

# origins

CNS documentary service

## Midterm Report on the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family

Cardinal Peter Erdo

The church must respond to “wounded families” and those in irregular family situations “with the tenderness of a mother and the clarity of a teacher,” according to a midterm report summarizing discussions during the first week of the extraordinary session of the Synod of Bishops taking place at the Vatican Oct. 5-19. In strikingly conciliatory language on situations contrary to Catholic teaching, the report called for greater acceptance and appreciation of divorced and remarried Catholics, cohabitating couples and homosexuals. Hungarian Cardinal Peter Erdo of

*“Jesus looked upon the women and the men he met with love and tenderness, accompanying their steps with patience and mercy in proclaiming the demands of the kingdom of God.”*

Esztergom-Budapest, who as the synod relator has the task of guiding the discussion and synthesizing its results, presented the document to Pope Francis and the synod Oct. 13, saying that the synod participants had seen a need to accept and support those who want “to feel fully part of the church,” even if they have “experienced failure or find themselves in the most diverse situations.” What is needed, the report said, is that “the doctrine of the faith, the basic content of which should be made increasingly better known, be proposed alongside mercy.” The document rejected any move toward acceptance of same-sex marriages but asked, “Are our communities capable of... accepting and valuing (homosexuals’) sexual orientation, without compromising Catholic doctrine on the family and matrimony?” It also said the synod fathers “felt the urgent need for new pastoral paths that begin with the effective reality of familial fragilities.” A final synod report is expected to be issued at the synod’s end following a week of small-group discussions. That text will serve as the basis for discussion at the 2015 regular session of the Synod of Bishops, which also will discuss the family. An unofficial translation of the report released by the Vatican press office follows.

**1** During the prayer vigil held in St Peter’s Square on Oct. 4, 2014, in preparation for the synod on the family, Pope Francis evoked the centrality of the experience of family in all lives in a simple and concrete manner:

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