

INTRODUCTION

THE JOY OF LOVE

Paragraphs 1 - 7

The Synodal process allowed for an examination of families in today's world.

Complex issues require continued open discussion on doctrinal, moral, spiritual & pastoral questions.

Debates have ranged from

immoderate desire for total change without sufficient reflection of grounding

to an attitude that would solve everything by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations.

Not all issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium.

Unity of teaching and practice in the church are necessary but with the guidance of the Spirit other ways of interpretation are not precluded.

Each country and region can seek solutions better suited to local culture, tradition and needs.

INTRODUCTION

Structure:

1. Opening chapter, based on scripture to set the tone
2. Examination of the actual situation of families to keep us grounded in reality
3. Recalls essential aspects of Church's teaching on marriage and family.
- 4 & 5. Two central chapters dedicated to love
6. Highlights some pastoral approaches
7. The raising of children
8. An invitation to mercy and pastoral discernment in situations that fall short of the Lord's demands
9. The spirituality of the family.

The Synodal process has been long, and so is this Exhortation.

Some chapters will be more relevant to some than others but

everyone should be challenged by Chapter 8.

Families are not a problem; they are first and foremost an opportunity.

The Synod

Relatio Synodi 2014

1, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18, 22, 28, 30, 48, 54, 55, 56, 59, 61, 62, 65, 73, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 101, 225, 226, 229, 230, 231, 237, 238, 251, 254, 259, 260, 262, 263, 267, 311, 312, 313, 321, 322, 328, 331, 332, 354.

Relatio Finalis 2015

2, 3, 11, 13, 15, 19, 20, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 57, 58, 60, 63, 75, 76, 78, 79, 89, 93, 102, 103, 165, 196, 201, 202, 208, 211, 216, 227, 228, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 247, 248, 250, 255, 256, 266, 271, 272, 273, 274, 278, 279, 280, 282, 296, 299, 300, 301, 302, 306, 309, 310, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 327, 334, 335, 337, 338, 340, 346, 374, 376, 388.

Pope Francis

4, 14, 42, 43, 68, 77, 98, 100, 109, 112, 119, 120, 123, 132, 133, 134, 177, 178, 179, 180, 185, 186, 187, 192, 193, 194, 195, 197, 198, 203, 205, 206, 209, 210, 212, 213, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 224, 243, 257, 261, 264, 265, 268, 269, 270, 281, 282, 284, 292, 294, 295, 297, 298, 304, 305, 308, 325, 326, 349, 366, 370, 371, 381, 384, 386.

Pope Francis – Evangelii Gaudium

50, 51, 52, 53, 291, 336, 351, 352, 353, 355, 356, 357, 362, 363.

Pope St John-Paul II

6, 7, 8, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 166, 168, 169, 170, 171, 174, 182, 183, 184, 190, 191, 214, 215, 242, 246, 323, 324, 329, 330, 339, 364, 372, 373, 375

Familiaris Consortio

64, 74, 99, 113, 118, 121, 176, 223, 377, 380, 385, 389, 390

Thomas Aquinas

108, 110, 111, 115, 116, 122, 127, 129, 130, 135, 140, 141, 144, 145, 172, 341, 342, 347, 348.

Vatican II documents

80, 84, 125, 126, 128, 136, 138, 157, 189, 199, 249, 290, 293, 301, 367, 368, 369, 379, 383.

Other Vatican documents

23, 25, 26, 88, 97, 173, 181, 275, 345, 358, 358, 360, 361, 391.

Catechism

66, 67, 82, 83, 85, 87, 104, 276, 277, 285, 286, 289, 343, 344

Popes

Pius XI (Casti Conubii) 117, 245

Pius XII 70

Paul VI (Humanae Vitae) 86, 156

Benedict XVI 105, 142, 143, 163, 164, 175, 207, 333

Doctors of the Church

69, 106, 124, 131, 167, 240, 241, 253, 287, 288, 307

Bishops' Conferences

Argentina 38, Australia 188, Chile 137, Colombia 49, Italy 239, Kenya 244, Korea 21, Latin America & Caribbean 200, Mexico 39, Spain 10.

Canon Law

71, 72, 81, 96

Other

5, 107, 114, 138, 154, 204, 303, 350, 365, 382, 387.

Frequency of words (& cognates)

Contraception	1	
Redemption	1	
Doctrine	2	
Acceptance	3	
Adultery	3	
Ministry	4	
Sacraments	5	
Compassion	6	
Condemn	6	
Healing	6	
Judgement	6	
Forgiveness	8	
Welcome	8	
Remarried	8	
Reconciliation	10	
Law	22	
Divorce	23	
Sin	24	
Mercy	39	
Discern	41	
Eucharist + communion		55
Pain + hurt + suffer		62
Pastoral	71	

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

Paragraphs 8 - 30

The Bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises.

Jesus mentions two houses; let us enter the house of Psalm 128 where the father and mother have echoed the command of Genesis to become one flesh.

Their fruitfulness is a sign of God's own creative act and a living reflection of the Trinitarian community of love.

Their children are signs of energy and vitality gifted by God, not as property of the family but as unique individuals with their own lives to lead.

Their home could be a 'domestic church', a setting for the Eucharist, the presence of Christ seated at its table (15), a school of faith for their children.

The Bible also reflects the presence of pain, evil and violence that can shatter the idyllic picture of Psalm 128.

Work is an essential part of human dignity which makes possible the sustenance of family life which can be endangered by lack of work (the result of many causal factors).

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES OF FAMILIES

Paragraphs 31 - 57

The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and the Church.

There are many problems and challenges and it is necessary to focus on concrete realities through which the Church may be guided to a more profound understanding of the mystery of marriage and the family.

What follows is based on the pastoral insights of the Synod and the Pope's own pastoral experience.

THE CURRENT REALITY OF THE FAMILY (32 – 49)

A long section, quite sobering in its, sometimes, quite brutal criticism.

32. Anthropological and cultural changes lead 'individuals' in personal and family life to receive less support from social structures than previously.
33. Danger of extreme individualism (with multiple consequences).
34. This can lead to the confusion of genuine personal freedom with self-referenced behaviour and decision making.
35. We can't stop advocating marriage because it might be currently unfashionable.

Simply to decry present-day evils is as unhelpful as imposing rules in an authoritarian manner.

The positive reasons for choosing marriage and family need to be presented more responsibly and generously.

36. We need a dose of self-criticism. How we present Christian beliefs and the way we treat people can contribute to today's problematic situation:

An almost exclusive insistence on procreation overshadows the unitive meaning of marriage with its call to mutual growth in love.

Not enough solid guidance has been offered to young married couples based on their concrete realities.

We have proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage.

All this does not help to make marriage desirable or attractive – in fact, the opposite.

37. We find it difficult

to present marriage more as a dynamic path to personal development than as a lifelong burden.

We find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful; we have been called to form consciences, not to replace them.

38. We have often wasted pastoral energy on denouncing a decadent world

without being proactive in proposing ways of finding true happiness.

Many feel the Church's message on marriage and the family does not clearly reflect Jesus' preaching and attitudes.

39. Not that we must stop warning against cultural decline
nor the rise of:

the 'culture of the ephemeral',
a utilitarian approach to relationships
and a limiting narcissism.

40. To counter contemporary pressures we need to find

the right language, arguments and forms of witness
to inspire young people to take up the challenge of marriage
and starting a family with enthusiasm and courage.

41. Contemporary cultural tendencies

(e.g. pornography and commercialisation of the body)

can inhibit the growth in personal, emotional and sexual maturity
compounding problems within society and within marriages.

42. The world politics of reproductive health,
developments in bio-technology
and economic factors

has led to population decline in some areas.

And will lead to economic impoverishment and a loss of hope.

Chapter 2: The Experiences and challenges of families.

43. The weakening of faith and religious practices in some societies leads to
 loneliness,
 fragility of relationships
 and the institutional abandonment of support for families.

44. Lack of dignified employment opportunities and of affordable housing impacts negatively on the start, support and maintenance of family life.

45. Many children are born out of wedlock and raised in non-traditional 'family' arrangements.
 Children are also vulnerable to abuse and sexual exploitation.

46. Migration can enrich both families and host countries
but forced migration (result of war, persecution, poverty and
injustice)
traumatises and destabilises families.

The Church needs specific pastoral programmes for those
migrating and those remaining behind.
47. Families of persons with special needs render a particular witness
to the gift of life.
48. Care and concern for the final stages of life are all the more
necessary in a society where the elderly can be regarded as a
burden and where the traces of death and dying are hidden away.

49. To those living in dire poverty and great limitations
(e.g. single mother leaving child alone to go to work)
the Church must offer
 understanding,
 comfort
 and acceptance
rather than impose a set of rules that only serve to make people
feel
 judged
 and abandoned.

SOME CHALLENGES (50 – 57)

Difficulties in raising children:

Exhausted parents

No common meal

Distractions of television etc.

Fears about employment and finance

Drug use and associated violence.

(Legal) deconstruction of the family through:

Other forms of union:

Same sex unions may not simply be equated with marriage

No union that is temporary or closed to the transmission of life can ensure the future of society.

Practice of polygamy

Cohabitation with no marital intention

Chapter 2: The Experiences and challenges of families.

Gender issues:

Much needs to be done in respect of attitudes and practices towards women.

Impact of absent fathers

Challenges of gender ideology and transgenderism

Technological separation of reproduction from parenthood

The Synod showed that there is no stereotypical, ideal family but a mosaic of joys, hopes and problems.

We should not waste energy on doleful laments but seek new forms of missionary creativity.

CHAPTER THREE

LOOKING TO JESUS: THE VOCATION FO THE FAMILY

Paragraphs 58 – 88

58 – 60.

This chapter summarises the Church's teaching on marriage and the family,

a teaching that must be inspired by the message of love and tenderness that lies at the heart of the Gospel message;

Otherwise it is nothing more

than the defence of a dry and lifeless doctrine.

JESUS RESTORES AND FULFILLS GOD'S PLAN (61 – 66)

Marriage is a gift from God.

Jesus' reaffirmed its indissolubility, which is also a gift, not a yoke.

Jesus restored marriage and family to God's original plan.

The example of Jesus is the paradigm for the Church:

Cana

Samaritan Woman

Woman found in adultery

The Incarnation of the Word in a human family and all that followed continues to fill Christian families with joy and hope.

The example of the Holy Family shows that every family, despite its weaknesses can become a light in the darkness of the world.

THE FAMILY IN THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH (67 – 70)

Gaudium et Spes (Vat II) was concerned 'to promote the dignity of marriage and the family'.

Humanae Vitae (Paul VI) developed the Council's teaching and especially brought out the intrinsic bond between conjugal love and the generation of life.

Familiaris Consortio (John Paul II) defined the family as 'the way of the Church' and proposed basic guidelines for pastoral care of families.

Deus Caritas Est (Benedict XVI) promoted marriage an icon of the relationship between God and his people.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY (71 – 75)

The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention or an empty ritual.

Grounded in the grace of baptism it is a gift for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, a vocation to be an, albeit, imperfect sign of the love between Christ and the Church.

The ministers of the sacrament are the spouses themselves.

SEEDS OF THE WORD AND IMPERFECT SITUATIONS 76 – 79)

Marriage is best understood Christocentrically

And the pastoral care of all should be inspired by seeing through the eyes of Christ.

The Church should turn with love to those who participate in her life in an imperfect manner

leading them, where possible to celebrate the sacrament of matrimony.

79. When faced with difficult situations and wounded families:

pastors must exercise careful discernment (*Fam. Con*)

avoid judgements that do not take into account the complexity of various situations.

be attentive to how people experience and endure distress.

THE TRANSMISSION OF LIFE AND THE REARING OF CHILDREN

(80 – 85)

Marriage is an intimate partnership of love and life

which is for the good of the spouses themselves.

Sexuality is ordered for conjugal love and for procreation by its very nature.

The birth of a child does not come from outside but springs from the heart of the spousal relationship of mutual self-giving.

Love always looks outward from itself and is drawn outward from itself in fruitfulness.

No marital genital act can refuse this meaning (*Hum. Vit*)

Even if it may not always beget a new life (PF)

82. There is an unwelcome growth of a mentality that reduces human regeneration to just one variable in a couple's plan.

The Church's teaching helps couples appreciate the marital communion and its responsibility for procreating life.

Humanae Vitae highlighted the need to respect the dignity of the person in assessing methods of regulating birth.

83. The inestimable value of each human life precludes both abortion and euthanasia.

84. Education – a most serious duty:

Primary duty of parents – an indeclinable role

Supported by state provision: schools complement but do not replace parents.

However, the educational pact is broken and the educational alliance between society and the family is in crisis (arising in part from complex cultural realities and the influence of the media).

THE FAMILY AND THE CHURCH (86 – 88)

Families are 'domestic churches'

The Church is a family if families enriched by the lives of those domestic churches.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOVE IN MARRIAGE

Paragraphs 89 – 164

Although specifically aimed at the context of marriage and family, this chapter is applicable to all. For 'married couples', or 'family' one could read 'Church' or 'I'.

It is insufficient to speak of the Gospel of marriage and the family without speaking about love, a word commonly used and often misused.

OUR DAILY LOVE (90 – 141)

In 1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 7 St Paul is lyrical about some of the features of true love:

An in-depth analysis drawing on the original Greek to draw out theological, spiritual and pastoral applications.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Love is patient (91 – 92)

Does not act on impulse or give offence.

God's 'patience' is shown in his mercy.

Love always has a deep compassion that accepts others as part of this world, even if they act differently from how I would like.

Love is kind (93 – 94)

Patience is not completely passive but

dynamically and creatively interactive with others in 'kindness'

= to be at the service of others.

Love is not jealous (95 – 96)

True love values another person's talents and achievements

Sees others as God sees them

Rejects injustice

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Love is not boastful (97 – 98)

'self' is not the centre of attention

Thinking of oneself as being more 'spiritual' or 'wise' than others risks being 'puffed up'.

True love: is marked by humility

understands

shows concern

forgives

embraces the weak

Love is not rude (99 – 100)

Love cannot be harsh, abrasive or rigid

Rudeness is anti-social (i.e. contrary to social cohesion)

Love must be gentle, thoughtful and courteous

Love is 'social' (i.e. integrates and leads to social cohesion)

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Love is generous (101 – 102)

Love of others requires love of self,
where love of self is a psychological prerequisite to loving others
more effectively
and to do so without expectation of a return.

Love is not irritable or resentful (103 – 104)

Indignation is only healthy when it makes us react to a grave
injustice;
When it permeates our attitude towards others it is harmful.
'Do not let the sun go down on your anger'
Anger happens; do not nurture it.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Love forgives (105 – 108)

Forgiveness: is the opposite of resentment
is not easy
involves understanding
forgiveness of self
sacrifice
assumes experience of being forgiven by God.

Love rejoices with others (109 – 110)

If we fail to learn how to rejoice in the well-being of others, and focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Love bears all things (111 – 113)

In reality this is about the way we speak

Speak well rather than ill

Does not overlook problems or weaknesses in others but sees the bigger picture

Love believes all things (114 – 115)

This is not theological 'belief' but trust.

Loving trust liberates

Does not try to control, possess or dominate

Lack of trust leads to suspicion, deceit and lies.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Love hopes all things (116 – 117)

Love does not despair of the future
Though things may not turn out as we wish
God may well make crooked lines straight

Love endures all things (118 – 119)

Love bears every trial with a positive attitude
Is able to tolerate aggravations but
Is always ready to confront any challenge
Quotes an extensive passage from Martin Luther King who
Met every kind of trial and tribulation with fraternal love.
Love never gives up.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

GROWING IN CONJUGAL LOVE (120 – 141)

Reflecting the covenant between Christ and humanity, conjugal love, the love between husband and wife, is sanctified by the sacrament of marriage.

Marriage is the icon of God's love for us.

as God is a communion, a Trinity of persons in unity,
so in marriage God makes two spouses one single existence.

However, there is no need to lay upon two limited persons the tremendous burden of having to reproduce perfectly the union between Christ and his Church.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Lifelong sharing (123 – 125)

Conjugal love is the greatest form of friendship:
Indissoluble, permanent, exclusive and open to new life.

A love, however, that is
 weak and infirm and
 incapable of accepting the challenge of marriage
will succumb to the culture of the ephemeral
and fail to grow

But seen in a context of a plan bigger than our own, a promise to
love for ever, assisted by grace, can be the sign of a great
mystery.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Joy and beauty (126 – 130)

In marriage the **joy of love** needs to be cultivated.

Joy is an expansion of the heart
can be experienced even amid sorrow
appreciates beauty without the need to possess it
sees others as beautiful ends in themselves despite
appearances to the contrary.

Is expressed by 'gaze'.

A 'look of appreciation' is so important.

Greatest joy is eliciting joy in others

Babette's Feast

Joy also grows through pain and sorrow

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Marrying for love (131 – 132)

Marriage is more than a contract, or a fleeting fashion.

As a social institution, marriage protects and shapes a shared commitment to deeper growth in love and commitment to one another, for the good of society as a whole.

Such a serious commitment cannot be hastily made, nor indefinitely postponed.

Unwillingness to make such a commitment is selfish, calculating and petty.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

A love that reveals itself and increases (133 – 135)

Three essential words: Please
 Thank you
 Sorry

The right words, spoken at the right time, daily protect and nurture love.

Married love is not defended primarily by presenting indissolubility as a duty, or by repeating doctrine, but by helping it grow under the impulse of grace.

A love that fails to grow is at risk.

The perfect families proposed by consumerist propaganda do not exist.
It is healthier to be realistic and bring love to maturity come what may.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Dialogue (136 – 141)

Dialogue is essential
involves listening, which itself requires interior silence.
The other may not need a solution,
simply to be heard respectfully.
Requires an open mind.

Trivial matters can assume undue importance through tone and attitude.

Unity in marriage is not 'uniformity' but a
unity in diversity or
reconciled diversity

Dialogue necessitates having something to say

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

PASSIONATE LOVE (142 – 162)

A love lacking pleasure or passion insufficiently symbolises the union of the human heart with God.

The world of emotions (143 – 146)

The 'passions' – desires, feelings and emotions – have an important place in married life.

The experience of emotion or the stirring of desire (or repugnance) is morally neutral: it is what we do that is morally good or evil.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

God loves the joy of his children (147 – 149)

The Church's teaching on renunciation is misinterpreted as a rejection of human happiness.

The Church does reject *eros* but rather declares war on a warped and destructively dehumanising form of it.

Some spiritualities teach the necessity of the elimination of desire but God loves the enjoyment felt by human beings.

It is important to have the freedom to see that pleasure can find different expressions in accordance with the needs of mutual love.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

The erotic dimension of love (151 – 152)

Sexuality is not a means of gratification or entertainment; it is an interpersonal language respectful of mutual dignity.

The erotic dimension of love must not be seen as a permissible evil to be tolerated for the good of the family; it is a gift from God that enriches the spousal relationship and, sublimated by love, it becomes pure.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Violence and manipulation (153 – 157)

A 'use and discard' mentality leads to abuse, sexual perversion and violence.

Even within marriage sex can become a source of suffering and manipulation

Every form of sexual submission must be rejected.

The Pauline virtue of reciprocal 'submission' ('be subject to one another' Eph. 5) is freely chosen and marked by fidelity, respect and care.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

Marriage and virginity (158 – 162)

Virginity is a form of love

No degree of superiority or inferiority can be asserted with respect to either marriage or celibacy based on sexual abstinence.

The two states complement each other with different elements of perfection.

Virginity and marriage are, and must be, different ways of loving:

Virginity (celibacy) is an 'eschatological witness'

Marriage is a historical (or incarnational) sign.

Married couples who manifest the positive aspects of conjugal love provide an eloquent witness to those facing the risks and challenges of celibacy.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

The transformation of love (163 – 164)

Longer life expectancy means that exclusive relationships must last longer too.

Challenges arising from longevity and physical changes does not mean that love and attraction need fade.

The marriage bond finds new forms of expression and seeks new ways to grow in strength.

Chapter 4: Love in marriage.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LOVE (163 – 164)

CHAPTER FIVE

LOVE MADE FRUITFUL

Paragraphs 165 – 198

WELCOMING A NEW LIFE (166 – 177)

A section on parenthood and the respective and unique roles of mother and father

The Lord's gift to the parents of a new child begins with acceptance, continues with lifelong protection and has as its final goal the joy of eternal life.

Any sense of rejection or abandonment is shameful.

Large families are a joy for the Church but

Responsible parenthood (quoting JP II):

does not mean unlimited procreation or lack of awareness of what is involved in rearing children

is the empowerment of couples to use their inviolable liberty wisely and responsibly, taking into account social and demographic realities, as well as their own situation and legitimate desires.

Chapter 5: Love made fruitful.

Expectant mothers (=parents) need to ask God for the wisdom fully to know their children and to accept them as they are.

Every child has the right to receive love from a mother and a father, perceived as a mutual love, the source of one's life and the solid foundation of the family.

The weakening of maternal presence with its feminine qualities poses a grave risk to our world.

Acknowledging a certain flexibility of roles, the clear and well-defined presence of both male and female, creates the environment best suited to the growth of the child.

Today, the problem is not so much one of overbearing fatherhood but an absent fatherhood.

Chapter 5: Love made fruitful.

AN EXPANDING FRUITFULNESS (178 – 186)

On adoption: The choice of adoption and foster care expresses a particular kind of fruitfulness in the marriage experience, and not only in cases on infertility.

No family can be fruitful if it sees itself as overly different or 'set apart' but must have an awareness and an engagement with social obligations:

to find a place for the poor
to build friendships with those less fortunate

By their witness they will speak to others of Jesus

Their fruitfulness expands and makes God's love present in society.

Families who are properly disposed and receive the Eucharist regularly, reinforce their desire for fraternity, their social consciousness and their commitment to those in need.

Chapter 5: Love made fruitful.

LIFE IN THE WIDER FAMILY (187 – 198)

The nuclear family needs to interact with the wider family.

Honour father and mother:

Parents must not be abandoned or ignored

but marriage demands that they be 'left'.

Marriage challenges husbands and wives to find new ways of being sons and daughters.

What concern and respect is shown to the elderly, who witness to the continuity of the generations.

The value of a big heart to embrace:

Brothers and sisters

Parents-in-law

Other families

Chapter 6: Some pastoral perspectives.

CHAPTER SIX

SOME PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES

Paragraphs 199 – 258

*The principal concern of this chapter is the pastoral care of marriage
from engagement,
the formal preparation for marriage and for the wedding
ceremony,
the early years of married life
care (accompanying) in periods of difficulty
and care when death parts the spouses.*

In introducing this chapter (199) Pope Francis said the Synod
Raised the need for new pastoral methods respectful of both
Church's teaching and
Local problem and needs.

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF THE FAMILY TODAY (200 – 204)

Families have an apostolate as are 'domestic churches'

To enable that vocation there is a need

for evangelisation and catechesis inside the family

to propose values, not merely rules

to denounce 'market logic' and all that prevents authentic family life.

202. The main deliverer of pastoral care is the parish – a family of families.

Ordained ministers often lack necessary training and there is need for more formation of all (priests, deacons, catechist and pastoral workers).

Chapter 6: Some pastoral perspectives.

203. Seminarians should receive

a more extensive interdisciplinary formation and

a personal formation that promotes

the maturity and psychological balance needed for effective ministry.

Families need to be part of that formation to keep the seminarians grounded in reality.

204. Trained lay leaders and professionals,

bringing professional expertise and experience,

can keep pastoral initiatives focussed on real situations and concrete concerns of families.

This complements the fundamental values and richness of spiritual direction that the church offers.

PREPARING ENGAGED COUPLES FOR MARRIAGE (205 – 216)

There are many ways to help young people discover the dignity and beauty of marriage.

Because of the challenging complexity of today's world preparation involves the whole Christian community through

Witness of families themselves

Grounding marriage preparation in the complete sacramental framework.

The couples in preparation also serve to enrich the forming community.

207. Each local church will discern their own appropriate programme of preparation that

does not distance young people from the sacrament

does not overwhelm with too much information (they don't need the whole of the Catechism)

provides couples with the help they need to receive the sacrament worthily and make a solid beginning as a family.

208. The best marriage preparation, of course, begins at birth, within the family. Pastoral initiatives aimed at helping married couples grow in love and in the Gospel also help their children and their future married life.

PREPARING ENGAGED COUPLES FOR MARRIAGE (205 – 216) cont.

209. Timely preparation enables the couple fully to assess their suitability and to discuss

What each expects from marriage

What they understand by love and commitment

What they want from each other

What kind of life they want to build.

Mutual attraction alone is insufficient, they must recognise risks and discern deeper reasons to proceed to marry.

210. Couples need to recognise each other's weak points as well as strengths, to detect potential danger signals in their relationship and, before the wedding, find effective ways of responding to them. Sadly, many couples marry without really knowing each other.

211. Preparation must show that the wedding ceremony is not the end of the road but that marks the beginning of a marriage which is a lifelong calling based on a firm and realistic decision to face all trials and difficult moments together.

PREPARING ENGAGED COUPLES FOR MARRIAGE (205 – 216) cont.

The preparation of the celebration

212. Too much focus on invitations, clothes, reception etc can mean the couple come to the wedding ceremony exhausted and financially drained. Some don't get married because of the expense.

To fiancés: have the courage to be different – you can opt for a modest and simple celebration in which love takes precedence.

213.

As to liturgy: make it a profound personal experience.

For two baptised people, their commitment is a sign of the covenantal love between Christ and his Church.

The meaning of fidelity needs to be stressed.

'Till death do us part' means just that: the words of consent involve a totality that includes the future not just the present.

The couple should meditate on the biblical readings and the meaning of the rings and other signs, and should pray together.

Chapter 6: Some pastoral perspectives.

ACCOMPANYING THE FIRST YEARS OF MARRIED LIFE (217 – 230)

From this point on, until the end of this chapter, the writing is very personal. In this particular section there are almost no footnotes . In many ways it repeats in a more poetic style and language what has been said in 205 - 216. It evidences immense pastoral experience and human understanding. It clearly forms the basis for Chapter 8. Very difficult to summarise.

The whole section 217 – 230 should be required reading for couples undergoing marriage preparation (indeed, the whole of AL)

227 – 230 are of general relevance to pastors and parishes:

Pastors have to encourage families to grow in faith

Parishes, movements, schools and other Church institutions can help in a variety of ways to support families and help them grow

CASTING LIGHT ON CRISES, WORRIES AND DIFFICULTIES (231 – 252)

The Challenge of crises

232. The life of every family is marked by crises but

these are part of its dramatic beauty
they need not weaken a relationship but
mature the wine of their union.

Each crisis becomes an apprenticeship in growing closer together.

233. When problems are not dealt with communication can be lost and

The person I love becomes
My mate, then
The father or mother of my children, then
A stranger.

Chapter 6: Some pastoral perspectives.

CASTING LIGHT ON CRISES, WORRIES AND DIFFICULTIES (231 – 252)

Cont.

234. Crises need to be faced together but the couple may need help.

The Pre-Synodal consultation showed that most people in difficult or critical situations

Do not seek pastoral assistance because

They don't find it sympathetic, realistic or concerned for individual cases.

This should spur us to greater sensitivity to their burden of hurt and anxiety.

CASTING LIGHT ON CRISES, WORRIES AND DIFFICULTIES (231 – 252)

Cont.

Types of crises:

235. Some 'crises', or challenges, are typical, even normative, but can have repercussions:

- the arrival of a child,
- raising of children,
- adolescence,
- empty nesting
- care for elderly parents

236 - 240. Other crises are more personal:

- financial
- work-related
- social
- emotional
- spiritual

There may also be unexpected or disruptive events or situations that may risk recrimination but require forgiveness and reconciliation and external support.

- Physical changes
- Attraction to another
- Sense of dissatisfaction
- Petty hurts and jealousies
- Unresolved emotional issues from childhood

Chapter 6: Some pastoral perspectives.

CASTING LIGHT ON CRISES, WORRIES AND DIFFICULTIES (231 – 252)

Cont.

Accompaniment after breakdown and divorce

241

Chapter 6: Some pastoral perspectives.

WHEN DEATH MAKES US FEEL ITS STING (253 – 258)

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOWARDS A BETTER EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Paragraphs 259 – 290

Pope Francis is primarily concerned with the principal role of parents in the education of children but there is a practical relevance to all who are concerned with education in its broadest understanding: schools, teachers, governors, youth workers and parishes.

WHERE ARE OUR CHILDREN? (260 – 262)

Families are the natural place for support, guidance and direction, ever vigilant and never neglectful.

They must ask who is entering their children's lives, especially through ever-developing technology.

They must prepare them to confront the risks of aggression, abuse or addiction.

But not through obsessive concern or control.

It is more important to start processes than to dominate spaces.

The real question is not so much where the children are physically or with whom, but where are they existentially – what are their convictions, goals desires and dreams?

This implies freedom and education must encourage responsible use of freedom.

The child's rightful use of that freedom might surprise and challenge us.

THE ETHICAL FORMATION OF CHILDREN (263 – 267)

Parents cannot abdicate the moral formation of their children to others.

They are the principal agents of such formation which is rooted in:

Affection

Example

Trust

Loving respect

This is best delivered inductively – i.e. by helping children learn for themselves rather than by imposition.

And by the development of good habits (Ps and Qs) which interiorise values leading to sound and steady ways of acting.

Such a virtuous life builds, strengthens and shapes freedom which might otherwise be lost.

THE VALUE OF CORRECTION AS AN INCENTIVE (268 – 270)

It is essential that children realise that:

Misbehaviour has consequences.
Hurt caused to others has to be acknowledged.
Forgiveness should be sought.
Harm must be repaired.

Correction is necessary but

must not be delivered from anger.
must not lead to discouragement.

A balance has to be found between two equally harmful extremes:

One: where everything revolves around the child's desires.

Such children will grow up with a sense of their rights but not their responsibilities.

Two: where the child is deprived of an awareness of his or her dignity, personal identity and rights.

Such children end up overwhelmed by their duties and a need to carry out other people's wishes.

PATIENT REALISM (272 – 273)

Moral education and ethical formation has to be:

step by step
relevant to age and ability

and is effective if it is:

understood,
accepted
appreciated

It must also deal with the imperfect realisation of these values in parents/ teachers / and others.

FAMILY LIFE AS AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING (274 – 279)

The family and Catholic Schools are the principal setting for teaching:

the wise use of freedom (274)

the virtue of hope

the development of critical abilities, detachment from impulses and the value of deferment (275)

the value of socialisation:

the avoidance of fatal self-absorption and the importance of awareness, care and respect for those we live with. (276)

care for the environment (276)

the negative risks of technology and media (277)

THE NEED FOR SEX EDUCATION (280 – 286)

Vat II called for 'a positive and prudent sex education'.

This is difficult in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialised and impoverished. (280)

Has to be within framework of an education for love and mutual self-giving. (280)

Has to be delivered appropriately to age and maturity and must offer help in recognising, understanding and handling the bombardment of deforming messages. (281)

The importance of modesty. (282)

A focus on 'safe sex' promotes narcissism and the use of other persons for self-gratification in place of the gift of mutual acceptance and all-inclusive commitment. (283)

A 'union' based solely on sexual attraction without love is an illusion. Sex education must prepare young people seriously for great and generous love. (284)

There should be respect and appreciation of differences (accept your own body). (285)

Avoid gender stereotyping (286)

PASSING ON THE FAITH (287 – 290)

Faith is a gift handed to us which we, in turn must hand on to our children.

This is difficult in today's world.

Even so, the home must be the place to:

Learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of faith

To pray

To serve our neighbour

Education in the faith must be adapted to each age:

For children: use of symbols, actions and stories

For adolescents (who are often 'anti'): attractive testimonies and encouragement in their own experience of the faith.

Both must see people praying.

The family has an evangelising mission and is an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the gospel and varied forms of witness.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ACCOMPANYING, DISCERNING AND INTEGRATING WEAKNESS

Paragraphs 291 – 312

This complex chapter is in many ways the most sensitive and possibly the most contentious. The many references to St Thomas Aquinas can make for some dense reading and there is much that will keep moral theologians busy.

The chapter draws heavily on the Synod and quotes extensively from the Relatio Synodi and the Relatio Finalis. Sometimes such references are introduced by, 'I support the general consensus of the Synod', sometimes 'I agree with many Synod Fathers... '.

Pope Francis uses the "I" formula in many places in this chapter and there are occasional uniquely characteristic turns of phrase. For example: "Let us not forget that the Church's task is often like that of a field hospital."

Clergy will doubtless wish to read and study this chapter in full.

ACCOMPANYING, DISCERNING AND INTEGRATING WEAKNESS (291 – 292)

Christian marriage is fully realised in the union between a man and a woman who:

- give themselves mutually in free, faithful and exclusive love.
- belong to each other until death.
- are open to the transmission of life.
- are consecrated by the sacrament by which grace they become:
 - a domestic church and
 - a leaven of new life for society

There are, however:

- some forms of union that radically contradict this ideal
- others that realise it in a partial or analogous way.

The Synod stated that the Church

- does not disregard the constructive elements in such situations.

GRADUALNESS IN PASTORAL CARE (293 – 295)

With regard to civil marriages or simple cohabitation, where there is:

stability,
legal recognition
deep affection and responsibility for children
and an ability to overcome trials

the opportunity arises for pastoral dialogue and discernment to distinguish elements in their lives that can lead to a greater openness to the Gospel of marriage in its fullness and foster both human and spiritual growth.

Whatever the reasons behind the choice of civil marriage or cohabitation, which may be cultural, economic or anti-institutional, the couples need to be welcomed and guided patiently and discreetly, as Jesus treated the Samaritan Woman.

Relevant here is St Pope John Paul II's 'law of gradualness'. This is not a 'gradualness of law' but a gradualness of response by those who are not in a position to understand, appreciate or fulfill the demands of the law.

THE DISCERNMENT OF "IRREGULAR" SITUATIONS (296 – 300)

This is an important and lengthy section where each paragraph requires careful analysis.

296. I want to make clear, in case we take the wrong path, that there are two ways of thinking which recur throughout Church history:

Casting off

Reinstating

The Church's way is Christ's way:

mercy and reinstatement

There is a need

to avoid judgements which do not take into account the complexity of various situations

to be attentive to how people experience distress because of their condition.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

THE DISCERNMENT OF "IRREGULAR" SITUATIONS (296 – 300) cont.

297. I support the general consensus of the Synod in considering the pastoral approach to those in 'irregular' situations (civil marriage, divorced and remarried, co-habitation):

The Church has a responsibility of helping them understand the divine pedagogy of grace in their lives and offering them assistance so they can reach the fullness of God's plan for them.

THE DISCERNMENT OF "IRREGULAR" SITUATIONS (296 – 300) cont.

298. As to the divorced there are a variety of situations:

- 1) A second union, consolidated over time, with children, proven fidelity and Christian commitment...
- 2) Every effort was made to save first marriage, unjustly abandoned, entered second union for sake of children and feel certain first union was invalid
- 3) A new union following a divorce which entails suffering and confusion for children, or where someone has consistently failed in their obligations to the family.

The discernment of pastors must always take place 'by adequately distinguishing' and with an approach which carefully discerns situations.

THE DISCERNMENT OF "IRREGULAR" SITUATIONS (296 – 300) cont.

299. I agree with many who said that

The baptised who are divorced and civilly remarried need to be more fully integrated in Christian communities, while avoiding any occasion of scandal.

The logic of integration is key to their pastoral care.

Their participation can be expressed in different ecclesial services.

This requires discerning which forms of current exclusion in the

liturgical, pastoral,
educational, institutional

framework can be surmounted.

They are not to feel as excommunicated members of the Church but living members able to grow in the Church.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

THE DISCERNMENT OF "IRREGULAR" SITUATIONS (296 – 300) cont.

300. It is not possible to provide a new set of general rules, canonical in nature, applicable to all cases.

What is possible is a renewed encouragement to undertake a responsible personal and pastoral discernment in particular cases.

Priests have a duty to accompany the divorced and remarried in helping them understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

THE DISCERNMENT OF "IRREGULAR" SITUATIONS (296 – 300) cont.

Conversation with the priest in the internal forum contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders and what can foster fuller participation in the life of the church.

The following conditions are essential for this discernment to happen:

humility

discretion

love for the church and her teaching

a sincere search for God's will

a desire to make a more perfect response to it.

It is essential to avoid the grave danger of misunderstandings such as:

any priest can quickly grant 'exceptions'

sacramental privileges can be obtained for favours

the Church maintains double standards.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

MITIGATING FACTORS IN PASTORAL DISCERNMENT (301 – 303)

This is a dense section on such matters as ignorance, culpability, freedom of choice, conscience

The Church possesses a solid body of reflection concerning mitigating factors and situations.

It can no longer simply be said that all those in any 'irregular' situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace.

Factors may exist which limit the ability to make a decision:

ignorance, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachment,
other psychological or social factors.

A negative judgement of an objective situation does not imply judgement as to culpability.

Responsibility for actions or decisions is not the same in all cases.

MITIGATING FACTORS IN PASTORAL DISCERNMENT (301 – 303) cont.

303. Conscience

Guided by the serious discernment of the pastor every effort should be made to encourage development of conscience where conscience

does more than recognise that a situation does not correspond to overall demands of the Gospel.

can recognise what is the most generous response which can be given to God

can see what God is asking amid complexity of one's limits, even if not yet fully the objective ideal.

RULES AND DISCERNMENT (304 – 306)

304. It is reductive simply to consider whether or not an individual's actions correspond to a general law or rule.

It is not enough to discern and ensure full fidelity to God in the concrete life of a human being...

because general rules cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations.

Conversely, what may be part of a practical discernment in particular circumstances cannot be elevated to level of a rule.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

305. Moral laws cannot be applied to those living in 'irregular' situations as if they were stones to throw at people's lives.

Because of forms of conditioning and mitigating factors, it is possible that in an objective situation of sin – which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such – a person can be living in God's grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church's help to this end. (Footnote 351)

Fn.351 In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, "I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [24 November 2013], 44: AAS 105 [2013], 1038). I would also point out that the Eucharist "is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (*ibid.*, 47: 1039).

Discernment must help to find possible ways of responding to God and growing in the midst of limits.

Black and white thinking can close off the way of grace and growth.

A small step taken amid great difficulty can please God more than an outwardly orderly life that does not confront great difficulties.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

Schönborn's statement:

Cardinal Schönborn's statement on the development of doctrine came in response to a question as to whether paragraph No. 84 of "Familiaris Consortio" is still valid given that in footnote No. 351 of "Amoris Laetitia," Pope Francis opened the possibility that divorced and remarried Catholics could, in certain circumstances, receive the sacraments of reconciliation and Communion. St. John Paul II had ruled out such a possibility, unless the couple—who for serious reasons cannot separate—"take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples."

The Austrian cardinal describes Francis' opening as "a classic case" of "the organic development of doctrine." He explained that here "there is not a change [of doctrine]," but there is "the organic development of doctrine," along the lines that John Henry Newman had envisaged. He recalled that just as John Paul II had "developed doctrine" in "Familiaris Consortio," so, too, Francis has done the same in "Amoris Laetitia." He suggested that one might even say that this new development was in some way "implicit" in No. 84 of "Familiaris Consortio," which looked at three different situations. In any case, the cardinal said, "There is continuity in teaching here, but there is also something really new. There's a real development [of doctrine], not a rupture."

Asked why Francis had inserted this significant change into a footnote (No. 351) and not into the main body of the text, the cardinal responded, "I don't know!" He suggested, however, that the reason may have been because Francis—as he said on several occasions—thinks "it's a trap to focus on this single issue" because one risks losing the wider vision of marriage that is being presented here. Cardinal Schönborn then expressed his own view that perhaps the time has come, 50 years after the Second Vatican Council, to look anew at "how we understand the sacramental life."

THE LOGIC OF PASTORAL MERCY (307 – 312)

307. To avoid misunderstanding:

The Church must in no way desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage.

There can be no place for any kind of relativism or undue reticence in proposing that ideal.

To show understanding in exceptional circumstances does not diminish the light of the fuller ideal.

More important than the pastoral care of failure is the pastoral effort to strengthen marriages and prevent breakdown.

THE LOGIC OF PASTORAL MERCY (307 – 312) cont.

308.

However, without detracting from the evangelical ideal, there is always a need to accompany with mercy and patience.

I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion but

I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church

attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness,

a Mother, who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.

Chapter 8: Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness.

THE LOGIC OF PASTORAL MERCY (307 – 312) cont.

309-310

The importance of mercy.

The Church is commissioned to proclaim the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel.

Nothing in the Church's preaching or witness to the world can be lacking in mercy.

The Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.

THE LOGIC OF PASTORAL MERCY (307 – 312) cont.

311. The teaching of moral theology must incorporate these considerations and emphasise the primacy of charity as a response to the gratuitous offer of God's love.

312. All this helps us avoid a cold bureaucratic morality in dealing with sensitive issues.

The mindset which should prevail in the Church is that of a pastoral discernment filled with merciful love which is ever ready to

understand, forgive, accompany, hope and above all, integrate.

Those in complicated situations:

may not always encounter a confirmation of their own ideas or desires but

will receive some light from pastors ready to listen with sensitivity and serenity and

will be helped to live better lives and to recognise their proper place in the Church.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SPIRITUALITY OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Paragraphs 313 – 324

In this chapter some characteristics of the specific spirituality, called for by Vat II, that unfolds in family life and its relationships are described.

It offers a deep reflection on the sacramental mystery of marriage that provides support and encouragement to those who are theologically / spiritually and sacramentally literate; a bit more of a challenge to those who are not.

Rather more in traditional Vatican Document Speak, somewhat abstract and no use of the 'I'. Just an occasional quote from Pope Francis which rather sticks out; e.g. 'The family has always been the nearest hospital'. (321) and perhaps the final paragraph.

A SPIRITUALITY OF SUPERNATURAL COMMUNION (314 – 316)

The Trinity is present in marital communion.

The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures, which deepen communion and in which God has a dwelling place.

The demands of family life invite growth and a richer encounter with the Lord, both as a family and individually.

GATHERED IN PRAYER IN THE LIGHT OF EASTER (317 – 318)

In a family life centred on Christ:

Moments of pain and difficulty can be transformed into an offering of love.

Moments of joy and celebration can be experienced as a sharing in the life of the resurrection.

Importance of family prayer and the sacrament of the Eucharist which enables the marriage covenant to live as a 'domestic church'.

A SPIRITUALITY OF EXCLUSIVE AND FREE LOVE (319 – 320)

The fidelity of spousal commitment, which accepts and works through the challenges of life, is a sign of the Lord's closeness.

This mutuality will nonetheless allow space for each spouse's personal relationship with the Lord, who alone is the ultimate centre of each person's life.

A SPIRITUALITY OF CARE, CONSOLATION AND INCENTIVE (321 – 325)

Christian couples are called to care and therefore share in God's creative work.

All family life is a 'shepherding' in mercy.

To contemplate loved ones with the eyes of God and see Christ in them is a profound spiritual experience leading to loving care and total attention.

Importance of hospitality.

The family lives its spirituality precisely by being at one and the same time a domestic church and a vital cell for transforming the world.

FINAL PARAGRAPH (325)

The teaching on marriage of both Jesus and St Paul are set in context of ultimate and definitive dimension of human existence.

No family 'drops down from heaven perfectly formed'.

To grow and mature in the ability to love is a never ending vocation.

Therefore, we should not demand of our interpersonal relationships a perfection, a purity of intentions and a consistency which we will only encounter in the Kingdom to come.

We should also keep from judging harshly those who live in situations of frailty.

We must all respond to the impulse to keep striving towards something greater: the fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us.