



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0789

Venerdì 16.10.2015

Synod15 - 12a Congregazione generale: Audizione dei Delegati fraterni

Sua Em.za STEPHANOS - Patriarcato Ecumenico

Sua Em.za ANDREJ - Patriarcato Serbo

Sua Em.za IOSIF - Chiesa Ortodossa di Romania

Sua Em.za BISHOY - Chiesa Copta Ortodossa di Alessandria

Sua Em.za Mar YOUSTINOS BOULOS - Patriarcato Siro-Ortodosso di Antiochia e di tutto l'Oriente

Molto Rev.do Timothy THORNTON - Comunione Anglicana

Molto Rev.do Ndanganeni Petrus PHASWANA - Federazione Luterana Mondiale

Rev. Dott. Tim MACQUIBAN - Consiglio Metodista Mondiale

Rev. Dott. Robert K. WELSH, - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Dott. A. Roy MEDLEY - Alleanza Battista Mondiale

Rev. Dott. Walter ALTMANN (Brasile) - Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese

Molto Rev.do Thomas SCHIRRMACHER - Alleanza Evangelica Mondiale

Questa mattina, nel corso della 12a Congregazione generale del Sinodo ordinario sulla Famiglia, si è svolta l'audizione dei Delegati fraterni di diverse confessioni cristiane.

Di seguito riportiamo i testi degli interventi dei 12 Delegati Fraterni che hanno preso la parola oggi:

Sua Em.za STEPHANOS, Primate della Chiesa Ortodossa di Estonia (Estonia) - Patriarcato Ecumenico

Votre Sainteté, très respecté et vénéré Pape François
Vénérable Assemblée,

J'ai le plaisir ce matin de vous adresser les salutations fraternelles de Sa Sainteté le Patriarch Œcuménique de Constantinople Bartholomée ainsi que l'assurance de ses prières pour le plein succès de votre Saint Synode.

Il semblerait qu'aujourd'hui le mariage et la filiation ont changé de sens. Dans bien des Pays, le législateur met peu à peu en place de nouvelles normes en la matière. Ces mutations de la famille nous interpellent directement et créent à juste titre des inquiétudes face à ces évolutions et à ces diversifications des structures familiales qui se font au nom de l'égalité et du refus d'établir des discriminations.

On peut répondre que le juridique confirme sans doute une réalité sociale nouvelle mais pour l'Eglise, le sacrement de mariage, s'il est lucidement souhaité, ne relève pas d'Elle comme simple institution mais avant tout comme **mystère de vie**. Le mariage n'a de sens que dans la foi au Christ, à l'Evangile, dans la certitude que les actions du Christ continuent dans l'Evangile, puisque tels sont justement les sacrements.

Notre première tâche est donc bien l'évangélisation. Il faut - si c'est possible et sans contrainte, même dissimulée - faire pressentir aux femmes et aux hommes d'aujourd'hui qu'ils ne sont pas orphelins, que Jésus les accueille, qu'il aime chacun comme il est, pour lui donner consistance et responsabilité, comme il aima ces femmes perdues de mœurs qu'étaient la Samaritaine et la Prostituée. Aborder nos contemporains avec un langage de jugement au sujet de la sexualité, dans la perspective du permis et du défendu, alors que dans bien des cas ils ne savent pas très bien s'ils croient réellement en Dieu, c'est absurde. C'est peut-être les éloigner pour longtemps de Dieu, du Christ, de l'Eglise. C'est seulement si nous savons trouver la parole qui convient, pour montrer aux couples la sacramentalité de l'amour qui est le leur, que nous pourrons leur faire comprendre le sens du « sacrement du mariage ». Tant il est vrai que le véritable amour peut constituer un lieu privilégié d'évangélisation.

Peut-être pourra-t-on ainsi les aider, jeunes ou moins jeunes, souvent incertains, parfois psychologiquement infirmes (*ils ne se rencontrent pas, ils se mélangent*, a dit un poète), à se regarder autrement, à se libérer d'un lien trop fusionnel, pour devenir vraiment responsables l'un de l'autre, dans l'espérance, et parfois, pour déjà faire l'expérience de la résurrection, dans la gloire des corps. C'est bien pour cette raison qu'on ne peut en aucun cas remplacer la famille naturelle par des substituts.

Pour conclure je dirai que le message chrétien, dans ce domaine qui nous préoccupe, n'est pas une loi à imposer mais une aimantation à proposer. L'Eglise n'a pas à dicter les lois de l'Etat ou à les bloquer comme un « quelconque groupe de pression ». L'Eglise inspire et sanctifie. Elle ne contraint pas. Ce qu'Elle tente de changer, ce sont les cœurs.

[01720-FR.01] [Texte original: Français]

Sua Em.za ANDREJ, Metropolita di Austria-Svizzera (Austria) - Patriarcato Serbo

Eure Heiligkeit, hochverehrte Eminenzen und Exzellenzen Brüder im bischöflichen Amte, hochwürdige Priesterschaft, liebe Brüder und Schwestern in Christo, sehr geehrte Damen und Herren! Im Namen der Serbischen Orthodoxen Kirche wende ich mich mit Freude an die XIV. Ordentliche Generalversammlung der Bischofssynode. Ich habe die schöne Einladung, an dieser als Delegat meiner Kirche teilzunehmen, mit großer Dankbarkeit angenommen. In diesem Sinne möchte ich Ihnen Allen die Segenswünsche Seiner Heiligkeit des serbischen Patriarchen Irinej aus Belgrad, sowie der Mitglieder der Heiligen Bischofssynode der Serbischen Orthodoxen Kirche übermitteln.

Die lebhaften Diskussionen, die in den letzten Jahren über Fragen der Sexualmoral und der Gestaltung des

Lebens von Ehe und Familie geführt worden sind, aber auch des pastoralen Umgangs mit homosexuellen Partnern oder sogar ihrer kirchlichen Segnung, als auch über Fragen zur Ehescheidung und Wiederverheiratung, haben also innerhalb der Römisch-katholischen Kirche zur Einberufung dieser großen Bischofssynode geführt, um in langer dreiwöchiger und außerordentlich konzentrierter Arbeit nach klärenden Antworten zu suchen.

Die Orthodoxe Kirche selbst scheint momentan bezüglich der Sexualmoral mit anderen Fragestellungen beschäftigt zu sein. Überhaupt, in welcher Beziehung steht nun die kirchliche Eheschließung zur standesamtlichen Bindung oder auch zu jenen Bindungen von eingetragenen Partnerschaften allgemein? Gibt es in der Orthodoxen Kirche *de facto* eine Theologie der Ehe oder der Geschlechter? Was segnet konkret die Kirche in ihrer sakramentalen Feier der Ehe? Sprechen wir von einer natürlichen Bindung von Mann und Frau als gottgewollte Ordnung, um etwa das eheliche Leben mit allerlei Güter Gottes zu bereichern oder sehen wir in der Ehe eine transzendente Öffnung der Liebe auf das Reich Gottes hin? Zu allen diesen Fragen wurden bis jetzt von den Orthodoxen Kirchen nur Grundpositionen erarbeitet. Die Orthodoxe Kirche ist ja für ihre *apophatische* Haltung bekannt, genauer gesagt für ihre klare Zurückhaltung, nämlich Grundinhalte ihres kirchlichen Lebens und Glaubens in verbindlichen Grundtexten oder Enzykliken festhalten zu wollen.

Die Orthodoxe Kirche feiert die Ehe seit alters her als Sakrament, und aus den Texten der gottesdienstlichen Begleitung der Ehepaare lassen sich nur fragmentarische und manchmal auch nicht unproblematische theologische Argumente schöpfen. Die traditionelle Begleitung der Ehe in den uralten liturgischen Texten liefert keine schlüssige systematische Begründung, was denn gerade die Sakramentalität der Ehe ausmacht, geschweige denn eine angemessene Antwort auf die mit Nachdruck in unserer heutigen Zeit gestellten kontroversen Fragen. Die Theologie ist also gerade daher aufgefordert, die Weichen nicht nur für die Fundierung des Ehesakraments zu stellen, und damit für **die Berufung und Sendung der Familie in der Kirche und der Welt von heute**, sondern überhaupt für die Artikulierung einer Theologie der Liebe zwischen den Geschlechtern für unsere heutige Zeit.

In diesem Sinne grüßt die Serbische Orthodoxe Kirche Sie alle sehr herzlich und freut sich durch meine Teilnahme an der Generalversammlung Ihrer Bischofssynode. Ich danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit!

[01721-DE.01] [Originalsprache: Deutsch]

Sua Em.za IOSIF, Metropolita dell'Europa Occidentale (Francia) - Chiesa Ortodossa di Romania

Votre Sainteté,
Béatitudes, Eminences, Excellences, Révérends Pères,
Frères et Soeurs, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je vous remercie pour l'invitation fraternelle, au nom du Patriarche Daniel de Roumanie, qui m'a chargé de représenter Sa Béatitudo et le Saint Synode du Patriarcat de Roumanie au Synode des évêques catholiques qui essaient de donner une orientation pour la famille chrétienne aujourd'hui, si fortement éprouvée de tout part (mais pourtant indissoluble).

Je vais partager avec vous des choses que nous connaissons tous. Mais combien aussi nous avons besoin de collaborer entre chrétiens pour comprendre et aider la famille dans la société! Il est vrai qu'aujourd'hui, par la migration massive, nous sommes confrontés à la réalité de ce que nous appelons des mariages mixtes catholiques-orthodoxes que nous devons traiter avec sérieux et discernement, surtout quand ils sont doublés de ruptures ou divorces préalables.

Les crises de la famille, qui sont de fait les crises de chaque être humain, ont été assumées par Dieu en Christ Lui-même qui nous a fait la grâce du pardon, dans le repentir. Comment et jusqu'où comprendre cette miséricorde infinie d'un Dieu qui vient se repentir Lui-même pour nos propres péchés?

La famille est, comme nous le savons, au cœur de la vie humaine et de la vie chrétienne, étant le berceau de l'amour de Dieu fait don à l'homme par l'amour de Son Fils Crucifié et Ressuscité pour «attirer» l'homme à Sa ressemblance, (par la grâce en abondance), amour que le Saint Esprit fait grandir en chacun (des êtres humains) et qui conditionne en même temps le développement de la vie humaine.

Nous savons que:

1. **La famille est d'institution, non pas humaine, mais divine.** A ce titre, elle est, à l'image de la Divinité, une diversité de personnes en communion dans l'unité de nature. Elle est normative pour toutes les formes que prend la vie ecclésiale (y compris la communauté monastique, famille et fraternité selon l'Esprit) et sociale. (La tradition ecclésiale et la Parole de Dieu demeurent la référence permanente à travers l'Histoire.)

Nous savons que:

2. **La famille conjugale**, comme la famille ou communauté monastique, suivent les mêmes principes: **chasteté** (consécration de la sexualité), **obéissance** (au Christ et les uns aux autres dans une hiérarchie de service), **pauvreté** (mise en commun des biens possédés). La famille est appelée à réaliser la ressemblance de l'image trinitaire de Dieu (familles des hypostases divines) par une ascèse continue dont l'épître et les prières du Couronnement dans la tradition orthodoxe donnent la méthode.

Nous savons que:

3. La famille a, pour l'extérieur, un double rayonnement: a) **rayonnement social** par l'aumône, l'hospitalité et le témoignage de foi et d'amour dans la Cité; b) **rayonnement écologique aujourd'hui**, il faut le dire aussi, (respect des créatures et création, transformation des créatures par l'agriculture, comme alimentation dictée par les canons de la Tradition), une prolongation eucharistique.

Mais nous savons aussi que:

4. **La famille est la cellule première de l'Eglise.** Aussi les époux participent ils régulièrement à l'Eucharistie en tant que membres du sacerdoce royal et concélébrants sous la tête qui est Jésus Christ. Toutes les caractéristiques de la famille dérivent de sa structure eucharistique, en se fondant essentiellement sur le pardon alimenté par l'humilité qui font grandir l'amour réciproque et transfigure à court et à long terme la personne et la vie chrétienne.

«La grandeur divine [du mariage] réside en ce que dans le mariage se trouve une représentation vivante de l'union du Logos avec la nature humaine... – dit St. Jean Chrysostome. **Mais ce nid, (le mariage) c'est encore à son plus haut degré de splendeur qu'Il (Dieu) le mène! Il l'élève jusqu'à la dignité de Mystère, de Sacrement. Comme l'ultime et inexprimable grandeur, Il en fait l'image plénière de l'union de Son Verbe avec la nature humaine.»**

[01722-FR.01] [Texte original: Français]

Sua Em.za BISHOY, Metropolita di Damietta, Kafr Elsheikh e Elbarari (Egitto) - Chiesa Copta Ortodossa di Alessandria

Pastoral Attention towards Persons with Homosexual Tendencies [point 130 (55)]

And Integration of Divorced a Civilly Remarried Persons [point 120 (51)]

Greetings from H.H. Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria to the Holy Father and all the members of this venerable synod.

The first church mission towards persons with homosexual tendencies is to explain in a tender, tolerant and convincing way that homosexuality is a great sin forbidden by God according to the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul the Apostle said: *"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due"* (Rom 1:26,27 NKJ). (cf. Gen. 19; Lev. 18;22; 20:13; IKings 14:24; 15:12; 2Ki 23:7; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 17-20; Gal. 5: 19-21; ITim 1:10; Jude 7,8)

Consequently, the church's main pastoral mission is to encourage such people to repentance guiding them to lead a pure life (Gen. 1:27; Mk 10:6-9; Acts 15:29; Rom. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:32; Rom. 13:8-10; ICor 7:2; ICor 7:7-9; IThes 4:1-8; Heb. 12:14; 13:4; Rev. 21:8; 22:15; etc.).

If a married party is homosexual -forcing the other party into intercourses against the natural use- the church should not force the innocent party to continue in a sexual marital relation with him/her, because this damages the innocent party physically, physiologically and socially.

Our Church **allows divorce** in cases of adultery and in cases of what we call "legal adultery"; which is anything that is counted as adultery like: homosexuality, intercourses against natural use, urging or compelling an innocent party into forbidden relations for materialistic gain or sexual exchange.

Maybe many cases civilly divorced or remarried are due to some of the previously mentioned reasons which the church can avoid **by allowing divorce and remarriage only to the innocent party**. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: *"But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery"* (Mat 5:32 NKJ) (cf. Mt. 19:3-12; MK. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18).

Likewise, those who are civilly married or remarried need a pastoral service that ought to be tolerant and convincing. It should be made clear to them that marriage outside the church is not a sacrament and is not a holy bond, and that it hinders the couple from integrating into the sacramental life of the church. In order to keep and save marriages the holy sacrament of matrimony should be performed inside the church because "what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mat 19:6 NKJ). This would make the new home and children holy and blessed. It would make the couple's bond last till the end of their lives, and their children to be brought up in a sound peaceful way.

[01723-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Sua Em.za Mar YOUSINOS BOULOS, Arcivescovo di Zahle e Bekaa (Libano) - Patriarcato Siro-Ortodosso di Antiochia e di tutto l'Oriente

Sua Santità Papa Francesco,
Beatitudini Eminenze,

È un onore per me essere presente in questo sinodo dedicato alla famiglia, rappresentando la mia chiesa Siro-Ortodossa di Antiochia. La decisione di trattare la suddetta questione è necessaria, in mezzo al mondo moderno ed ai suoi nuovi valori, che hanno creato nuove sfide per la famiglia. La scelta del tema indica la sensibilità della chiesa verso quello che la famiglia cristiana attraversa nel mondo contemporaneo. Tornando al documento: "Instrumentum laboris" ritengo sia necessario approfondire qualche punto per aiutare le famiglie nella loro vocazione e missione nel mondo e in particolare nel medio oriente.

Il primo punto tocca il campo scolastico e universitario. Il costo delle scuole cristiane e delle università è diventato troppo alto, perciò un peso economico, che le famiglie medio orientali, specialmente in Libano, trovano difficile da sostenere se hanno più di due figli. Questo fatto influisce sul tasso di natalità in modo significativo, nei paesi dove già i cristiani sono minoranze. Bisogna per tanto rivedere la questione seriamente.

Vorrei indicare nel secondo punto la questione della comunione Eucaristica e condividere con voi qualche esperienza. Nel mondo ecclesiastico orientale o piuttosto ortodosso la chiesa crede nel principio dell'economia che si dice in aramaico (*mdabronutho*). Questo principio trova nel sacramento dell'eucaristia una medicina per le anime ferite, oltre che un aiuto per le persone che vogliono recuperare il loro rapporto con il Signore. Tale sacramento che è d'effetto salvifico non dovrebbe fare parte delle norme di punizione, se non per certi casi eccezionali. L'eucaristia non è un premio o una ricompensa, ma il tramite attraverso il quale il Signore Gesù guarisce le nostre debolezze, e ci attira verso di Lui. Come ha detto Papa Francesco nell'omelia del Corpus Domini, il Giugno scorso: "L'Eucaristia non è un premio per i buoni, ma la forza dei peccatori".

Il terzo punto riguarda l'emigrazione a causa della guerra in Siria ed Iraq. Questo fatto ha creato nuove sfide per le famiglie cristiane, che sono emigrate nei sia paesi vicini come pure in Europa.

Il pericolo tocca l'identità culturale, sociale e religiosa della famiglia emigrata. L'emigrazione interna, o verso paesi vicini ha minato la stabilità economica e sociale delle famiglie e le ha messe di fronte alla povertà e al bisogno eccessive. Perciò le chiese in Libano e in Siria e Iraq hanno dovuto affrontare tale situazione, aggravata dal fatto che le Nazioni Unite hanno cancellato i cristiani dal loro programma di aiuti perché non vivono sotto le tende.

Le famiglie emigrate in Europa, invece, hanno affrontato nuove culture e rischiano di perdere la loro identità e di diventare preda di nuove ideologie. La chiesa cattolica in particolare, in collaborazione con altre chiese apostoliche avrebbe il dovere di prendersi cura di loro e di aiutarli ad affrontare la nuova realtà.

Concludo, con cordiali saluti e auguri inviati da parte del patriarca Sua Santità Ignazio Efrem II a Sua Santità Papa Francesco e a tutti membri del vostro sinodo. Anche da parte mia vorrei profondamente esprimere i miei auguri per tutti voi e per gli atti del sinodo, perché rimanga la chiesa di Cristo una nel Vangelo e nei sacramenti, anche se amministrata da diversi capi, perché quello che unisce vale più di quello che divide. Sia lodato Gesù Cristo.

[01724-IT.01] [Testo originale: Italiano]

Molto Rev.do Timothy THORNTON, Vescovo di Truro (Gran Bretagna) - Comunione Anglicana

Most Holy Father, brothers and sisters in Christ

I bring greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury who is praying for you and for us. I ask that you remember him and the meeting he has called of the Primates of the Anglican Communion in January 2016. I will take back to him a small gift from this Synod of Bishops and that is the suggestion that every participant only speaks once and for no more than three minutes. I think he will appreciate this gift.

Archbishop Justin wanted me to tell you that the Anglican Communion sees the family as foundational to and in our society and hasn't changed its understanding of traditional marriage. Within the Anglican Communion we share the same issues as you do and many of the conversations and interventions I have heard here are identical or similar to conversations with my fellow bishops within the Communion. I use the word issues not problems not only because of English understatement and irony but also because, as has been said by many of the Synod Fathers, the first part of the *Instrumentum Laboris* is too focussed on the negative aspects of family life. There is much joy in families and family life and much to celebrate. On a personal level my daughter announced her engagement whilst I have been here, not as a result of the Synod you understand but forgive me if I haven't been giving every intervention my complete attention my mind has been on how on earth can we afford it!

That's an example of what I want to say, a point which hasn't been fully considered in all the words we have heard. A key part of families is that they change. Whenever you're privileged to be a part of a family in its journey as a pastor you're seeing a snapshot, a moment in time which has both a history and a future. We see a glimpse

and don't always fully understand, nor should we be given the privilege of being with the family throughout its journey.

All families change. When a couple announce their engagement they're already looking to the future with hope, joy and some concern. When a couple marry they're full of plans about the future. When a baby is born the parents enjoy the moment but immediately they look to the future and wonder. We don't want the baby to stay a baby that would be very odd. We hope and pray it will grow, develop and mature.

Change is a key part of the Christian faith. It's at the heart of who we are and what we believe. Just look around this Hall and see all the change that's taking place all the time. Every day we're called to be converted to Christ, turn away from sin and turn to God. Every day we open ourselves to the possibility of transformation. That's why all Christians are full of joy and hope every day. I was thrilled when I read *Evangelii Gaudium*, the joy of the gospel. That is what we all need to put before people. I'm sorry to say the biggest problem that faces my denomination is that we, as Christians, appear irrelevant to many people. We appear dull, boring and lacking in any sense of joy or hope.

Holy Father, brothers and sisters in Christ, I am not a prophet but I tell you this Synod will end. It will end and when it does we will all be older than when we arrived. We will all have changed. How will we have changed and how open will we be to the daily conversion that is crucial if we are to be alongside families as they change, grow and mature? St Paul calls us in Ephesians (ch.4) to be mature Christian disciples. I would add the world joyful. If we are joyful, mature Christian disciples we will not be afraid or over anxious about the changes which are happening to each one of us as well as to families all around the world.

[01725-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Molto Rev.do Ndanganeni Petrus PHASWANA, Vescovo emerito della Chiesa Evangelica in SudAfrica (SudAfrica) - Federazione Luterana Mondiale

Your Eminences,

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for having the honor to greet this synod on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation, a communion of 145 Lutheran churches.

I shall begin my greeting with the words of the Gospel according to St Matthew 18:20: "...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

These are the words that spring to my mind as I reflect on the theme of this synod, family, and the relationship between our two Christian world communions—the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation.

The Lutheran communion shares the deep conviction that faith is about relationships. Faith grows out of the relationship between God and human beings. Through the grace that we receive in our intimate relationship with God, we are called to grow in relations with one another and together to be nurtured by the gospel. These two are carried by the apostolic tradition: truth of the gospel and healing of relationships. I can see this tradition being carried forward in this synod: praying and reflecting together on the gospel in a conciliar spirit.

In today's fragmented world, the gospel's healing power and the call to relationship are crucial. Frequently, politics, religion and culture are instrumentalized and used to divide people and nations. This has led to growing alienation and disunity. In the midst of this isolation, it is our task as churches to proclaim and witness that God does not call us to isolation, but, rather, to life in communion with Christ and with one another. We are called to overcome fragmentation and grow into being communities where relationships can be healed and strengthened.

Over the past five decades, Catholics and Lutherans have been deeply committed to seek Christian unity through joint theological dialogue. The latest fruit of this shared journey, a dialogue report *From Conflict to*

Communion, communicates already through its title where this shared journey continues to take us. We have moved from a situation of conflict to an ever-growing commitment to communion, which we are called to live out not separately but in witnessing together as Christian sisters and brothers.

While this document was specifically published to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it is also an expression of joy and gratitude for these last 50 years together and a call to witness together in this world.

While sharing the joy of our joint Catholic-Lutheran journey together, we should therefore remain sensitive to how our theological discussions support individual Christians in the challenges and sorrows facing them in their everyday lives. Here, I am thinking particularly of the ecumenical families where members of the same family are not able to break the bread and share the wine, and hence be nurtured in shared communion in Christ.

To be in relationship and communion is the deepest meaning of family. By living and growing in these relationships and all the challenges that arise, families need to be nurtured and supported. Both Catholics and Lutherans pray that families can live out their faith in communion with each other and with their neighbors, to witness together and to nurture their witness and togetherness through a shared spiritual life.

The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue has been greatly encouraged by the words of Pope John XXIII “The things that unite us are greater than those that divide us.” How can we support our families today so that these words become a real sign of hope for them while they are yearning to experience and witness communion in this fragmented world?

The Lutheran World Federation is praying for the presence of the Holy Spirit at this synod. May God bless you.

[01726-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Rev. Dott. Tim MACQUIBAN, Direttore dell'Ufficio Ecumenico della Chiesa Metodista in Roma (Italia) - Consiglio Metodista Mondiale

Holy Fathers, sisters and brothers in Christ:

Methodists, with the Catholic Church, have shared two emphases within their own understanding of faith. The primary calling of Christians is to **holiness** in response to God's grace, calling us to be **disciples of Jesus Christ**, the Living Word who challenges us to participate in **new evangelisation**. Like you in this Synod, Methodists are exploring the tradition and experience of the Christian Church in living in contexts where its values, teaching and practice relating to marriage and the family have not been shared with those of the surrounding society. The ideal of family as a place of mutual care and concern, compassion, growth, and flourishing, needs to be true also of the family of faith, the Church. It needs to be a safe place, a place of care and compassion, of flourishing for all kinds of disciples, who seek to follow God's call in a variety of ways, and, by doing so, a home for those whose lives are holy.

Sometimes in this Synod we seem to have concentrated on one form of family, of parents and children, as defined through sacramental marriage and its vocation. For some this fails to take account on the different ways many people experience different forms of family in our various contexts and cultures. Perhaps we understate how we all belong to **the family of faith**, constituted by the call of God, comprising local church communities connected to the *ecumene* as part of the worldwide “household of faith” which is familial in character. And we need to respond to the many challenges but also opportunities we have together for pastoral care and evangelisation.

While we rightly celebrate the joy of new life and the centrality of marriage and family life (as traditionally defined), those who are single, with or without children, or in civil partnerships or co-habiting relationships, and even those within marriages conducted in church and childless can easily feel excluded. The Church is

challenged to accept that it can (even if unintentionally) add to these difficulties with such a stress on “the Gospel of the Family” and a theology which all too often talks of children as “gifts” without taking into account the nature of the gift or the significance this might have for those who are denied such a “gift”. For some the alternative of adoption may be an opportunity to express the love of God for those who desire a stable family unit in which to grow up. For others, through choice or circumstance, childlessness may be embraced as a vocation which needs to be recognised, supported and affirmed by the Church by appropriate pastoral strategies. But it should not be side-lined or marginalised.

The family, however defined, is the place of mutual care and concern, compassion and helpfulness, giving and receiving, sharing and discipline, forgiving and being forgiven, whether in the traditional family or the family of faithful disciples who constitute local ecclesial communities. The Kingdom of God into which we are called is one of mercy and grace. God’s love is wide enough to encompass all. The Church which witnesses to God’s love revealed supremely in Jesus Christ should reflect this with appropriate teaching and pastoral support of those who embrace a single state or relationships without the blessing of the “gift” of children so that they may feel included and welcomed within the “household of faith”, the Church.

[01727-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Rev. Dott. Robert K. WELSH, Presidente del Consiglio della Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (Stati Uniti d’America) - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Holy Father, Members of this 14th General Synod of Bishops. Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am honored to be present with you as the fraternal delegate of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to share in the important work and discussions of this General Assembly.

My intervention will be centered upon three brief reflections:

First, I want to applaud you for choosing the vital and important topic of the Vocation and Mission of the Family -- not only for the Roman Catholic Church, but for all Christians and all churches. How do we understand marriage and family life today? What can we do to respond to the growing number of divorces and the impact on the children in those families? These are urgent issues before all Christians, and all societies, that represent major theological, practical, and pastoral challenges.

Second, I am as one of those referred to in the working document for this Synod as living in a “mixed marriage” (paragraphs 126-128). I have noted that throughout these paragraphs, “mixed marriages” are only named in the context of presenting problems; for example, at the pastoral level of religious education of children and in the relation to liturgical life. My hope is that this Synod might also identify “mixed marriages” in a more positive and hopeful context as “great opportunities” for witnessing to God’s gift of oneness in Christ and God’s love for all persons, especially for those marriages between persons baptized as Christians.

And a third reflection (on a very personal level): My wife is Roman Catholic; my daughter has become Roman Catholic through her marriage to a life-long Roman Catholic; and I have now have three beautiful grandchildren – all baptized within the Catholic Church. My oldest grandson (Trace), now 14 years old, frequently serves as an altar boy. He loves the church; he loves the Mass, and especially helping during the celebration of the Eucharist.

My regret continues to be that, when I attend Mass with my grandson, I am not allowed to partake of the Eucharist. It’s personal, and it’s painful. Coming from my background as a Disciples of Christ and as a life-long ecumenist, I not only experience being excluded from my own personal family; but, also experience exclusion from the family of the church: the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church that we all confess.

[//But, it’s not just about me. Surely not! I also believe this pain is deeply felt by hundreds of thousands of

persons around the world who long to experience our unity in Christ as one family gathering and sharing in the one Eucharist. Indeed, I believe the world itself is waiting, and longing, for such a sign of God's reconciliation, and healing, and peace.//]

Holy Father, as part of the "Holy Year of Mercy" that you have proclaimed, I hope that you might offer a concrete, "real-life" sign of hope and healing that would be both pastoral and evangelical: where all Christians would be welcomed to share in the one Eucharist. This Holy Year of Mercy could thus be the occasion to act upon the volumes of emerging theological agreements that have been produced through ecumenical dialogue and encounter over the years since the Second Vatican Council: celebrating the family, gathered together, at one Table as brothers and sisters in Christ.

[//I pray that this Synod of Bishops will not only bring renewal to the life of the Catholic Church, especially in its local parishes and dioceses -- but also, in bringing renewal to the ecumenical movement and to all churches in our common calling to God's mission in the world.//]

[01728-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Rev. Dott. A. Roy MEDLEY, Segretario Generale delle Chiese Battiste negli Stati Uniti d'America (Stati Uniti d'America) - Alleanza Battista Mondiale

To our dear brother in Christ, Pope Francis, and to you our beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, I bring you warm and fraternal greetings from Baptist Christians around the world who pray with you and for you, and especially from Dr. Neville Callam, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. Grace to you and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the honor of accompanying you in this reflection on the vocation and mission of the family. We appreciate very much your emphasis on the centrality of scripture and prayer in family life as well as your desire that every Christian family nurture faith in Christ within itself and in others. We also resonate with the crises that you speak to in the *Instrumentum laboris*.

As you prepare to speak on the family, I urge you to emphasize the pastoral nature of the ministry which is entrusted to you and the whole church. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," says our God. (Matthew 12:7)

There is no perfect family and no perfect marriage. In our broken world, families are not only a source of great blessing, they can also be a source of great harm as when a father molests his daughters, or brothers and sisters fight over inheritance. This is the pastoral reality: families have their blessings and their dysfunctions.

Amidst such experiences people yearn for mercy. Hence, in Baptist hymnology, Jesus as friend, is an important theme. Hymns such as "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," and "There is Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus," express for us the presence of God in the midst of our imperfections and struggles. They remind us of the one who in his vocation of suffering servant enters our woundedness. This is the one who invites sinners to sit at his table; the one who is "gentle and humble in heart, in whom we find rest for our souls" (Matt 11:29); the one to whom we pray in all confidence, "Lord, have mercy."

This is the presence of Christ and his church the world longs for but seldom expects. Instead they see us abandoning them in the midst of their greatest personal struggles. Two years ago, I was on a midnight flight and I was squeezed next to a young man 20 years old. During our 3 hour flight he kept waking me as he ordered one gin and tonic after another. By his fourth he was quite talkative and he began to pour out to me, a stranger, the heartbreak of his life. He was on his way home, having been arrested for possession of marijuana. He had a learning disorder and could not read - a fact that brought him much shame throughout his school years. His family life was a mess. And on it went for half an hour or more when he then asked me, "So, what do you do?" "I am a Baptist minister," I replied. What he said next hurt me deeply: "So, I guess you have just been sitting there judging me." "No, Son," I said, "my heart has been breaking for you."

This is the question the world asks the church, "Does God's heart break for me? Does the church's heart break for me?" Does this Jesus still invite sinners to his table? In the imperfection of our lives, can we discover through you, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear?"

Pope Francis, this is the pastoral heart of grace and mercy to which I hope you will give full voice.

[01729-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Rev. Dott. Walter ALTMANN (Brasile) - Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese

Your Holiness Pope Francis,
Your Holinesses, Beatitudes, Eminences and Excellences, Reverend Fathers,
Brothers in Christ,

I bring you greetings from the fellowship of the more than 340 member churches of the World Council of Churches on behalf of the moderator of the Central Committee, Dr Agnes Abuom, and of the General Secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

The Holy Father underlined at the opening of this very important event in the life of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church: The synod is not a convention or a parliament, "but an expression of the church; it is the church that walks together to read reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God."

I would like to add to this, that the Synod - as I have experienced it - is also a great and wonderful learning community. Listening to each other, you affirm together the Gospel values you share, how they are expressed in the tradition of the church and how they can be lived out and practiced today. Listening to each other, you also experience the rich diversity of the worldwide church and at the same time the need for deepening the unity among you in dialogue with each other, and through and with the Petrine ministry of the successor of St. Peter.

I can assure you that many of the member churches of the WCC follow closely the news stream on the Synod. And many of them are praying for you, that the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit may guide and enlighten you in your efforts for the best of the church and the millions and millions of Christians everywhere in the world.

Concerning the commitment that "the church that walks together to read reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God" the World Council of Churches has been speaking since the 2013 Assembly in Korea of a "pilgrimage of justice and peace", underlining that we are together on a faith journey and are deeply committed to justice and peace as signs of God's reign to come. This commitment to express the values of God's reign as justice and peace is very significant for all those who live together in different types of family life. That is the first and innermost circle of our life together as we seek to bring fairness and reconciliation. From my own continent of Latin America, and from my experience as Moderator of the WCC, I know how many women and men, and not the least children, need that the church be a fellowship of inclusion and healing, recognising our differences in the bond of love. The openness required for change, and for new commitment to God's call today, should be a mark of our pilgrimage as a common journey of the churches.

On its own journey through history, the WCC as a fellowship of member churches has often experienced tensions between our commitment to the unity of the church and the diversity of being church in different political, economic, cultural and religious contexts. Discerning the way forward, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer taking majority decisions, but we are searching for the way by consensus. This helps us to see how much indeed we have in common and how little it is that continues to separate us. We search for new learning, listening carefully to all who are sharing their lives and their challenges. Despite those differences that still exist, consensus helps us to move forward together, responding to Christ's prayer that his disciples all may be one so that the world may believe (John 17:21).

May God bless you and this Synod abundantly.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

[01730-EN.01] [Original text: English]

Molto Rev.do Thomas SCHIRRMACHER, Presidente della Commissione Teologica dell'Alleanza Evangelica Mondiale (Germania) - Alleanza Evangelica Mondiale

Die Missionarische Dimension der Familie (II., II.)

Die Weltweite Evangelische Allianz vertritt weltweit 600 Millionen evangelikale Christen, die durch eine große Liebe zur Bibel, zur Evangelisation, aber auch zur traditionellen Ehe und Familie gekennzeichnet sind. Sie machen etwa zwei Drittel aller protestantischen Christen aus.

Wir danken dem Heiligen Vater, dass er uns in zahlreichen Begegnungen die Hand ausgestreckt hat, so dass wir beispielsweise einmal drei Stunden mit ihm unter Anderem über die geschätzten 80-90 Millionen gemischt katholisch-evangelikalen Ehen sprechen konnten.

Mein großer Wunsch ist, dass die Katholische Kirche in ihrer Vorreiterrolle dazu beiträgt, dass katholische und evangelikale Christen eine gemeinsame Sprache und Aufgabe in Ehe und Familie finden, wie dies seit dem Heiligen Johannes Paul II. so erfolgreich mit dem Einsatz gegen Abtreibung gelungen ist.

Familie spielt in vierfacher Weise in der Evangelisation eine zentrale Rolle, und jedesmal geschieht dies im Spannungsfeld zwischen eindeutigen göttlichen Ordnungen, und der unendlichen Barmherzigkeit Gottes, der selbst Totes zum Leben erwecken kann.

Ich wünsche dieser Synode, dass sie vom Heiligen Geist geleitet die Komplementarität von Wahrheit und Liebe findet, die der Heilige Vater in seiner Predigt in der Eröffnungsmesse der Synode so eindrücklich ausgesprochen hat.

Meine Eltern

Meine Eltern sind vor einem halben Jahr kurz hinter einander im Alter von 93 Jahren in die himmlische Ruhe eingegangen. Die Eltern meines Vaters ließen sich in der Grundschulzeit Ende der 1920er Jahre scheiden, mein Vater wurde von einem Verwandten zum anderen gereicht, bis er sich bis mit 16 Jahren allein ein Zimmer nahm. Mit 18 Jahren wurde er in den Krieg eingezogen. Eine rein standesamtlich vollzogene Ehe ging schnell wegen Unerfahrenheit und Ehebruch der Gattin in die Brüche.

Meine Mutter hatte aus einer christlichen Familie kommend aus Protest einen Atheisten geheiratet, die Erziehung der gemeinsamen Tochter wurde zum Albtraum. Als ihr Mann starb, entschied meine Mutter, ihre Familie nie wieder ohne Gott zu leben. Mein Vater war von der Beziehung dieser Frau zu ihrer Tochter so fasziniert, dass er sie nach dem Geheimnis ihrer Liebe fragte und darüber zum Glauben an Jesus Christus fand, woraufhin die beiden heirateten.

Dass Gott nach dem Chaos zerstörter Beziehungen durch Vergebung und Auferstehung zu neuem Leben meinem Vater die Chance gab, Ehe und Familie neu zu erleben, hat er bis ins hohe Alter laut gerühmt. Er hinterließ 3 Kinder und 9 Enkelkinder mit ihren Familien, alles aktive Christen.

1. Familie als Empfänger von Evangelisation

Angesichts des Scheiterns eines Lebens ohne Gott wurde Familie hier Empfänger des Evangeliums.

Familien, nicht nur Individuen, sind die Empfänger der Frohen Botschaft von Jesus Christus.

2. Evangelisation durch Familie

Sogar eine unvollständige Familie wie die meiner Mutter und ihrer Tochter wurde zum Werkzeug des Zeugnisses der Gnade Gottes.

Unvollständige, aber von Gott getragene Familie wird zur Botschafterin, um kaputten Familien die Botschaft von Kreuz und Auferstehung zu vermitteln.

Evangelisation in der Familie

Meine Eltern haben für ihre Enkelkinder täglich gebetet, bevor sie überhaupt geboren wurden. Auf dem Sterbebett haben sie alle Enkelkinder einzeln zu sich gebeten und ermuntert, ihr Leben mit Gott zu leben.

Statistisch ist die Weitergabe des Evangeliums an die nächste Generation die wichtigste Form der Evangelisation. Bei ihr spielen vor allem Mütter eine zentrale Rolle.

Evangelisation, weil christliche Familie Gottes Liebe wieder spiegelt

Familie, die selbst nur deswegen Liebe leben kann, weil sie von der Gnade und Vergebung lebt, die die Kirche verkündigt, wird zum Magnet für Menschen, die auf der Suche nach echter Liebe sind.

[01731-DE.01] [Originalsprache: Deutsch]

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