses who stay active in their churches of origin. They frequently participate in their spouse’s church in ways that are possible for them. The children may or may
Sometimes, we are blessed with a view of the world that brings things into our sight and into focus which we may normally never get to see.

These little gifts of being able to see something that is new and special to us often serve to help us to gain a better perspective of the world around us.

Interchurch Families clearly state that their children are not confused. Quite the contrary, Interchurch children tend to have a deeper understanding of both churches so that they can explain the differences to others with great clarity.

The children of Interchurch Families who are brought up in both of their parents’ denominations can be compared to children who are raised to be bilingual in their homes of origin. They are equally fluent in the two languages that they hear being spoken all around them since their birth; it is their normal. It is those who have never lived this interchurch family experience who seem to think, that being raised in both churches or being raised with an awareness of two church traditions even if they are officially only being raised in one of their parent’s churches, who think that interchurch children will become confused.

Any young child who has visited other homes observes quite quickly that other families have varied or different rituals and habits from the ones they have in their own homes. The differences are just that differences and nothing more; there is no value judgment placed on the differences perceived by the children. Children’s natural curiosity leads them to observe and adapt as they grow. They quickly learn what rules apply in their friend’s homes, and what they must follow in their own home. Interchurch children adapt readily to being exposed to two different Christian denominations.

Children who get the proper amount of appropriate attention, affection and approval will be able to flourish in a variety of situations. We have observed that children raised in Interchurch Families are not confused. Interchurch children who are raised in both traditions tend to be far more aware of both churches’ practices so that they can serve to clarify what is accurate and what is an incorrect assumption within their communities. In this way they serve as bridges between the two churches that may not otherwise exist; they are insiders in both churches.
Interchurch Families would like to have the gift of being interchurch recognized as the gift that it can be for our churches of origin.

**Interchurch Families are often perceived to be a problem rather than a solution.**

Two adults fall in love across the great historical divide that exists between Christian denominations. Falling in love across an historical divide is not the problem; the real problem is that the churches are divided.

Proselytizing in an effort to convert another Christian to the church of one spouse or the other in order to help to maintain family unity often discounts the faith practices of one spouse or parent. Healthy marriages require both spouses to feel equal to the other. “Converting” if it is perceived to be a requirement for the marriage to be valid, does not actually create a genuine conversion of that person. It is more of a paper conversion than a true spiritual conversion. Genuine spiritual conversions made without any kind of external pressure are the desired kind of conversion so that it is an authentic experience.

Interchurch Families indicate that they have many hurdles to jump through, far more than single church couples. These hurdles are perceived to be unnecessary, or only directed at potentially interchurch couples, and often times to be imposed in an arbitrary or punitive manner.

The Roman Catholic spouse is asked to sign or to make a promise that the Roman Catholic Spouse will do everything in their...
“We all share our journey with everyone else who is heading in the same direction as we are headed, and even with those we pass going in the opposite direction. This gives us a bond of unity even if it only lasts briefly. That brief moment may be enough; it is a gift of sorts. We can see examples all around us.

there every child will develop their own mature belief system. If there is no religious affiliation, no Bible study in the family, the child will be left to find some spiritual grounding elsewhere.

The Pastoral Care of Interchurch Families
Most truly interchurch families have indicated that one of the spouses has felt shunned or excluded at different times, often during those critical moments in their lives. It appears that it is more painful to the spouse whose church rejects their spouse than it is to the spouse who is being shunned or rejected. We don’t believe that any church consciously seeks to reject the loved ones of their own church communicants/members. It is just that the churches haven’t yet thought this action through well enough to be able to see the moments when they are rejecting the spouse of their own parishioner. Proper pastoral care is needed, but interchurch families often are met with church rules or cannon
laws so that they feel invisible, ignored or rejected. How can this dynamic be turned around? These dynamics need to be changed; true Christian hospitality is needed.

**Some Concluding Thoughts**
Interchurch Families have special insights into what it is like to live on the fringes of society while trying to be affiliated as a family with two Christian traditions, two churches. As painful as this experience may be for interchurch families, they may actually be one of the best resources available for Christians who wish to find paths towards peace in a world that seems to be constantly at war and torn apart from our neighbors.

Interchurch Couples and Interchurch Families wish to be seen as the gift they/we are for both of their churches. This is a topic that we would like to see all churches begin to address, “How can we best give pastoral care to interchurch families so that churches are better able to nurture interchurch families in the faith community and so that interchurch families can be seen for the gifts we/they have?”

Barbara Ehrenreich calls for existential clarity and courage. Interchurch Families and ecumenism, in general, also needs to be viewed with existential clarity so that Interchurch Families can be seen for the gifts that they bring to their churches simply by being interchurch that is living an interchurch life. Change is usually perceived as being difficult. A change in the way that interchurch families are perceived may be necessary if we are ever to be able to achieve some kind of Christian Unity. ~ M. J. Glauber

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Bees are feared because they may sting you. It is the nature of bees to sting; it is a protective measure for them. Bees also help to pollinate flowers, and some bees create honey from the nectar they find in flowers. Every living creature has some form of gift, their purpose, that they bring to the world. Recognizing the gifts of others is important for all of us.
Above you will find a link to the Instrumentum Laboris created by the Vatican in response to input that they received from dioceses from around the world. This document is thorough. It would serve all of us well, if we personally became familiar with what it says, rather than to allow others to interpret it for us through their own personal filter.

What was the content of the input that the Vatican was given from which this document was created? This may help us to better understand the Instrumentum Laboris because we may be able to better understand what societal issues it is attempting to address. Below you will find a few of the abstracts regarding the full reports that can be found at http://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=issue&journal_code=INT&issue=1&vol=20 and at http://www.intams.org/backissues.htm#anchor-vol201-12345 You can order a copy by sending an email to dominique.vanhaelst@intams.org

~ M.J. Glauber

Intams - The Synod on the Family
Reports From Around the World from local Roman Catholic Churches

The INTAMS review; Journal for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality has consecrated the first volume of 2014 to the reports that have been sent for the Synod. Authors from 20 countries report on how and what their local church has contributed. Selected excerpts appear below.

The complete report can be found at http://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=issue&journal_code=INT&issue=1&vol=20

Document Details: USA - American Input for the Synod on the Family

Title: U.S. Catholic Hopes for the Upcoming Synod on the Family
Author(s): RUBIO, Julie Hanlon
Journal: INTAMS review
Abstract: The U.S. Catholic response to the Synod on marriage and family has been one of gratitude and hopefulness. Though the experiences of Catholics varied depending on the how the bishop in their diocese chose to seek input on the survey, those who were given the opportunity to respond were happy to share their views, hopes, and anxieties. Several U.S. bishops reported widespread disagreement on church teachings, along with a desire for a more welcoming and merciful church that makes room for the diversity of Catholic families.

U.S. Catholics are not necessarily hoping for changes in moral teachings, but they are interested in the attractive sort of moral teaching which Pope Francis models in Evangelii Gaudium. Here, judgment is tempered with mercy, norms are less important than virtues, tradition is understood as accompaniment, and the church is open to dialogue and growth.

Document Details : Switzerland’s Report for the Synod on the Family

Title: Kirche in der Schweiz auf dem Weg zur Familiensynode
Author(s): BÜNKER, Arnd
Journal: INTAMS review
Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014  Pages: 61-68  DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036695
Abstract: The announcement of the Synod and the call to everyone in the church, down to the very basis, to answer a questionnaire aroused considerable expectations in many of the Swiss faithful, due in large part to the great approval of Pope Francis and to his popularity. The Swiss bishops dealt with the questionnaire in a differentiated manner that made possible a very high level of participation.
by both pastors and faithful; and this gives us a detailed picture of the pastoral care of partnership, marriage, and family in Switzerland. There has seldom been such a broad and intensive discussion of these questions in the church, as happened in the context of this questionnaire.

The results show a widespread failure with regard to the communication and the acceptance of the church’s teaching. But they also show a great openness and willingness to interpret, and to live, forms of relationship and family in a religious sense. The pastoral activity of the church must prove its worth in this state of tension today. The demands made of pastoral workers are immense. Many expect that the Synod will give the green light to follow paths in pastoral care that have been unofficial up to now. But we can also see that the church’s teaching on partnership, marriage, and family needs to be adjusted and given a new position in the life of the church and of the faithful.

Document Details : Mexico’s Input to The Synod on the Family
Title: Preparations for the Extraordinary Synod in Mexico
Subtitle: The Perspective from Tlalnepantla
Author(s): PESCHARD, Norma
Journal: INTAMS review Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014  Pages: 10-12
DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036686

Abstract: The present article aims to share some reflections on the significance of marriage and the family, on the basis of the consultation carried out in Mexico last autumn and winter among people of various ages and states of life, in preparation for the 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops. The observations made in the course of this analysis depict a process of change in family structures. The ongoing cultural changes have made a considerable impact on the values of our families, generating difficulties and areas of shadow. In many cases, the growth of new customs and confusing definitions tend to support positions contrary to the essence of marriage and of the family.

This article has three parts.
Part 1 is descriptive: it consists of an introduction and some general reflections on the consultation itself and on the topics discussed.
Part 2 analyses the consultation in Mexico, especially in the archdiocese of Tlalnepantla, to see how the church is responding to the current challenges to marriage and family life. A summary of the responses to the questionnaire is given.
Part 3 concludes by speaking of the expectations of the church in our country with regard to the coming Synod.

Document Details : Input from Eastern Canada for the Synod on the Family
Title: La consultation sur la famille dans l'Est du Canada
Author(s): DEMASURE, Karlijn
Journal: INTAMS review Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014  Pages: 19-25
DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036688

Lines: Creating art or simple doodles that helps us to put together new combinations of ordinary things, helping us to be able to see things in a new light is God at work.
Abstract: The author examines the process of consultation on the pastoral challenges that the family faces in eastern Canada. After describing the procedures in the archdioceses of Gatineau, Montreal, Ottawa, and Saint John’s, as well as in the diocese of Valleyfield, the article examines the reactions of the participants who were able, thanks to this consultation process, to make their voices heard on the problems that they encountered, such as the shortness of the time they were given, the excessive difficulty of the questions, and the gap between doctrine and reality. The bishops’ decision not to publish the results of the consultation is discussed in the third part of the article, followed by the analysis of the various “filters” through which these results passed before they were sent to Rome.

Document Details: Input from England, Wales and Scotland
Abstract: This article discusses the consultation process for the Extraordinary Synod on Marriage and Family Life in England, Wales and Scotland. After summarising the different methods of consultation undertaken by the respective Bishops’ Conferences and by some individual dioceses, the article goes on to explore the reaction to the consultation process in the UK Catholic media and among laypeople. Media reactions to the consultation process and the significance of consulting laypeople tended to reflect existing conservative or liberal outlooks, with conservative commentators playing down the significance of the consultation and stating that there would be no substantive changes to Church teaching, and liberal commentators seeing the consultation as a sign of hope and change ahead. Laypeople tended to react positively to the consultation in spite of difficulties with its technical language. In the final part of the article, the author suggest some practical ways in which Bishops’ Conferences, dioceses and parishes might use the consultation process and the eventual outcome of the synod as an opportunity to forge a more constructive and fruitful relationship between laypeople and magisterial authority.

Document Details: Report From Belgium
Title: Die Kirche in Belgien auf dem Weg zur Synode über die Familie  Author(s): KNIEPS-PORT LE ROI, Thomas , DILLEN, Annemie  Journal: INTAMS review  Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014  Pages: 36-42  DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036691
Abstract: Two initiatives in particular have marked the preparations in the Church in Belgium after Pope Francis’ announcement of an Extraordinary Bishops’ Synod to be held in 2014: First, the Belgian Bishops invited and encouraged Belgian Catholics on a large scale to fill in the questionnaire which...
the Vatican had distributed in order to receive input from the local churches. The questionnaire was put on-line and by mid-December 2013 the Bishops had received 1589 responses either from individuals or groups. A second, complementary initiative was taken by the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven where researchers had set up a quantitative survey in order to assess experiences and points of tension in the Church teaching on sexuality, marriage and family issues. The Leuven theologians received 1853 responses mainly from persons who are professionally and/or voluntarily involved in pastoral services and faith transmission in the Flemish Church. The results of both surveys were presented and discussed during a study day at the Leuven Faculty of Theology in May 2014. Although the findings concurred to a great extent in assessing a discrepancy between the church teaching and its reception by Belgian Catholics, the Leuven survey provided additional and more accurate information, mainly with regard to the core group of church-related and committed faithful.

**Document Details : Report From Germany**

**Title:** Reaktionen auf den vatikanischen Fragebogen zur Familienpastoral in Deutschland  
**Author(s):** HILPERT, Konrad  
**Journal:** INTAMS review  
**Volume:** 20  
**Issue:** 1  
**Date:** 2014  
**Pages:** 49-53  
**DOI:** 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036693  
**Abstract:** Despite unclarities about the authors’ expectations, and despite its intentionally unrepresentative character, the Vatican questionnaire met with considerable interest in Germany among the diocesan bishops, the Catholics, and many lay bodies and associations. Taken together, the evaluations clearly display a marked divergence between the stances of many Catholics and the official positions on sexual morality. But there is also a basic agreement about the principle of the church’s championing of the idea of a sacramental bond for life that includes fidelity, exclusiveness, and openness to new life. It is striking that the responses to the questionnaire also include criticism and expectations addressed to the church as an authority and an agent in moral matters. We could summarize as follows: Instead of prohibitions and severity, people want encouragement, support, and accompaniment. The faithful wish, not so much to receive instructions from on high, as to feel that they are taken seriously and accepted together with the reality of their own lives, and that they will receive compassionate treatment even when they experience failure.

**Document Details : Report from Italy**

**Title:** Einige Anmerkungen zur Befragung über Ehe und Familie in Italien  
**Author(s):** LINTNER, Martin M.  
**Journal:** INTAMS review  
**Volume:** 20  
**Issue:** 1  
**Date:** 2014  
**Pages:** 69-77  
**DOI:** 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036696  
**Abstract:** In comparison to other European countries, the echo of the Vatican questionnaire about marriage and family in Italy was scanty, not least because in most dioceses, the endeavors to get a wide base of the faithful to respond remained within modest limits. With only a few exceptions, the results from the individual dioceses were not made public. It is however possible, on the basis of the results that have

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been made known and of the responses that were elicited by initiatives such as that of the periodical Il Regno, to identify some fundamental tendencies, which demonstrate the discrepancy between the church’s teaching and the praxis of many of the faithful in Italy, and which permit us to draw some conclusions about the reasons for this. In addition to an inadequate knowledge of the differentiated teaching of the church, there is also a rejection for reasons of substance of specific declarations and norms. It is also clear that many of the faithful hope that the praxis of the church will change on some disputed points (especially with regard to the admission to the sacraments of those who are divorced and remarried) and that the church’s teaching on marriage, family, and sexuality will develop further, not least against the background of the insights of the human sciences and of anthropological considerations that are made necessary by today’s sociocultural context. There is a palpable hope that the church will not only proclaim the Gospel to families, but will also endeavor to understand it and to live it together with them, and that it will not exclude people in difficult marital and family situations, but will find ways to integrate them into the ecclesial community, so that this community will be credible and tangible to those concerned. There is a hope, not only that accurate distinctions will be drawn between the various situations, for the sake of the love of truth (see Familiaris consortio, nr. 84), but also that, for the sake of love of the persons concerned, solutions will be found that do justice to the various situations.

Document Details: Report from Southern Africa

Title: Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelisation  
Subtitle: Southern African Catholic Bishop’s Conference (South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland)  
Author(s): MUNRO, Alison  
Journal: INTAMS review  
Volume: 20  
Issue: 1  
Date: 2014  
Pages: 101-105  
DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036701

Abstract: Responses to the questionnaire were received from twenty four of the twenty nine dioceses of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), covering South Africa, Swaziland and Botswana. The seriousness of those who answered the questionnaire, bishops, lay people, married couples, parish pastoral councils, family movements, sodalities and clergy, was evident in the responses provided. Despite time constraints, and the summer holiday period in Southern Africa, the overall participation was impressive. Reflection and engagement took place in a variety of forms from parish to parish, mostly done by the pastoral councils of parishes. Some dioceses hosted meetings of those involved in the family apostolate to attend to the questionnaire. The major concerns to emerge are those related to an understanding of what constitutes a family; pastoral care for those in irregular marriages; learnings from indigenous cultural practices; catechetics and ongoing formation; and the realities of the socio-economic context. The survey provided an honest account of family life in the region; people highlighted joys and hopes as well as challenges and frustrations experienced in trying to live out their faith. There were different perspectives and emphases, but nothing not yet known. There is a wide variety in people’s experience of family life. The
number of ‘typical’ families is declining. People value family life greatly, and they are trying hard to keep their families together despite challenging circumstances. They are looking to the Church for direction and support, mindful that much needs to be done by themselves, within their own homes and communities. Bishops have long expressed concern about family life, as have delegates in various pastoral consultations of the SACBC. A much needed process and response will require the commitment and collaboration of all, bishops and laity alike, so that we can reclaim the home and family as the ‘domestic Church’. The results of the survey have led the bishops to consider how better to respond to the pastoral challenges faced by families in the region. There is a need for greater catechetics and a renewed focus on pastoral care. The bishops have resolved to make family life one of the focus areas in the region for the next three years.

Document Details : Survey from Asia
Title: An Attempt to Understand the Varied Reception of the Synod Preparation Document and Survey in Asia
Author(s): LOUIS, Wendy
Journal: INTAMS review
Volume: 20 Issue: 1 Date: 2014 Pages: 106-110 DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036702
Abstract: The questionnaire ought to have targeted groups clearly, with different questions for different groups. Families could not answer questions about pastoral realities and natural law, which were the concern of pastors. Many questions could not be answered because the church is not present at the grassroots, and is not accustomed to collecting data relevant to the development of its ministry. The questionnaire thus shows that we need a better grasp of the basic realities. – There is an optimistic expectation that the Synod on the Family will result in a much better understanding of how to care for the family and appreciate it. Many in the church in Asia are concerned about whether the Synod discussions will take up only questions and concerns that are relevant to the family in a European context. The various Asian realities – interfaith marriages, poverty, migration, women’s place in the family, separated families, and fast-aging populations – are often too challenging to be included in debates that focus on the doctrinal and theological aspects of marriage and the family.

Document Details : An African Response
Title: African Cross-National Attitudes and Expectations in View of the Synod on the Family
Author(s): ASSENGA, Petri
Journal: INTAMS review
Volume: 20 Issue: 1 Date: 2014 Pages: 90-95 DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036699
Abstract: The announcing of the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the family met with an enthusiastic response in Africa, where the institution of marriage is central. The interest in the Synod and in the questionnaire was so intense that many people thought that the Vatican had proclaimed 2014 as the ‘year of the family’. The response has involved research, reflection, and prayer. Some dioceses have composed prayers for the family and organized seminars and retreats to promote the well being of the...
National Reports for the Synod on the Family

family which is under attack from various sides, for economic and political reasons. There have been many academic symposia and workshops in Catholic universities and colleges, organized by departments of pastoral and moral theology. The episcopal conferences have likewise been involved, organizing talks and discussions with theologians, pastors, and experts on marriage and the family in preparation for the Synod. The church in Africa has taken the family as its model. The traditional African family is facing challenges from the media, which bombard it with foreign values. This explains the need for the church to help families in the ways indicated in the present article.

Document Details : Report from Across West Africa

Title: A Cross-West African Sub-Region Survey on Attitudes with regard to Family Life
Author(s): APPIAH-KUBI, Francis
Journal: INTAMS review
Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014
Pages: 96-100  DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036700

Abstract: Marriage and family life embody solid cultural values and are the fundamental guarantee of the community and of society. They have been the object of examination by social scientists, whose conclusions pose a great challenge to the church. For the church, what is at stake is the identity and the survival of marriage and family life, as well as the lives of so many children who are the victims of an a priori discrimination that deprives them of a proper education and of the growth to human maturity that, in God’s plan, happens in a home with both a father and a mother. The direct rejection of God’s law and purpose for marriage is equally dangerous, since this is not simply a political struggle. It is not merely a question of legislation: it is a ‘move’ by the devil to confuse and lead astray the children of God. Within this ideological confusion, and against the background of certain traditional customs, the African Christian family must make sense of its family life in the context of its faith and culture. The present contribution, which is exclusively the fruit of field research, studies reactions and concrete activities that have been taken in Africa in view of the upcoming Synod. It analyzes data collected across the West African sub-region and makes some relevant proposals for the Synod’s consideration.

Document Details : Report From Australia

Title: Preparing for the Synod on the Family
Subtitle: The Australian Response
Author(s): KIRCHHOFFER, David G. , L'HUIILLIER, Natalie Lindner
Journal: INTAMS review
Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014
Pages: 111-117  DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036703

Abstract: Australians responded enthusiastically to the calling of the Synod, though there appears to be a tension between expectations of doctrinal reform and pastoral reform. The Bishops Conference allowed each diocese to consult as it saw fit and submit its findings, in light of which a committee of four bishops drafted the official
submission to the Synod. Other materials were also sent to the Synod office, including some directly by dioceses and other Catholic organisations. The dioceses surveyed made the preparatory document and questionnaire available online and in print. There was a high level of frustration expressed with the complexity of many of the questions. The Conference and most dioceses did not publish the findings of the consultation or their submission to the Synod. Nonetheless, these are likely to reveal trends with regard to co-habitation, pre-marital sex, contraception, the treatment of divorced Catholics and same-sex marriage similar to those of other western countries based on an analysis of existing quantitative data from the National Church Life Survey, diocesan reports to which the researchers were given access, and the Catholic media.

There is an apparent disconnect between the lived experience of many Catholics and Church teaching in these areas. Moreover, there is a tension between issues of doctrinal confusion, doctrinal rejection, and pastoral care which could have consequences for whether the Synod should consider doctrinal reform or need only focus on pastoral care. Most importantly, the responses demonstrate that Catholics in Australia want to be better informed about Church teaching, want to be consulted about these matters, and want to have a say in the formulation of Church teaching. Not taking these wishes seriously risks further alienating many Catholics from the Church who express a disjuncture between Church teaching and their own life experience in these matters.

Document Details : An Interchurch Perspective

Title: The Synod on the Family  Subtitle: An Interchurch Family Perspective
Author(s): REARDON, Ruth  Journal: INTAMS review
Volume: 20  Issue: 1  Date: 2014  Pages: 118-123  DOI: 10.2143/INT.20.1.3036704
Abstract: In addressing the 1980 Synod on the Family on ‘Mixed Marriages and their Christian Families’ Cardinal Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, focused on the possibility of admitting the non-Catholic partner to Eucharistic communion in the Catholic Church, and on the witness to unity that could be made by mixed couples. Over the years there have been positive developments, and it is now clear that the non-Catholic partner can be admitted to Eucharistic communion at least on an occasional basis, in some cases and under certain conditions. However, Christian marriage is not a series of special occasions, but an on-going daily commitment to becoming an intimate community of life and love, a ‘domestic church’. Interchurch families now hope that the coming Synod on the Family will make an explicit statement that interchurch families can share...
Reports for the Synod on the Family

communion on an on-going basis. This could transform life for some families, and would be a clear witness to the nature and importance of Christian marriage.

Implications Regarding the Synod on the Family for Interchurch Families, Ecumenists, and for Those Who Give Us Pastoral Care

Instead of prohibitions and severity, people want encouragement, support, and accompaniment. There is an apparent disconnect between the lived experience of many Catholics and Church teaching. In Asia, many questions could not be answered because the church is not present at the grassroots, and is not accustomed to collecting data relevant to the development of its ministry. The questionnaire thus shows that we need a better grasp of the basic realities. While in Africa, where the institution of marriage is central, the issues that are paramount to Africans seem to reflect issues related to survival there in regard to the concept of the family.

Regarding input from the United States, though the experiences of Catholics varied depending on the how the bishop in their diocese chose to seek input on the survey, those who were given the opportunity to respond were happy to share their views, hopes, and anxieties. Several U.S. bishops reported widespread disagreement on church teachings, along with a desire for a more welcoming and merciful church that makes room for the diversity of Catholic families. U.S. Catholics are not necessarily hoping for changes in moral teachings, but they are interested in the attractive sort of moral teaching which Pope Francis models in Evangelii Gaudium. Here, judgment is tempered with mercy, norms are less important than virtues, tradition is understood as accompaniment, and the church is open to dialogue and growth.

As interchurch families in the United States, we do not feel that our concerns have been addressed nor that the spirituality and faith practices found in truly interchurch families have ever been adequately recognized for the merits that exist with interchurch families. In spite of the fact that approximately 60% of the marriages that take place in the Roman Catholic Church each year are between a Roman Catholic and another baptized Christian who is not Roman Catholic.

It appears to us that the Roman Catholic partner in an interchurch marriage feels the pain far more deeply when they see their spouse being rejected by the church that has nurtured their faith than that Baptized Christian spouse themselves may feel the pain of being rejected.

While taking the Eucharist together is thought to help to bind single church couples together, this practice is discouraged for interchurch families. We do not think that any church would intentionally seek to undermine the unity of a family, but that through some kind of a lack in focus on the pastoral care of the interchurch family that the Roman Catholic Church has simply ignored the lived reality of interchurch families even if this was not their intent.
Implications from the Reports for the Synod on the Family

There is a need for improved pastoral care of interchurch families, one that supports and nurtures interchurch marriages so that it happens in an on-going daily commitment to becoming an intimate community of life and love, a ‘domestic church for interchurch families much in the way that single church Roman Catholic families are nurtured.

Globally, Roman Catholics have observed that there is an apparent disconnect between the lived experience of many Catholics and Church teaching. How this disconnect impacts the faithful needs to be fully understood if the church is to remain relevant for the people of the world at this time and place in history.

Being able to share the eucharist together as a family is extremely important for interchurch families. Interchurch Families do not enjoy living on the fringes of society in the church; they wish to become full participants in the life of the church. It is at those moments where they seek to be nurtured by the church where they most often feel rejected. This dynamic is not in the best interest for the on-going well-being of the family or of the church.

In the United States, non-membership in any denomination is the fastest growing denomination. The very survival of traditional churches may be threatened by this trend. However, it would be in the best interest of our churches if they would accompany us on the lived reality of our lives.

Many national reports indicate that the gap between doctrine and reality needs to be properly addressed by the Church if the Church is to survive these times. On the other hand, an improved focus on the proper pastoral care of the family may help significantly. An improved pastoral approach that instead of providing the faithful with prohibitions and severity, but which provides people with the encouragement, support, and accompaniment that would enhance their lived experiences seems to be essential at this time if the church is to survive.

It became clear that every nation in the world wishes for families to be nurtured for what is good within their lived reality, and not to constantly have to encounter restrictive rules at every turn that in effect serve to criticize and to alienate them as they live the best and most faithful life especially given their circumstances. An example, that interchurch families have shared with us, pertains to the “promise.” It seems that the Roman Catholic spouse who is about to enter into marriage with a Christian baptized in another Christian denomination is asked to make “the promise.” In the same family, if their sibling who was also raised as a Roman Catholic chooses to marry another Roman Catholic, that sibling and his wife are not being required to make “the promise.” The Roman Catholic Church has made an assumption that two Roman Catholics who marry each other are far more likely to raise their children in the faith. When the Roman Catholic sibling and their Roman Catholic spouse choose to not raise their children in the faith, any kind of faith, this is noticed by the interchurch family who may feel further marginalized by the church from which they are seeking to be validated for what is good within their marriage. Improved pastoral care is needed that specifically address the real and lived experience of what it is to be interchurch. ~ M.J. Glauber
Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is discussed at the following link: http://www.praytellblog.com/index.php/2015/01/26/pastoral-difficulties-with-recently-ordained-priests/

I think that you will find what is written there to be thought provoking. Does it reflect your personal experience in any way? If so, in what ways?

~ M.J. Glauber

The Pastoral Care of Interchurch Families

Improved pastoral care is needed for Interchurch Marriages and Interchurch Families in the United States so that Interchurch Families can feel welcomed and nurtured by their churches of origin and so that they can remain faithful and active in their churches of origin. That pastoral care ideally would allow Interchurch spouses to explore their religious beliefs so that they can grow in their faith. This kind of pastoral care would be mutually beneficial for the churches and the interchurch couples and their interchurch children.

However, it needs to be asked if the positive role that interchurch families may hold for our churches has been considered in anyway by our local churches and then reflected in the national reports contributed to the Synod on the Family? It appears that the positive role and great potential that interchurch families could contribute to our churches has been overlooked once again. This is unfortunate, but the Synod on the Family has not yet been fully completed so there still remains some hope. ~ M.J. Glauber

Ecumenical Prayers

Preserve us, O God, while waking and guard us while sleeping, that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in your peace. ~ A New Zealand Prayer Book

In the quiet of this place, in the dark of the night, I wait and watch. For fresh soundings of life, for new showings of light, I search in the silence of my spirit, O God. ~ The Episcopal Church
Receptive Ecumenism


Look carefully at these three concepts:

- The person isn't the problem;
- Uncover the Core Wound;
- Forgiveness is Key,

and then relate them to what you find in the Vatican Document Instrumentum Laboris Familia.

In her report, *Receptive Ecumenism and Couple Therapy: Receiving the Witness of Interchurch Families* by Dr. Mary Marrocco, RMFT, points out, “As Pope Francis said at a Sunday reflection to Israeli and Palestinian leaders, when he welcomed them to his home: “Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare. It calls for the courage to say yes to the encounter and no to conflict.”

Saying yes to the encounter makes a big difference! Interchurch Couples exist because they have said “Yes.” ~ M.J. Glauber

“Low Wages Are a Moral Crisis in Our Time”

is a report written on January 23, 2015 by Sister Simone Campbell. It was posted by Bill Moyers on his online blog site; it can be found at [http://billmoyers.com/2015/01/23/just-wage/](http://billmoyers.com/2015/01/23/just-wage/), a link, where it can be read in full. Further details can also be found at [http://www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org).

Beginning on January 19, 2015, Bill Moyers began featuring the ideas presented by anti-poverty leaders in the USA. Moyers noted that “more than 1 in 3 Americans (are) living below twice the poverty line” so the time is right to address this topic. It is a Christian message that urges us to care for the wants and needs of those who are less fortunate than we are.

Sister Simone notes that “When we deal with poverty, we need to heed what Pope Francis says in Joy of the Gospel: “We are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment or a ‘dignified sustenance’ for all people, but also their ‘general temporal welfare and prosperity.’” Sister Simone gives an accurate evaluation of the economic situation in which we find ourselves in the U.S.A. at this time. In January 2015, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke about economic inequality in the New York City. May we respond with goodwill.

~ M.J. Glauber

Creating art that helps us to put together different combinations, so we can see things in a new light.... God is always with us to inspire us and to nurture us as we live our very ordinary lives. May we find the same in those who are giving us pastoral care..
The 2015 Student Prize for Undergraduate Students who are Interested in Christian Unity sponsored by the North American Academy of Ecumenists

Do you know interested students?

WHO: Open to current undergraduate and graduate students with an interest in Christian unity.

EASY APPLICATION: Tell us (2 pages maximum) about your academic studies, your involvement in the church, and how you envision greater realization of Christian unity, including specific suggestions for unity which churches might employ. Email your text or attached file, in English or in French, to naae.prize@gmail.com no later than June 15, 2015.

Applicants will be notified of results by August 1, 2015.

PRIZE: The prize is valued at $500 each. The students selected will have their registration fee and accommodations paid entirely by the Academy, and part or all of their travel expenses to attend the 2015 NAAE conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario, September 25-26-27, 2015. At this year’s annual conference, the Academy will draft a response to the World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Paper no. 214, The Church: Towards a Common Vision. Prize recipients will participate, and their names will be included, as part of this response.

ABOUT THE ACADEMY: The North American Academy of Ecumenists (NAAE) groups together leading scholars and church leaders from colleges, universities and seminaries throughout North America. The Academy meets annually in September and is affiliated with the Journal of Ecumenical Studies.

For more information about the Academy, visit http://naae.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ff52f91c0bff10fedb9fe359b&id=69efe85cf7&e=61743516e9

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Anthony Mansour
Board Member
North American Academy of Ecumenists
mobile: +001-438-887-0352

* We hope that this is an annual opportunity.
* We see great hope for the future in opportunities like this.

~ M.J.G.
Lamar Burton, at the AAIF Conference in 2006 in Louisville, KY, volunteering as an AAIF Board Member, donated his time to give us a guided tour at the backside of the track at Churchill Downs.

We are all most thankful for all that Lamar has done for AAIF over the years, for his dedication to ecumenism as a member of an interchurch marriage, and for being willing to serve regularly on the AAIF volunteer board.
Many Thanks
We would like to thank the following people for helping to make this edition of the ARK possible. We are grateful for the insight and inspiration given to us by Barbara Ehrenreich, for the Vatican document: “Instrumentum Laboris” in which we find a sense of hope, for the input from around the world by those people who love their church and who wish to see their church continue to serve the faithful, for the work done by The INTAMS review; Journal for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality which consecrated the first volume of 2014 to the reports that have been sent for the Synod. For the work of the North American Academy of Ecumenists. For the insight of Ruth Reardon and for her contributions to the understanding of what it is to be Interchurch, for the ecumenical work and dedication of Ray Temmerman, Melanie Finch and Thomas Knieps-Port Le Roi, and for all of the gifts and merits that can be found in being Interchurch. For everyone who has helped to make this edition of the ARK possible. I would like to give a special thank you to Peter Glauber, my husband, whose encouragement has made this edition of the ARK possible.
~ M.J. Glauber