

# CATHOLICS, FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS: VIEWS FROM THE PEWS

JULIE CLAGUE  
*University of Glasgow*

## I. POPE PAUL VI ESTABLISHES THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 1965

As the Second Vatican Council was drawing to a close, Pope Paul VI issued a *motu proprio* establishing the Synod of Bishops. The Council had been a powerful expression of the collegiality of the bishops. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* had integrated the theology of collegiality into the universal teaching of the Church and, through their role at the Council, the Council Fathers had demonstrated that collegiality worked in practice. Pope Paul had become convinced of ‘the necessity and importance of making ever greater use of the bishops’ assistance in providing for the good of the universal Church’, and he wanted to ensure that an institutional mechanism was in place that would promote the continuation of more collaborative modes of Episcopal oversight.<sup>1</sup> The creation of a permanent representative council of bishops would strengthen the unity of the bishops throughout the world and the bishop of Rome, and facilitate the bishops’ participation in the service of the Church. The function of the Synod of Bishops would consist in ‘providing information and offering advice’ and, when conferred on it by the Pope, the Synod would also have decision-making powers.<sup>2</sup> The *motu proprio* specifies the following general purposes of the Synod of Bishops:

- a) to promote a closer union and greater cooperation between the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops of the whole world;
- b) to see to it that accurate and direct information is supplied on matters and situations that bear upon the internal life of the Church and upon the kind of action that should be carrying on in today’s world;
- c) to facilitate agreement, at least on essential matters of doctrine and on the course of action to be taken in the life of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

As a newly constituted arm of the Church, the Synod of Bishops was hardly a tried and tested means of fostering collegiality, but Paul recognised that it would ‘be improved upon with the passing of time’.<sup>4</sup>

## II. THE DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN TODAY’S WORLD

Between Paul’s establishment of the Synod of Bishops in 1965 and the Fifth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘The Duties of the Christian Family in Today’s World’ in 1980, the energy and enthusiasm generated by the Council dissipated considerably. In Rome, Church

governance continued as before, as did Curial influence on Episcopal conferences. Many local initiatives in Church renewal were met with official caution or stifled. With regard to matters of marriage and family life, the Church had been plunged into crisis by Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968.<sup>5</sup> Controversy surrounding the encyclical's ban on contraception, and its status as authoritative teaching continued to preoccupy and divide Catholics. *Humanae Vitae* had become an issue that would not go away.<sup>6</sup>

In his intervention at the Synod assembly on the family in 1980, Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco tackled the thorny matter of the widespread rejection of Catholic teaching on birth control as expressed in *Humanae Vitae*. He pointed out that opposition to the encyclical was 'found even among those whose lives are otherwise outstanding in their Christian dedication, and among theologians and pastors whose learning, faith, discretion and dedication to the Church are beyond doubt'.<sup>7</sup> As evidence, Archbishop Quinn cited a Princeton University study which had found, he said, 'that 76.5 percent of American Catholic women [...] were using some form of birth regulation and that 94 percent of these Catholic women were using methods condemned by the encyclical'.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Quinn continued, 'only 29 percent of American Catholic priests believe contraception is immoral'.<sup>9</sup>

Archbishop Quinn was not calling into question Catholic teaching on contraception. Rather, he was taking seriously his Synod responsibility in ensuring that 'accurate and direct information' was supplied 'on matters and situations that bear upon the internal life of the Church and upon the kind of action that should be carrying on in today's world'.<sup>10</sup> Quinn called for 'an honest examination' of the subject by the Synod; one that faced up to the reality of the non-reception of magisterial teaching on this issue, which he described as 'a profound theological and pastoral problem'.<sup>11</sup> As Peter Hebblethwaite reports, Archbishop Quinn, along with Cardinal Basil Hume who had adopted a similar tack, was in the minority in advocating a more pastoral approach to Catholics experiencing difficulties with the Church's teaching on contraception. Both Archbishop Quinn and Cardinal Hume 'were subjected to intense criticism' by certain Synod members, according to Hebblethwaite.<sup>12</sup> 'The critics were particularly scathing in their rejection of surveys and sociological data', he states.<sup>13</sup> One such critic was Cardinal Pericle Felici, President of the General Secretariat of the Synod, who rejected Quinn's proposal that the Holy See initiate formal dialogue with Catholic theologians around the world on the problems raised by dissent from the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*. 'There is no need of rediscussing it', Cardinal Felici retorted, 'no need to pay attention to statistics because statistics don't signify anything. The encyclical is closed'.<sup>14</sup>

Concerns about the uses and abuses of statistics were also voiced in the language-based discussion groups. What, if anything, does statistical evidence of non-reception of Church teaching imply for the *sensus fidei* (the divine gift of the right sense of the faith that is possessed and preserved by the faithful)?<sup>15</sup> Two of the eleven language groups were emphatic that the sense of faith of the faithful is not a quality that can be quantified in statistical terms:

The German-language group declared that one discovered 'the sense of the faithful not by counting heads but by consulting the magisterium'. The Italian group said the same: 'The sense of the faithful should not be understood as the sum of the opinions of believers, nor can it be determined by statistical methods'.<sup>16</sup>

In these remarks, the bishops were concerned to prevent any simple equating of the beliefs and practices of the majority of believers with the content of the Catholic faith, and to warn against attempts to read theological meaning into sociological data. Such cautionary remarks have their place. Statistics are open to misinterpretation and misapplication; but statistical evidence can also aid understanding. How should one regard Archbishop Quinn's citing of the survey of

contraceptive use by Catholics? Peter Hebblethwaite sees in the language groups' remarks an attempt to dismiss the Princeton data and its implications by refuting a point that no one had made:

When Archbishop Quinn quoted the Princeton report, he was not naively suggesting that it was the pathway to doctrinal truth ... He was pointing to a pastoral problem that cannot be resolved by denying its existence. It is part of the data.<sup>17</sup>

The question arises as to how, precisely, social scientific research and statistical data can inform the theological and pastoral dimensions of the Church's activities. Are there some aspects of Church life or doctrine in respect of which, to quote Cardinal Felici, there is 'no need to pay attention to statistics because statistics don't signify anything'? These matters were taken up in Pope John Paul II's post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*:

The 'supernatural sense of faith' [...] does not consist solely or necessarily in the consensus of the faithful. Following Christ, the Church seeks the truth, which is not always the same as the majority opinion. She listens to conscience and not to power, and in this way she defends the poor and the downtrodden. The Church values sociological and statistical research, when it proves helpful in understanding the historical context in which pastoral action has to be developed and when it leads to a better understanding of the truth. Such research alone, however, is not to be considered in itself an expression of the sense of faith.<sup>18</sup>

John Paul prefaces this statement by affirming that the Church has a responsibility to seek an ever deeper understanding of the reality of marriage and family life. In this, the Church can be guided by the experiences, questions and concerns of married couples and families:

Since God's plan for marriage and the family touches men and women in the concreteness of their daily existence in specific social and cultural situations, the Church ought to apply herself to understanding the situations within which marriage and the family are lived today, in order to fulfil her task of serving [...] Moreover, the call and demands of the Spirit resound in the very events of history, and so the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family by the circumstances, the questions and the anxieties and hopes of the young people, married couples and parents of today.<sup>19</sup>

The Pope recognises that there are many challenges facing married couples and families, and that discerning the right path is not always easy:

Not infrequently ideas and solutions which are very appealing but which obscure in varying degrees the truth and the dignity of the human person, are offered to the men and women of today, in their sincere and deep search for a response to the important daily problems that affect their married and family life. These views are often supported by the powerful and pervasive organization of the means of social communication, which subtly endangers freedom and the capacity for objective judgment.<sup>20</sup>

The entire Church must be involved in the process of discerning which approaches to the problems confronting married couples and families are consistent with the Gospel and with human dignity, 'in order that the entire truth and the full dignity of marriage and the family may be preserved and realized'.<sup>21</sup> This is a task not only for the Church's pastors but for the laity too, since the sense of faith is a gift given by the Holy Spirit to all the faithful:

This discernment is accomplished through the sense of faith, which is a gift that the Spirit gives to all the faithful, and is therefore the work of the whole Church according to the

diversity of the various gifts and charisms that, together with and according to the responsibility proper to each one, work together for a more profound understanding and activation of the word of God. The Church, therefore, does not accomplish this discernment only through the Pastors, who teach in the name and with the power of Christ but also through the laity [...].<sup>22</sup>

These statements by John Paul are significant. First, the Church can ‘be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family by the circumstances, the questions and the anxieties and hopes of the young people, married couples and parents of today’.<sup>23</sup> Second, *Familiaris Consortio* captures an important insight about the joint task that confronts the faithful – pastors and laity – who are imbued with the sense of faith, in discerning together the correct path that the Gospel of Christ illuminates on the many issues of life, including those that concern marriage and family. How well were these elements integrated into the Fifth Ordinary General Assembly on the Christian family? Lay delegates attended the Synod assembly of 1980, though the assembly lacked the sort of consultative mechanisms that could ensure extensive lay input to the Synod deliberations. Taken on its own, the Synod assembly of 1980 cannot serve as a model of how to discern together as the whole Church. Plainly, an assembly of the Synod of Bishops cannot be expected to foster the type of joint discernment between pastors and laity described in *Familiaris Consortio*. Other types of institutional bodies and mechanisms would be required for such a purpose; and these the Roman Catholic Church currently lacks.

How did the assembly of 1980 fare in terms of its accomplishment of the general purposes of the Synod of Bishops as specified by Paul VI? Did it promote ‘closer union and greater cooperation between the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops of the whole world’? Was ‘accurate and direct information’ supplied on matters concerning the Church and the world? Did the Synod assembly ‘facilitate agreement on essential matters of doctrine’? It is possible to answer in the affirmative in all these respects. The Synod bishops provided information, they united around and cooperated with Pope John Paul II, and agreement was reached. The bishops could agree upon and unite around the doctrine of the Church on marriage and family life, but only by choosing to ignore the fact that many – possibly most – of the world’s Catholics could not agree with and could not unite around certain aspects of the doctrine of the Church on marriage and family life. Unity was forged in terms of the college of bishops, but not in terms of the Church. In preferring an idealised portrait of Christian marriage and family life, the Synod airbrushed away some of ‘the circumstances, the questions and the anxieties’ of young people, married couples and parents. The bishops had dismissed data that demanded action, such as the data on birth control provided by Archbishop Quinn. That data demonstrated the gulf that existed between Church teaching and the beliefs and practices of many of the faithful in relation to responsible parenthood. The embarrassing disjunction between the official narrative on marriage and fertility and the lived reality of the faithful should have given pause for thought and acted as a ‘wake-up call’ for the college of bishops. Instead, the hierarchy continued as though no such disjunction existed. Would greater lay representation at the assembly, and a wider and more thorough consultation of the faithful prior to the assembly have increased the likelihood of the nettle being grasped? One senses that the scale of the problem would require a more comprehensive, sustained and multi-pronged approach across the whole Church. In any case, at the 1980 Synod assembly on the family, there was insufficient discernment about what the data signalled on the Synod floor. The data was significant, however. The problem was big, and it was not going to go away.

## III. THE PASTORAL CHALLENGES OF THE FAMILY IN THE CONTEXT OF EVANGELIZATION

On 8 October 2013, following discussions with his eight Cardinal advisors in the newly established Council of Cardinals (popularly known as the C8), Pope Francis convoked the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, for 5–19 October 2014, on the theme ‘Pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation’. This assembly would precede the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops scheduled for 4–25 October 2015 on the theme ‘Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the family’, thereby creating an unprecedented two-stage process of reflection on the family by the Synod of Bishops. The Preparatory Document for the Extraordinary General Assembly explains the reasons for this unique initiative by Pope Francis:

The social and spiritual crisis, so evident in today’s world, is becoming a pastoral challenge in the Church’s evangelizing mission concerning the family, the vital building-block of society and the ecclesial community. Never before has proclaiming the Gospel on the Family in this context been more urgent and necessary. The importance of the subject is reflected in the fact that the Holy Father has decided to call for a Synod of Bishops, which is to have a two-staged itinerary: firstly, an Extraordinary General Assembly in 2014, intended to define the ‘*status quaestionis*’ and to collect the bishops’ experiences and proposals in proclaiming and living the Gospel of the Family in a credible manner; and secondly, an Ordinary General Assembly in 2015 to seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.<sup>24</sup>

This is followed by an attempt to detail some of the specific issues that have become ‘a pastoral challenge in the Church’s evangelizing mission concerning the family’:

Concerns which were unheard of until a few years ago have arisen today as a result of different situations, from the widespread practice of cohabitation, which does not lead to marriage, and sometimes even excludes the idea of it, to same-sex unions between persons, who are, not infrequently, permitted to adopt children. The many new situations requiring the Church’s attention and pastoral care include: mixed or inter-religious marriages; the single-parent family; polygamy; marriages with the consequent problem of a dowry, sometimes understood as the purchase price of the woman; the caste system; a culture of non-commitment and a presumption that the marriage bond can be temporary; forms of feminism hostile to the Church; migration and the reformulation of the very concept of the family; relativist pluralism in the conception of marriage; the influence of the media on popular culture in its understanding of marriage and family life; underlying trends of thought in legislative proposals which devalue the idea of permanence and faithfulness in the marriage covenant; an increase in the practice of surrogate motherhood (*wombs for hire*); and new interpretations of what is considered a human right. Within the Church, faith in the sacramentality of marriage and the healing power of the Sacrament of Penance show signs of weakness or total abandonment.<sup>25</sup>

The Preparatory Document emphasises that ‘reflection on these issues by the Synod of Bishops’ is ‘much needed and urgent’, and that ‘vast expectations exist concerning the decisions which are to be made pastorally regarding the family’.<sup>26</sup>

Half of the document is taken up with a series of thirty-nine questions directed to the particular Churches across the globe so that they may ‘participate actively in the preparation of the Extraordinary Synod, whose purpose is to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the pastoral challenges facing the family today’.<sup>27</sup> These consultation questions are organised under nine general headings. The first, on the diffusion of teachings on family in Sacred Scripture and the Church’s Magisterium, concerns whether teachings on marriage and the family are known and accepted by the faithful. The second, on marriage according to the natural law, concerns

whether the concept of natural law is recognised and accepted at the level of the local Church. The third concerns the pastoral care of the family in evangelization, and also covers marriage preparation. The fourth, on pastoral care in certain difficult marital situations, seeks to gauge the impact of cohabitation, separation, and divorce and remarriage on the particular Churches and invites proposals for ways to simplify the process of marriage annulment within the Church. The fifth cluster of questions concerns unions of persons of the same sex. The questions seek information from the particular Churches concerning the legal recognition of civil unions, child adoption by same sex couples, Catholic attitudes to same sex unions, and the type of pastoral response taken by the particular Church to people living in such unions. The sixth set of questions, on the education of children in irregular marriages, requests estimates of the proportion of children affected by irregular marriages, and asks for information on how the particular Churches approach sacramental, catechetical and educational provision for children affected by irregular marriages. The seventh set of questions deals with the openness of the married couple to life. These questions inquire about the extent of knowledge and acceptance of Church teaching on responsible parenthood in *Humanae Vitae*, of attitudes towards methods of family planning, of the impact of these practices on sacramental practice, on whether natural family planning methods are promoted at the local level, and they inquire as to how the Church might promote an increase in births and encourage greater openness to the fostering of children. The penultimate set of questions, on the relationship between the family and the person, explores the role of the family in fostering the personal faith of the believer. The final question allows the particular Churches to identify any other challenges or to make proposals on matters not covered by the questionnaire.<sup>28</sup>

The Preparatory Document was circulated to the particular Churches on 18 October 2013, accompanied by a letter signed by Archbishop (now Cardinal) Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops. The accompanying letter contained two remarks that raised hopes and expectations for the Synod gathering. Firstly, Archbishop Baldisseri informed the addressees – his fellow bishops – that the Synod of Bishops is intended as ‘an instrument of communion through which the collegiality desired by the Second Vatican Council is expressed and realized’ and that the Holy Father ‘wishes to strengthen it for a better exercise of collegiality’.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the Archbishop requested that the Preparatory Document be distributed to every level of the Church, including the grassroots, in order to generate the maximum feedback and to gather evidence and insights concerning the topics covered in the preparatory questions:

[...] share it immediately as widely as possible to deaneries and parishes so that input from local sources can be received regarding the themes and responses to the questionnaire, as well as any helpful statistics, for the preparation of the *Instrumentum laboris*.<sup>30</sup>

With this letter it became clear that, with Pope Francis’ approval, a full-blown consultation of the Church was underway. Armed with these findings, each Synod member would be able to speak to his own particular Church context. The Synod working document, the *Instrumentum laboris*, published in June 2014 confirms that many (probably in the region of several hundred thousand) Catholic individuals and groups participated in the consultation process:

A great number of detailed responses to the questions was submitted by the synods of the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, the Episcopal conferences, the departments of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General. In addition, other responses – categorized as *observations* – were sent directly to the General Secretariat by a significant number of dioceses, parishes, movements, groups, ecclesial associations and families, not to mention

academic institutions, specialists, both Catholic and non-Catholic, all interested in sharing their reflections.<sup>31</sup>

Most of these responses and observations are not in the public domain. However, the Austrian, Flemish and French-speaking Belgian, German, Japanese, Maltese and Swiss Episcopal conferences made public their submissions.<sup>32</sup>

In broad terms, the findings as revealed in the *Instrumentum Laboris* confirm a significant disjunction between the vision of marriage and family promoted by the Church in its official teaching and the various attitudes, values, lifestyles and practices that can be witnessed in the many diverse social and cultural contexts in which the Church has its being: 'a vast majority of responses highlight the growing conflict between the values on marriage and the family as proposed by the Church and the globally diversified social and cultural situations'.<sup>33</sup> According to the *Instrumentum Laboris*, 'the People of God's knowledge of conciliar and post-conciliar documents on the Magisterium of the family seems to be rather wanting ... Some responses clearly state that the faithful have no knowledge of these documents'. Some Catholics find Church documents too difficult to read and inaccessible to non-specialists.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, 'many respondents confirmed that, even when the Church's teaching about marriage and the family is known, many Christians have difficulty accepting it in its entirety'. Aspects of teaching that tend to be 'overlooked' include those involving 'birth control, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, cohabitation, fidelity, premarital sex, *in vitro* fertilization'.<sup>35</sup> The working document speaks of the 'demise of the concept of the natural law',<sup>36</sup> one of the crown jewels of the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the theological and ethical underpinning upon which much of Catholic teaching on sexual morality relies:

In a vast majority of responses and observations, the concept of natural law today turns out to be, in different cultural contexts, highly problematic, if not completely incomprehensible. The expression is understood in a variety of ways, or simply not understood at all.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV. MORE VIEWS FROM THE PEWS: SURVEYS OF CATHOLIC OPINION

The consultation process initiated for the Extraordinary General Assembly on the family was not a scientific study. How might statistical data inform the Church's discernment on these matters, particularly with regard to the questions explored in the Preparatory Document? What evidence is available about the beliefs and practices of Catholics around the world? Given that much of the available survey data concerns the advanced economies of Europe and North America, what research exists concerning the attitudes of Catholics in the Global South? Is the *Instrumentum laboris* correct to state that, regarding the Church's teaching about marriage and the family, many Catholics 'have difficulty accepting it in its entirety'? In order to gauge the extent of the non-reception of Church teaching on marriage and the family, and to obtain greater analytical specificity about the nature of any disconnect between the official Church and its ordinary members, some recent surveys of Catholic attitudes will be examined.<sup>38</sup>

First, it is necessary to note the size and distribution of the global Catholic population, in order to understand the diverse contexts in which Catholics live around the world. According to the latest Vatican estimates, the global Catholic population as of 31 December 2012 was 1.228 billion.<sup>39</sup> The Pew Research Center estimates there were 1.078 billion Catholics in 2010, based on census and survey data for individuals who self-identify as Catholic.<sup>40</sup> In December 2011, the Pew Research Center published estimates of the distribution of the global Catholic population

Table 1: Countries with the largest number of Catholics 2010 (Pew Research Center)<sup>42</sup>

Country	Estimated 2010 Catholic Population	Percent of Total National Population that is Catholic	Rank
Brazil	126,750,000	65%	1
Mexico	96,450,000	85%	2
Philippines	75,570,000	81%	3
United States	75,380,000	24%	4
Italy	49,170,000	81%	5
Colombia	38,100,000	82%	6
France	37,930,000	60%	7
Poland	35,310,000	92%	8
Spain	34,670,000	75%	9
Democratic Republic of Congo	31,210,000	47%	10
Argentina	31,020,000	77%	11
Uganda	14,100,000	42%	17
United Kingdom	10,040,000	16%	23
Republic of Ireland	3,950,000	88%	49

by country in 2010.<sup>41</sup> Table 1 displays in rank order the most recently available Pew estimates for countries with the largest Catholic populations in 2010.

Catholics are found throughout the inhabited regions of the globe: in the West and in the East; in the North and in the South; in mega-cities and in remote rural districts; in rich and in poor nations; in advanced democracies and in failing states. These diverse social and cultural contexts are the setting in which the beliefs and values of Catholics take shape.

*i. Univision Communications, 'Global Survey of Roman Catholics', 2014*

In February 2014, the Spanish-language media company, Univision Communications published the results of a global survey of Catholic opinion. The Synod consultation process and 'the worldwide conversation begun by the Vatican's announcement' of the Extraordinary General Assembly prompted Univision to commission the opinion poll,<sup>43</sup> which focuses on Catholic attitudes to certain Church teachings:

[O]ur research has endeavored to determine where Catholic opinion currently lies on some of the more controversial issues facing the church in the modern era, and specifically the extent to which Catholic public opinion mirrors Catholic doctrine.<sup>44</sup>

The survey, which was conducted between 18 December 2013 and 15 January 2014, was based on data gathered from 12,038 self-identified adult Catholics in twelve countries. The countries selected were those with the eleven highest populations of Catholics: Brazil; Mexico; Philippines; United States of America; Italy; Colombia; France; Poland; Spain; Democratic Republic of Congo; Argentina; and a twelfth country, Uganda (in order to allow for a better representation of sub-Saharan Africa).<sup>45</sup> Together, these nations account for 60 per cent of the world's Catholic population.<sup>46</sup>

Catholics were asked their views on admission to the sacraments for the divorced and remarried, contraception, abortion, same-sex marriage, married priests and women priests. They were also asked for their approval rating of Pope Francis. The findings indicate wide disparities between the views of ordinary Catholics on the issues surveyed and Church teachings on these issues:

Taken together, these findings suggest an extraordinary disconnect between the church's basic teachings on the fundamental issues of family and pastoral responsibilities and the viewpoints currently held by many of the world's more than 1 Billion Catholics.<sup>47</sup>

A majority of Catholics expressed views on contraception, on abortion, and on the admission of the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, at odds with the teaching of the Church. Two-thirds of Catholics oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex. Half of those surveyed believe priests should be allowed to marry,<sup>48</sup> and 45 per cent favour the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood.<sup>49</sup> The Catholics were most united in their approval rating of Pope Francis. When asked: 'How would you rate the job that Pope Francis has been doing since he was elected Pope earlier this year?', 87 per cent of respondents rated his performance as excellent or good.<sup>50</sup> The survey responses on the issues of admission of the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, abortion, contraception, and same-sex marriage are examined in further detail below, on the basis that these issues are discussed in the Working Document for the Extraordinary General Assembly.

#### *Admission of the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist*

Catholics were asked: 'Do you agree or disagree with Catholic Church policy on divorce that says: "An individual who has divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church, is living in sin which prevents them from receiving Communion"?' . 38 per cent of respondents agree with Church policy; 58 per cent disagree with Church policy; 4 per cent gave no answer.<sup>51</sup> The responses by country to the question on the admission of the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist are shown in Table 2. In ten of the twelve countries surveyed, a majority of the Catholic population disagrees with the Church's policy on admission to the Eucharist for those who are divorced and remarried. Only the African countries, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda, registered Catholic majorities in favour of Church policy. In both nations, more than seven out of every ten Catholics agree with Church policy. In the Philippines – the only state (other than the Vatican) where divorce is illegal – Catholics are somewhat divided on the question.

Table 2: Do you agree or disagree with Catholic Church policy on divorce that says: 'An individual who has divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church, is living in sin which prevents them from receiving Communion'?'<sup>52</sup>

Country	Agree %	Disagree %	No answer %
Brazil	27	71	2
Mexico	34	65	1
Philippines	46	50	4
United States	32	60	8
Italy	16	79	5
Colombia	36	60	4
France	17	78	5
Poland	31	58	11
Spain	12	82	6
Democratic Republic of Congo	72	18	10
Argentina	23	73	4
Uganda	78	21	1

Table 3: Do you support or oppose the use of contraceptives?<sup>54</sup>

Country	Support %	Oppose %	No answer %
Brazil	93	5	2
Mexico	88	11	1
Philippines	68	30	2
United States	79	15	6
Italy	84	12	4
Colombia	91	8	1
France	94	4	2
Poland	75	19	6
Spain	90	7	3
Democratic Republic of Congo	44	49	7
Argentina	91	7	2
Uganda	44	54	2

### *Contraception*

Catholics were asked: ‘Do you support or oppose the use of contraceptives?’. 78 per cent of respondents support the use of contraceptives; 19 per cent are opposed to their use; 3 per cent gave no answer.<sup>53</sup> The responses by country to the question on contraception are shown in Table 3. Despite Catholic teaching which prohibits the use of contraceptives, ten of the twelve countries surveyed registered large Catholic majorities in favour of contraception. Just the two African countries recorded majorities opposed to the use of contraceptives, though Catholic opinion is divided on the matter in DRC.

### *Abortion*

Catholics were asked: ‘Do you think that abortions should be allowed in all cases, allowed in some cases, or should it not be allowed at all?’. 8 per cent of respondents answered that abortion should be allowed in all cases. 57 per cent of respondents answered that abortion should be allowed in some cases. 33 per cent of respondents answered that abortion should not be allowed at all. 2 per cent of respondents gave no answer.<sup>55</sup> The responses by country to the question on abortion are shown in Table 4. Overall, one third of the Catholics surveyed agree with the official teaching of the Church, which states that abortion is never justified. Nine of the twelve nations surveyed registered large Catholic majorities in favour of abortion in some or all circumstances. Three of the twelve nations (the Philippines, DRC, and Uganda) registered Catholic majorities against abortion in all circumstances. In the Philippines (where, as in DRC, abortion is illegal) almost three out of every four respondents held this view.

### *Marriage between persons of the same sex*

Catholics were asked: ‘Do you support or oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex?’. 30 per cent of respondents support marriage between two persons of the same sex. 66 per cent of respondents oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex. 4 per cent of respondents gave no answer.<sup>57</sup> The responses by country to the question of marriage between two people of the same sex are shown in Table 5. In ten of the twelve countries, Catholic majorities oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex; though the Catholic populations of Brazil and Argentina are somewhat divided on the question. Spain and the United States of America registered Catholic majorities in support of same-sex marriage. Four of the countries have laws allowing same-sex marriage: Argentina; Brazil; France; and Spain. Mexico and the USA have legalised same-sex marriage in some of their regional jurisdictions.

Table 4: Do you think that abortions should be allowed in all cases, allowed in some cases, or should it not be allowed at all?<sup>56</sup>

Country	Allowed in all cases %	Allowed in some cases %	Not allowed at all %	No answer %
Brazil	7	74	18	1
Mexico	5	68	27	0
Philippines	2	25	73	0
United States	10	66	21	3
Italy	15	68	13	4
Colombia	3	58	38	1
France	32	62	5	1
Poland	9	73	13	5
Spain	24	64	8	4
Democratic Republic of Congo	5	35	56	4
Argentina	6	73	20	1
Uganda	5	30	64	1

Table 5: Do you support or oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex?<sup>59</sup>

Country	Support %	Oppose %	No answer %
Brazil	45	47	8
Mexico	36	62	2
Philippines	14	84	2
United States	54	40	6
Italy	30	66	4
Colombia	23	71	6
France	43	51	6
Poland	15	78	7
Spain	64	27	9
Democratic Republic of Congo	2	98	0
Argentina	46	48	6
Uganda	1	99	0

Colombia, parts of Mexico and some US states legally recognise same-sex civil partnerships. Since two-thirds of Catholics surveyed are opposed to marriage between persons of the same sex, the views of Catholics on this issue are more in line with Church teaching. According to the survey team: 'On average, 5% more women, 18% more young people and 10% more upper and upper middle class members are in favour of gay marriage compared to their counterparts'.<sup>58</sup>

#### *Church attendance*

On Church attendance, Catholics were asked: 'How often do you attend Mass or other religious services – frequently (every week / a few times a month) or infrequently (only during Christmas and holidays / never)?'. 69 per cent of respondents described themselves as frequent attendees. 30 per cent described themselves as infrequent attendees. 1 per cent gave no answer.<sup>60</sup> According to the survey team, '[t]he data shows a clear divide in opinion on the societal issues tested, among those who attend church services on a regular basis, and those who choose not to'.<sup>61</sup> For example, on contraception, 72 per cent of those who described themselves as frequent churchgoers support the use of contraceptives. For those who describe themselves as infrequent churchgoers, this figure rises to 90 per cent.<sup>62</sup>

### Analysis

The Univision survey is not without its limitations. For example, classifying church attendance in terms of just two categories of churchgoer – frequent and infrequent – is insufficient. Nonetheless, the survey is valuable for a number of reasons. As a large-scale representative survey of six in ten of the world's Catholic population, it makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Catholic opinion around the world. It provides valuable statistical evidence for parts of the globe where the Catholic Church has a significant presence – and, in some cases, a growing population – but where survey data is in short supply. It offers a synoptic view of national perspectives that surveys rarely capture, allowing for comparative analysis. Finally, its findings challenge perceptions that non-reception of Church teaching is predominantly a phenomenon of richer and more secularised nations in regions such as Europe and North America.

In terms of their socio-demographic profile, Catholics that best correspond to the position of the Church are '55 year old and above, married men and women who live in small, rural areas and who attend mass frequently'.<sup>63</sup> When the degree of correspondence with Church teaching is examined according to the gender of the respondents, the survey shows a difference between the sexes of no more than two percentage points on the questions relating to Eucharistic admission, abortion and contraception. On the question concerning marriage between persons of the same sex, however, men are significantly more in agreement with the Church's position than women: 70 per cent of males oppose marriage between persons of the same sex, compared to 61 per cent of women.<sup>64</sup>

In national terms, it is the attitudes of Catholics in Uganda, DRC, and the Philippines that most closely correspond to Catholic teaching. On the question of admitting the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist, on contraception, and on abortion, the degree of correspondence between Catholic opinion and Church teaching is low. There are, however, wide national variations in the degree of Catholic agreement with Church teaching. On the question of admitting the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist, the degree of Catholic agreement with Church teaching is 38 per cent across all surveyed countries, and ranges from 12 per cent in Spain to 78 per cent in Uganda. On the question of contraception, the degree of Catholic agreement with Church teaching is 19 per cent across all surveyed countries, and ranges from 4 per cent in France to 54 per cent in Uganda. On the question of abortion, the degree of Catholic agreement with Church teaching is 33 per cent across all surveyed countries, and ranges from 5 per cent in France to 73 per cent in the Philippines. On the question of marriage between persons of the same sex, the degree of Catholic agreement with Church teaching is 66 per cent across all surveyed countries, and ranges from 27 per cent in Spain to 99 per cent in Uganda. The Univision survey therefore shows that national context makes a difference to Catholic opinion on these questions.<sup>65</sup>

The Synod *Instrumentum laboris* refers to the influence of local context in its discussion of the responses to the Synod consultation that concern the moral evaluation of different methods of birth control:

Clearly, believers hold different positions and have diverse attitudes on this subject, depending on the different parts of the world where they live and their local surroundings, including those who find themselves immersed in highly secularized and technically advanced cultures and those who live a simpler life in rural areas.<sup>66</sup>

The Univision findings confirm that 'believers hold different positions and have different attitudes' on the subject of birth control, and that attitudes vary according to 'the different parts of the world where they live'. However, the Univision survey found that the vast majority of Catholics (78 per cent) support the use of contraception, wherever they live. One of the nations

surveyed is ‘highly secularized’ (France); others report high levels of religiosity (e.g., Brazil; Colombia; Poland).<sup>67</sup> Some are ‘technically advanced’ (e.g., USA; France); others, technologically underdeveloped (DRC; Uganda).<sup>68</sup> In some countries, most of the population lives in ‘rural areas’ (e.g., DRC; Uganda; Philippines), while others have largely urban populations (e.g., Argentina; Brazil).<sup>69</sup> How influential are these factors on attitudes to contraception in these nations? Ranked according to the degree of support for contraception, the twelve countries are: France (94%); Brazil (93%); Colombia (91%); Argentina (91%); Spain (90%); Mexico (88%); Italy (84%); USA (79%); Poland (75%); Philippines (68%); Uganda (44%); DRC (44%). Those showing the highest support for contraception have largely urban populations and – other than France – report high or moderately high levels of religiosity. Those showing the lowest support for contraception are highly religious but less developed nations with largely rural populations. According to Univision’s data, however, place of habitation has only a slight effect on attitudes: 21 per cent of those living in small cities oppose the use of contraceptives, compared to 19 per cent of those living in rural areas, and 18 per cent of those living in large cities.<sup>70</sup>

*ii. Linda Woodhead’s YouGov survey of British Catholics, 2013*

A few months before Pope Francis called the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the family, sociologist of religion Linda Woodhead undertook the first attitudes survey of British Catholics.<sup>71</sup> In January and June 2013, three YouGov surveys polled 1,672 adult self-identified Catholics in England, Wales and Scotland on their beliefs and values. The largest of these was a nationally representative sample of 1,062 Catholics.<sup>72</sup> Woodhead’s findings ‘reveal a profile of British Catholics adrift from Vatican-style Catholicism’.<sup>73</sup> These Catholics are moving further away from ‘a Vatican-approved model of a faithful Catholic’ with each successive generation.<sup>74</sup> ‘The result’, Woodhead claims, ‘is a Britain in which “faithful Catholics” according to official teaching are now a rare and endangered species’.<sup>75</sup>

*Church attendance*

In terms of churchgoing, the survey finds that just under one third of British Catholics attend Church weekly. One third of Catholics attend a few times a year, and slightly over one third never or hardly ever attend Church.<sup>76</sup> Woodhead uncovered a marked generational difference in the pattern of Church attendance:

Among churchgoers aged over 60, nearly 60 per cent retain a pattern of weekly attendance, whereas only around a quarter of under-60s churchgoers do so. The most common pattern for the latter is less than monthly but at least once a year (e.g. for Christmas). The remainder say they attend on a monthly basis. So, among British Catholics as a whole, about one in three over-60s attend weekly, but only one in eight of those under 60.<sup>77</sup>

*Marriage and family life*

‘Catholics are positive about the institution of the family’, Woodhead states, ‘yet their views of what constitutes a family are now very broad’.<sup>78</sup> The findings show that Catholics approve of multiple family forms:

Marriage has ceased to be an essential element of the family in most Catholic minds, with only a quarter disapproving of unmarried couples raising children. Almost 90 per cent agree that an unmarried couple with children is a family, and that a single-parent household constitutes a family; over half think the same about childless unmarried couples. When it comes to gay and lesbian couples, two-thirds of Catholics believe that a same-sex couple with children is a family, and almost half say the same of a same-sex couple without children.<sup>79</sup>

For British Catholics, the norm prohibiting sex before marriage has lost its force, though not the norm prohibiting extra-marital sex: 'Although pre-marital sex has ceased to be something about which most Catholics would feel guilty (only one in five would), two-thirds say they'd feel guilty about extra-marital sex'.<sup>80</sup> With regard to contraception, Woodhead states that 'only 9% of self-identified Catholics would even feel guilty about using it, and that rises to only 12% amongst churchgoers'.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Marriage between persons of the same sex*

On the question of marriage between persons of the same sex, the survey asked British Catholics two questions. The first probed attitudes towards the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, asking: 'Do you think same-sex couples should or should not be allowed to get married?'. 44 per cent of British Catholics said same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. 41 per cent said same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry. 15 per cent offered no opinion. The findings show that, currently, although a small majority of Catholic respondents favour allowing same-sex marriage, British Catholic opinion is divided on the question.<sup>82</sup>

Churchgoing Catholics are less inclined to allow same-sex marriage, though the survey responses of churchgoing Catholics show them to be similarly divided on the question. 42 per cent of churchgoing Catholics say same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. 48 per cent of churchgoers say same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry. 10% offered no opinion. A majority of churchgoing Catholics is opposed to same-sex marriage, therefore. When a representative sample of the general population of Britain was asked the same question, 52 per cent were in favour of allowing same-sex couples to marry. 34 per cent were against allowing same-sex couples to marry. 14 per cent gave no opinion. British Catholics are therefore less approving of same-sex marriage than the British population as a whole.<sup>83</sup>

A second follow-up question probed attitudes towards the morality of same-sex marriage. When asked: 'And do you think same-sex marriage is right or wrong?', 35 per cent of Catholic respondents answered that same-sex marriage is right; 47 per cent answered that same-sex marriage is wrong; 16 per cent answered 'Don't know'. These findings show that a majority of British Catholics believes same-sex marriage to be morally wrong. By contrast, a majority of the general population of Britain approves of the morality of same-sex marriage: 46 per cent of Britons believe that same-sex marriage is right; 34 per cent believe that same-sex marriage is wrong; 20 per cent do not know.<sup>84</sup>

Each successive generation of Catholics is more approving of same-sex marriage. Catholic over-40s say same-sex marriage is wrong by a margin of 63 per cent. Catholic under-40s say same-sex marriage is right by a margin of 29 per cent. When the responses of younger churchgoing Catholics are analysed, however, moral approval of same-sex marriage switches to moral disapproval. Churchgoing Catholic under-40s say same-sex marriage is wrong by a margin of 26 per cent (22 per cent answered 'Don't know').<sup>85</sup> British Catholics are also more disapproving of child-rearing by same-sex couples than the general population of Britain: 'Over a third of Catholics disapprove of same-sex couples raising children, which is slightly higher than the general population'.<sup>86</sup>

#### *Abortion*

The survey asked British Catholics about their attitude to abortion by probing views of the time limit for abortion in Britain. Respondents were asked: 'Currently, the legal time limit for abortion is 24 weeks. Leaving aside medical emergencies, which of these options do you

favour?'. 4 per cent of respondents favoured increasing the time limit to above 24 weeks. 28 per cent of respondents favoured keeping the time limit at 24 weeks. 31 per cent of respondents favoured reducing the time limit to below 24 weeks. 23 per cent favoured a ban on abortion altogether. 14 per cent answered 'Don't know'. According to these findings, almost two-thirds of British Catholics are in favour of retaining Britain's legal provision of abortion. Catholic support for a ban on abortion declines by generation. 'Age is a major factor here', Woodhead states, 'with double the number of over-60s supporting a ban compared with those under 40 (31 per cent to 17 per cent)'.<sup>87</sup>

Weekly churchgoing Catholics were less approving of abortion. Just 2 per cent of weekly churchgoing Catholics would increase the time limit for abortions. 18 per cent would keep the time limit at 24 weeks. 28 per cent would reduce the time limit to below 24 weeks. 42 per cent would ban abortions altogether. 9 per cent of weekly church attendees did not express an opinion. Compared to the general population of Britain, British Catholics are less approving of abortion. When a representative sample of Britons was asked the same question about the time limit for abortion, 6 per cent favoured increasing the time limit to above 24 weeks. A majority of Britons (40 per cent) favoured keeping the time limit at 24 weeks. 28 per cent favoured reducing the time limit to below 24 weeks. Just 7 per cent of Britons favoured a ban on abortion. 19 per cent of Britons did not express an opinion.<sup>88</sup>

#### *Catholic disaffection with the Church*

One of the survey's most sobering findings concerns the extent of Catholic disaffection with the institutional Church. Most British Catholics do not believe the Church is a positive force in society:

[...] only 36% of Catholics say that the Church is a positive force in society, and when those who take the opposite view are asked their reasons, the most popular are: that it discriminates against women and gay people; the child abuse scandals; that it's hypocritical; and that it's too morally conservative. So the Catholic Church in a country like Britain faces a crisis of disaffection, both amongst those who still identify as Catholic (a fairly stable proportion), and even amongst those who still go to church (a proportion in rapid decline).<sup>89</sup>

#### *Sources of authority and guidance for Catholics*

Woodhead's survey also asked Catholics about the sources of guidance that help direct their lives. Most do not accord great significance to traditional sources of religious authority, such as Church teachings:

When asked where they look for guidance in living their life and making decisions, over half of Catholics say their own reason, judgement, intuition or feelings, and another fifth say family or friends. More narrowly religious sources of authority are much less popular, even with churchgoers. The most cited is 'tradition and teachings of the Church' (8 per cent), followed by God (7 per cent), the Bible (2 per cent), the religious group to which a person belongs (2 per cent), and religious leaders, local or national (0 per cent).<sup>90</sup>

Older Catholics and weekly churchgoers give greater weight to religious sources of authority:

Among the minority of Catholics who attend church weekly, more are likely to cite tradition and teachings of the Church (23 per cent) and God (16 per cent), but such churchgoers are similarly dismissive of the other traditional sources of religious authority. Here again, the age difference is striking: over-60s are twice as likely as under-50s to take authority from religious sources.<sup>91</sup>

*Natural law*

The responses to the Synod consultation observed the ‘demise of the concept of the natural law’ in the Catholic consciousness.<sup>92</sup> Woodhead’s findings add support to this observation:

There is little evidence that Catholic attitudes about these [moral] matters are more influenced by acceptance of teaching about natural law than anyone else’s. Even among those opposed to same-sex marriage, for example, fewer give as a reason that it’s ‘unnatural’ than do opponents from other Christian denominations.<sup>93</sup>

As a consequence, Woodhead states, Catholics ‘are increasingly unlikely to support its [the Church’s] natural-law-based teachings about sex, gender and the traditional family’.<sup>94</sup> The rejection of these natural law-based teachings by ordinary Catholics is not – as is sometimes claimed – because Church teachings demand an impossibly high standard of behaviour. As Woodhead observes, ‘most Catholics don’t think the teaching is too *hard*, they think it’s *wrong*’.<sup>95</sup> British Catholics, according to Woodhead, have ‘embraced many aspects of the sexual revolution’.<sup>96</sup> As a result, ‘most Catholics under 40 have a very different sexual ethic from their leaders’.<sup>97</sup>

*Analysis*

‘What these findings show’, states Woodhead, ‘is a widening gulf between what the Vatican thinks a Catholic should be, and what Catholics in Great Britain really are. The gap is widest over issues of sex and personal morality and it has been widening down the generations’.<sup>98</sup> Woodhead’s research into British Catholic opinion shows that traditional patterns of Catholic believing and belonging, and support for Church teachings persist primarily among the over-60s and among a minority of churchgoers – including younger churchgoers.<sup>99</sup> Most Catholics in Britain no longer conform to this template:

What it means to be a Catholic has changed. There is now significant disparity between older and younger believers. Over-60s fit a model closer to that officially promulgated by the Vatican, while under-50s believe, behave and belong in different ways.<sup>100</sup>

Though many British Catholics disagree with Church teaching, and are infrequent churchgoers, they continue to describe themselves as Catholic. They are not turning away from the Church in significant numbers.<sup>101</sup> Rather, according to Woodhead, they are ‘forging a new way of being Catholic’.<sup>102</sup> The survey findings allow Woodhead to sketch a portrait of typical British Catholics, and to show how they are transforming contemporary Catholicism in Britain:

[British Catholics] are much less likely to go to church every week and to think of themselves as ‘religious’. They are likely to support the Church’s social teachings, but are increasingly unlikely to support its natural-law-based teachings about sex, gender and the traditional family.<sup>103</sup>

The continuing support for the Church’s social teaching, and the increasing lack of support for the Church’s natural law-based sexual teaching is significant. It indicates that British Catholics agree with their Church’s list of human rights, but increasingly disagree with its list of unnatural wrongs. That is to say, Catholics can recognise what God asks of them in moral terms when it is expressed through the socially responsible vision of human rights found in Catholic social teaching. Increasingly, however, Catholics cannot recognise what God asks of them in moral terms when it is expressed in the language of pre-ordained unbreakable rules of nature. Woodhead’s survey finds that British Catholics take seriously the Church’s commitment

to the dignity of the human person and its implications in terms of equal respect, non-discrimination and freedom of conscience and approve when these principles are promoted and applied consistently within political life.

Far from endorsing their Church's highly critical remarks about mainstream 'secular' culture, [British Catholics] actively embrace some aspects of its ethical progress, including its widening commitment to principles of human liberty and equality – albeit tempered by considerations of the common good.<sup>104</sup>

Some British Catholics clearly regard Britain as out-performing the Church in the promotion of some of the human rights listed in Catholic social teaching. This is especially the case in relation to the social inclusion of formerly marginalized and minority groups. British Catholics, Woodhead states, 'endorse the moral revolution which has advanced the equal treatment of women, children, and LGBT people. Some priests and even bishops have made this moral transition too'.<sup>105</sup>

### *iii. Association of Catholic Priests, 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', 2012*

In February 2012, the Irish Association of Catholic Priests commissioned Amárach Research to survey Catholics living in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (which reflects the jurisdiction of the Irish Episcopal Conference) on issues affecting the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland.<sup>106</sup> 1,005 self-identified adult Catholics were asked their views on a range of liturgical, moral and ministerial issues. The purpose was 'to assess the response of Catholics to changes in Church structures and the relevance of contemporary Church teaching in key areas to their daily lives'.<sup>107</sup> The findings that are relevant to the Synod assemblies on the family are discussed below. In terms of Mass attendance, 35 per cent of the Catholics surveyed indicated that they attended Mass at least once a week. 36 per cent said they attended Mass a few times per year. 27 per cent said they attended Mass less frequently.<sup>108</sup>

### *Lay consultation*

The survey asked Irish Catholics their views on the extent to which lay people are consulted about Church matters. To the question: 'Does your local Bishop actively seek the views of priests and laypeople (ordinary church goers) when making important decisions in your diocese?', 12 per cent of the lay people questioned answered 'Yes'; 35 per cent of lay people answered 'No'; and 53 per cent of laity answered 'Don't know'.<sup>109</sup> When respondents were asked: 'Is the voice of laypeople being heard in the Catholic Church in Ireland when it comes to issues of morality?', 17 per cent of survey respondents answered 'Yes'; 49 per cent answered 'No'; and 34 per cent answered 'Don't know'.<sup>110</sup> These findings show significant levels of dissatisfaction with the degree of consultation of and listening to laity by the hierarchy, and a widespread lack of awareness of consultation and listening exercises when they do occur.

### *Are Church teachings on sexuality relevant to you or your family?*

In relation to Church teaching, respondents were asked: 'Do you believe that the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality are relevant to you or your family?'. 25 per cent of those surveyed answered 'Yes'; 75 per cent answered 'No'.<sup>111</sup> According to the Amárach researchers, '[t]he older age cohorts and regular church goers find them [Church teachings on sexuality] most relevant. The younger age cohorts are the least likely to find the teachings pertinent to them'.<sup>112</sup>

*Homosexuality*

On the Church's teaching on homosexuality, respondents were asked: 'To what extent do you agree with the Catholic Church's teaching that any sexual expression of love between gay couples is immoral?'. 18 per cent of Irish Catholics agreed with Church teaching on the immorality of homosexual sexual activity. 61 per cent disagreed with Church teaching on the immorality of homosexual sexual activity. 21 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed with Church teaching on homosexuality. Of those Irish Catholics in agreement with the Church's official stance on the immorality of homosexual activity, 9 per cent agreed strongly and 9 per cent agreed slightly. Of those who disagreed with Church teaching on homosexuality, 46 per cent disagreed strongly and 15 per cent disagreed slightly.<sup>113</sup> The survey finds that most Irish Catholics morally approve of the sexual expression of love between gay couples. According to Amárach researchers, 'older age cohorts are more likely to agree with the immorality of homosexuality'.<sup>114</sup>

*Admission to the Eucharist for the divorced and remarried*

Respondents were also asked their views on the admission to the Eucharist of those who have been divorced and remarried. To the question: 'Do you think that Catholics who are separated or divorced from their spouse *and* are in a second stable relationship should be receiving communion at Mass?', 87 per cent answered 'Yes'; 5 per cent answered 'No'; and 8 per cent gave no opinion.<sup>115</sup> The findings show that an overwhelming majority of Irish Catholics are in favour of divorced and remarried Catholics receiving communion at Mass. As a final illustration of the yawning gap between the Irish hierarchy and ordinary Church members, large majorities were recorded in favour of Catholic priests being allowed to marry (87 per cent), and in favour of the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood (77 per cent).<sup>116</sup> The Amárach Research findings reveal the widespread falling away from traditional Catholicism in Ireland.

*Mercy for those who cannot accept the Church's teaching?*

A statement released by the Irish Bishops' Conference in response to the Synod consultation confirms that many Irish Catholics have problems with the Church's teachings on marriage and family:

Many of those who responded to the questionnaire expressed particular difficulties with the teachings on extra-marital sex and cohabitation by unmarried couples, divorce and remarriage, family planning, assisted human reproduction, homosexuality. The Church's teaching in these sensitive areas is often not experienced as realistic, compassionate, or life-enhancing. Some see it as disconnected from real-life experience, leaving them feeling guilty and excluded.<sup>117</sup>

The bishops report that many respondents experience 'difficulties' with some of the Church's sexual teachings. These 'difficulties' are of different sorts. Some find the teachings unrealistic, or lacking in compassion. In some cases, the teachings lead to experiences of guilt and exclusion. The lack of further specificity over the type of 'difficulties' experienced by Irish Catholics in the bishops' statement blurs any distinction between those who have difficulty in accepting some of the Church's sexual teachings, and those who agree with the Church's directives but who have difficulty in following them in practice. These types of difficulty are not the same. The Bishops' Conference statement continues:

We recognise our responsibility as bishops to present faithfully the Church's teaching on marriage and the family in a positive and engaging way, whilst showing compassion and mercy towards those who are finding difficulty in accepting or living it.<sup>118</sup>

Whether the difficulty involves acceptance of the Church's teaching or living it out, the bishops will extend compassion and mercy to those affected. This inclusive approach is in many respects to be welcomed. Many Bishops' Conferences have followed Pope Francis's lead in emphasising the Church's evangelical witness as a community of compassion and mercy. Pope Francis' *leitmotif* of compassion and mercy has transformed the mood music of the Church and stuck a chord with Catholics across the world. A chorus of Catholic voices echoes Pope Francis' words that 'the Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel'.<sup>119</sup>

There are different types of mercy, such as that shown to sinners,<sup>120</sup> and that shown to the suffering.<sup>121</sup> All of us are sinners and all of us suffer. Each stands in need of divine mercy. In terms of the non-reception of the Church's sexual teaching, however, a question remains about the categorisation of sinful behaviour. For, what is in dispute is that activities categorised by the Catholic Church as sinful are no longer widely thought to be so. Activities classified as immoral in Church teaching are morally acceptable in the eyes of many Catholics. Is it a sin to reject the validity of Church teaching? Theologically speaking, non-acceptance of the Church's sexual teachings raises complex questions involving issues such as knowledge, ignorance, wrongdoing, guilt, culpability and sin. Are all those who reject the validity of Church sexual teachings in need of mercy? The statement by the Irish bishops evades these issues. One wonders whether the Synod of Bishops will similarly opt to speak the language of mercy. While this would convey a less harsh and rigorist tone and signal a more pastorally sensitive approach with respect to Church teaching, it could also continue to imply that those who disagree with Church teaching are in the wrong.

#### V. THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS AND THE *SENSUS FIDEI*

Within the Church, work remains to be done in articulating how, precisely, sociological research informs the tasks of theology, and how theological ideas such as doctrinal reception and the *sensus fidei* might relate to observable social phenomena within the Church while, all the time, avoiding the error of reading sociology as theology. How, for example, does the *sensus fidei* relate to the expressed religious and moral beliefs and practices of the faithful? While it cannot be based upon a crude statistical calculus there must, presumably, be some sort of correlation. According to what criteria does one identify 'the faithful' who, together, possess and preserve the *sensus fidei*: by virtue of baptism; by participation in the sacramental life of the Church; by adherence to the teachings of the Church; or by a combination of these? Can reception of Church teaching be measured? What timescale should one apply in order to gauge reception? What should Church consultation of the laity involve, and how scientific, objective and comprehensive should consultation of the laity aim to be? Many of these questions are addressed in the International Theological Commission's *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*,<sup>122</sup> which also highlights the contribution made by the laity 'with regard to the development of the moral teaching of the Church' and 'in discerning the Christian understanding of appropriate human behaviour in accordance with the Gospel'.<sup>123</sup> Surely, the Church should recognise its particular dependency upon the experience and expertise of lay people in discerning its response to the pastoral challenges facing families? On the question of the non-reception of Church teaching, the document states:

Problems arise when the majority of the faithful remain indifferent to doctrinal or moral decisions taken by the magisterium or when they positively reject them. This lack of reception

may indicate a weakness or a lack of faith on the part of the people of God, caused by an insufficiently critical embrace of contemporary culture. But in some cases it may indicate that certain decisions have been taken by those in authority without due consideration of the experience and the *sensus fidei* of the faithful, or without sufficient consultation of the faithful by the magisterium.<sup>124</sup>

At the 1980 Synod assembly on the family, the bishops reached a consensus on ‘the duties of the Christian family in today’s world’, but without adequately addressing the concerns and pastoral needs of contemporary Christian families. On some questions of marriage and family life there was an embarrassing gap between theological rhetoric and pastoral realities, which sociological evidence confirmed. Consensus was reached by the college of bishops but not by the Church on these issues. The Synod of 1980 lacked the sort of mechanisms that could allow the faith sense of the faithful to be more adequately discerned.

For the Synod deliberations on the family in 2014 and 2015, there is a far larger body of survey and other evidence available to the bishops than was the case in 1980. While the perspectives and experiences of Catholics in the West still predominate in this body of knowledge, the research is somewhat more representative of Catholicism as a world Church. The picture of Catholicism we receive from this research is complex and varied, as one might expect for a Church of over one billion members. A substantial disconnect is evident, however, throughout many parts of the globe between Church teaching and Catholic attitudes on some issues of family life.

Prior to the Synod assemblies, Pope Francis ensured there was a consultation of the faithful of unprecedented scale. The consultation uncovered the extent of suffering experienced by Catholics:

Many of the difficulties highlighted in the responses and observations reveal the agonizing situation of people today when faced with the subjects of love, the generation of life, the reciprocity between man and woman and fatherhood and motherhood.<sup>125</sup>

It also confirmed that, on certain questions, the Church’s magisterium and large numbers of the faithful appear to inhabit different Catholic worlds. The non-reception of Church teaching represents a crisis for Catholicism that requires action. Nonetheless, this should not be allowed to overshadow the broad consensus that exists across the Church with regard to a large number of critical challenges facing families today that were identified during the consultation process. These include: domestic abuse and violence; incest; human trafficking; sex tourism; substance abuse; prostitution; pornography; addictions to gambling, gaming, and internet use; the harmful effects of information and communications technology on relationships; the impact of work, unemployment and job insecurity on family life; the impact of migration; the excessive educational expectations laid on children; conflicts and war; the plight of displaced peoples; the impact of AIDS and other diseases; loneliness and bereavement.<sup>126</sup> If there are some pastoral challenges to marriage and family life where the *consensus fidelium* appears to be lacking, on many urgent issues it is very much in evidence. Catholics are united with others across the globe, at the grassroots and at high level governance, in promoting compassion and justice for families and family members.

Synod assemblies cannot do all the work of discernment required of the people of God. New institutional mechanisms must be found to allow the lay faithful to play their full part in the joint task of discerning the *sensus fidei* of the faithful, and in helping to close the gap between theological rhetoric and pastoral realities.

## Notes

- 1 Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter Issued *Motu Proprio* Establishing the Synod of Bishops for the Universal Church, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, 1965, introduction [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19650915\\_apostolica-sollicitudo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19650915_apostolica-sollicitudo_en.html) (accessed 30 June 2014).
- 2 *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, part II.
- 3 *Ibidem*.
- 4 *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, introduction.
- 5 Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter On the Regulation of Birth *Humanae Vitae*, 1968.
- 6 Cf. Clifford Longley, 'Synod of Bishops is crucial test of hopes of renewal', *The Times* (London, Monday 29 September 1980), p. 14.
- 7 Archbishop John R. Quinn, '“New Context” for contraceptive teaching', *Origins: N.C. Documentary Service* 10 (October 9, 1980), pp. 263–67, p. 263. Cf. Anon. 'U.S. Bishops Urging Rome to Re-examine Birth Control Issue', *New York Times*, (New York, September 30, 1980), p. 1; Seán O'Riordan, 'The Synod on the family, 1980', *The Furrow* 31: 12 (December 1980), pp. 759–77, pp. 765–66; Robert Blair Kaiser, *The Encyclical that Never Was: The Story of the Pontifical Commission on Population, Family and Birth, 1964–66*, Revised edition (London: T & T Clark, 1987), pp. 281–87.
- 8 '“New Context” for contraceptive teaching', p. 263.
- 9 Anon., 'Sexuality document “won't be sensational”', *The Gadsden Times* (Alabama, Wednesday October 22, 1980), p. 10 <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1891&dat=19801022&id=BLQnAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=r9YEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=2333,3360539> (accessed 30 June 2014).
- 10 *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, part II.
- 11 '“New Context” for contraceptive teaching', p. 263.
- 12 Peter Hebblethwaite, 'The Pope on the family', *The Tablet* (London, 9 January 1981), pp. 5–6, p. 5.
- 13 *Ibidem*.
- 14 Anon., 'Sexuality document “won't be sensational”', p. 10.
- 15 Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1964, n. 12; cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 1965, n. 8.
- 16 Hebblethwaite, 'The Pope on the family', p. 5.
- 17 *Ibidem*.
- 18 Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, n. 5.
- 19 *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 4.
- 20 *Ibidem*.
- 21 *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 5.
- 22 *Ibidem*.
- 23 *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 4.
- 24 Synod of Bishops, *III Extraordinary General Assembly: Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization, Preparatory Document* (Vatican City, 2013), p. 1. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20131105\\_iii-assemblea-sinodo-vescovi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iii-assemblea-sinodo-vescovi_en.html) (accessed 30 June 2014).
- 25 *Preparatory Document*, p. 1. For discussion and analysis of the *Preparatory Document* and the pastoral challenges identified in the text: Solange Ngah, 'Changes in Family Life and the Challenges of Contemporary Culture' (translated by Peter Knox SJ), *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church Forum*, 1 December 2013; Sharon A. Bong, 'The Gospel of Families', *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church Forum*, 1 December 2013; Jillian Maxey, 'From the Trenches: A Reflection on the Preparatory Document on the Synod on Marriage and Family', *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church Forum*, 1 December 2013 <http://www.catholicethics.com/news/reflections-on-the-october-2014-synod-on-family-and-evangelization> (accessed 30 August 2014).
- 26 *Ibidem*.
- 27 *Preparatory Document*, p. 4.
- 28 *Preparatory Document*, pp. 4–7.
- 29 Letter of Archbishop Baldisseri, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences, 18 October 2013. The letter from Archbishop Baldisseri addressed to Archbishop Tartaglia of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland is available on the website of the Diocese of Motherwell (within the text of the Preparatory Document): [http://www.rcdom.org.uk/documents/PastoralChallengestotheFamilyintheContextofEvangelisation\\_001.pdf](http://www.rcdom.org.uk/documents/PastoralChallengestotheFamilyintheContextofEvangelisation_001.pdf) (accessed 15 July 2014).
- 30 *Ibidem*.

31 General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, III Extraordinary General Assembly: The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization, *Instrumentum Laboris*, (Vatican City, 2014), p. ix. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20140626\\_instrumentum-laboris-familia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html) (accessed 30 June 2014).

32 Links to the Synod responses that are in the public domain can be found on the website of the International Academy for Marital Spirituality, INTAMS: <http://www.intams.org/BishopsSynod.htm> (accessed 30 June 2014). For regional perspectives on the Synod assemblies on the family: Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn and Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi (eds.), 'Toward the Synods of Bishops 2014 & 2015: A Multi-National Survey and Analysis of Initiatives, Trends and Perspectives', special issue of *INTAMS Journal for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality* Vol. 20/1 (2014); 'Reflections on the Synod on the Family', special issue of *Asian Horizons, Dharmaram Journal of Theology* vol. 8 (June 2014).

33 Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 15.

34 *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 11.

35 *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 13.

36 *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 26.

37 *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 21.

38 For a survey of 1,853 Catholic pastoral workers and volunteers in Flanders, conducted between December 2013–January 2014 by the Catholic University of Leuven, on faith, family life, and attitudes to Church teaching on contraception, divorce, remarriage, cohabitation and homosexual relationships: Annemie Dillen and Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, 'Wachsende Entfremdung? Zur Perzeption des Familienlebens und der kirchlichen Lehre bei pastoralen MitarbeiterInnen und Ehrenamtlichen in der Katholischen Kirche in Flandern' ('A growing gap? Catholic pastoral workers and volunteers' perceptions of family life and church teaching in Flanders'), *INTAMS Journal for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality* Vol. 20/1 (2014). The findings were unpublished as this article went to press.

39 Holy See, *Statistical Yearbook of the Church 2012*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014), p. 5.

40 Pew Research Center, 'The Global Catholic Population', (Washington DC, February 13, 2013) <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/> (accessed 31 July 2014). For a discussion of the different methods of data collection used by the Holy See and the Pew Research Center, see Wesley Stephenson, 'How do you count Catholics?', BBC News Online, (London, 24 February 2013) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21545819> (accessed 31 July 2014).

41 Pew Research Center, *Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population*, (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, December 2011) <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2014). For interactive data tables of estimates of the Catholic population for all countries, using data from the report see: Pew Research Center, 'Table: Christian Population in Numbers by Country', (Washington DC, December 19, 2011) <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/table-christian-population-in-numbers-by-country/> (accessed 31 July 2014).

42 Table 1 is based upon Pew Research Center data extracted from two sources: 1. Pew Research Center, *Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population*; *supra*. 2. For the ten countries with the largest Catholic populations, the data is based upon revised 2010 estimates published by Pew in February 2013. See table entitled '10 Countries with the Largest Number of Catholics, 2010' at Pew Research Center, 'The Global Catholic Population'; *supra*.

43 Univision Communications, *Global Survey of Roman Catholics*, Executive Summary, (New York, February 2014), p. 2. <http://bendixenandamandi.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ExecutiveSummary.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2014). Cf. Univision Communications, 'Landmark Univision Poll Finds Majority of Catholics Worldwide Disagree With Church Doctrines', Behind the News Univision, (New York, February 10, 2014) <http://communications-univisionnews.tumblr.com/post/76256833104/landmark-univision-poll-finds-majority-of-catholics> (accessed 30 June 2014).

44 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 2.

45 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 27. Refer to Table 1 for the ranking of these countries by size of Catholic population. For further details about the survey design and methodology, which was conducted by Bendixen & Amandi International, see Executive Summary, pp. 27–32.

46 Based upon the latest Pew Research Center estimates for Catholic population size as of 2010; i.e. a worldwide Catholic population of 1.078 billion, and the countrywide Catholic population figures found in Table 1. The Univision survey claimed its poll covered 61 per cent of the worldwide Catholic population. This was based upon earlier Pew Research Center 2010 estimates in *Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population*; *supra*. Cf. Univision, Executive Summary, p. 27 note 1.

47 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 3.

- 48 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 9.
- 49 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 10.
- 50 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 17.
- 51 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 5.
- 52 Univision Communications, 'Voice of the People', (New York, February 2014), p. 2 [http://univision.data4.mx/resultados\\_catolicos/eng/ENG\\_catholic-survey.pdf](http://univision.data4.mx/resultados_catolicos/eng/ENG_catholic-survey.pdf) (accessed 30 June 2014).
- 53 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 7.
- 54 Univision, 'Voice of the People', p. 6.
- 55 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 6.
- 56 Univision, 'Voice of the People', p. 5.
- 57 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 13.
- 58 Univision, 'Voice of the People', p. 23.
- 59 Univision, 'Voice of the People', p. 7.
- 60 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 32. For a discussion of the high level of reported churchgoing, see Grant Gallichio, 'Survey says.', *dotCommonweal* A blog by the magazine's editors and contributors, (New York, February 11, 2014) <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/survey-says> (accessed 30 June 2014).
- 61 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 20.
- 62 Univision, Executive Summary, p. 21.
- 63 Univision, 'Voice of the People', p. 22.
- 64 Univision Communications, 'Voice of the People' interactive data-sets <http://www.univision.com/interactivos/openpage/2014-02-06/la-voz-del-pueblo-matriz-1> (accessed 1 July 2014).
- 65 For a comparative study of moral attitudes to premarital sex, extramarital affairs, divorce, contraception, and homosexuality in the general adult population of 40 countries: Pew Research Center, 'Global Views on Morality', (Washington DC, 2013) <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/04/15/global-morality/> (accessed 1 July 2013).
- 66 *Instrumentum Laboris*, n. 123.
- 67 Cf. WIN-Gallup International, 'Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism', (Washington, DC, 2012) <http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2014).
- 68 Cf. The World Bank, 'Science and Technology Data', (Washington, DC, 2014) <http://data.worldbank.org/topic/science-and-technology> (accessed 31 July 2014).
- 69 Cf. The World Bank, 'World Development Indicators: Rural Environment and Land Use: Table 3.1', (Washington, DC, 2014) <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/3.1> (accessed 31 July 2014).
- 70 Univision Communications, 'Voice of the People' interactive data-sets.
- 71 Pew reports there are 10,040,000 Catholics in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. See Table 1. The number of self-identified Catholics in Northern Ireland is 738,033 according to the 2011 Census. Cf. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Table KS212NI, 'Census 2011: Key Statistics for Northern Ireland', (Belfast, 11 December 2012), p. 19 [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/key\\_stats\\_bulletin\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/key_stats_bulletin_2011.pdf) (accessed 15 August 2014). The number of British Catholics is c. 9.3 million.
- 72 Linda Woodhead, 'New Poll: "Faithful Catholics" an Endangered Species', *Religion Dispatches* (Los Angeles CA, December 12, 2013) <http://religiondispatches.org/new-poll-faithful-catholics-an-endangered-species/> (accessed 1 July 2014).
- 73 Linda Woodhead, 'YouGov surveys reveal widening gulf between Catholics and Church teaching', Press release, Westminster Faith Debates, (Lancaster, 15 November 2013), p. 1 <http://faithdebates.org.uk/research/#> (accessed 1 July 2014).
- 74 Linda Woodhead, 'Endangered species', *The Tablet*, (London, 16 November 2013), pp. 6–7, p. 7.
- 75 Woodhead, 'New Poll: "Faithful Catholics" an Endangered Species'.
- 76 Linda Woodhead, 'What we really think', *The Tablet*, (London, 9 November 2013), pp. 12–13, p. 12.
- 77 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 6.
- 78 Woodhead, 'What we really think', p. 12.
- 79 *Ibidem*.
- 80 *Ibidem*.
- 81 Woodhead, 'New Poll: "Faithful Catholics" an Endangered Species'.
- 82 Woodhead, 'What we really think', p. 13.
- 83 *Ibidem*.
- 84 *Ibidem*.
- 85 *Ibidem*.
- 86 Woodhead, 'What we really think', p. 12.

- 87 Woodhead, 'What we really think', p. 13.
- 88 *Ibidem*.
- 89 Woodhead, 'New Poll: "Faithful Catholics" an Endangered Species'.
- 90 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 7.
- 91 *Ibidem*.
- 92 *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 26.
- 93 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 6.
- 94 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 7.
- 95 Woodhead, 'New Poll: "Faithful Catholics" an Endangered Species'.
- 96 *Ibidem*.
- 97 Woodhead, 'What we really think', p. 13.
- 98 Woodhead, 'YouGov surveys reveal widening gulf between Catholics and Church teaching', p. 3.
- 99 Cf. Woodhead, 'What we really think', p. 13.
- 100 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 7.
- 101 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 6.
- 102 Woodhead, 'Endangered species', p. 7.
- 103 *Ibidem*.
- 104 *Ibidem*.
- 105 Woodhead, 'New Poll: "Faithful Catholics" an Endangered Species'.
- 106 Amárach Research, 'Association of Catholic Priests – Survey of Catholic Attitudes', (Ireland, February 2012) <http://www.amarach.com/resources/client-reports/association-of-catholic-priests-survey-of-catholic-attitudes.htm> (accessed 31 July 2014). Pew estimates there are 3,950,000 Catholics in the Republic of Ireland. See Table 1. The number of self-identified Catholics in Northern Ireland is 738,033 (41% of the population). See note 71 *supra*.
- 107 Amárach Research, 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', (Ireland, February 2012), Slide 3 <http://www.amarach.com/assets/files/ConsumerForesightArchive/ACP%20Survey%20Findings%20April%202012.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2014).
- 108 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 7.
- 109 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 11.
- 110 *Ibidem*.
- 111 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 24.
- 112 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 34.
- 113 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 25.
- 114 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 34.
- 115 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 26.
- 116 'Contemporary Catholic Perspectives', Slide 16.
- 117 Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 'Statement of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference regarding the questionnaire from the Synod on the Family', (Maynooth, 13 March 2014) <http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/03/13/statement-irish-catholic-bishops-conference-questionnaire-synod-family/> (accessed 1 July 2014).
- 118 'Statement of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference regarding the questionnaire from the Synod on the Family'.
- 119 Cf. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, n. 114.
- 120 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 44.
- 121 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 193.
- 122 International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (Vatican City, 2014).
- 123 *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*, n. 73.
- 124 *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*, n. 123.
- 125 *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 122.
- 126 *Instrumentum Laboris* nn. 66–79.