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Final Report of the Synod of Bishops on the Family

Synod of Bishops

While not specifically mentioning the controversial proposal of a path toward full reconciliation and Communion for the divorced and civilly remarried, members of the Synod of Bishops on the family handed Pope Francis a report emphasizing an obligation to recognize that not all Catholics in such a situation bear the same amount of blame. The 94-paragraph report in Italian was approved Oct. 24, the last working day of the three-week synod; on Dec. 14 the Vatican released translations of the report, which highlighted the role of pastors in helping couples understand church teaching, grow in faith and take responsibility for sharing the Gospel. It

“All over the world, in the real-life situation of families, we can see much happiness and joy, but also much suffering and anguish.”

also emphasized how “pastoral accompaniment” involves discerning, on a case-by-case basis, the moral culpability of people not fully living up to the Catholic ideal. As Pope Francis said at the beginning of the synod, church doctrine on the meaning of marriage as a lifelong bond between one man and one woman open to having children was not up for debate. The final report strongly affirmed that teaching as God’s plan for humanity, a blessing for the church and a benefit to society. The report also spoke specifically of: the changing role of women in families, the church and society; single people and their contributions to the family and the church; the heroic witness of parents who love and care for children with disabilities; the family as a sanctuary protecting the sacredness of human life from conception to natural death; and the particular strain on family life caused by poverty and by migration. The report follows, copyright © 2015 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

1 We, the synod fathers, gathered in synod around Pope Francis, wish to thank him for calling us to reflect with him, under his guidance, on the vocation and mission of the family today. In humility, we offer him the fruit of our work, aware of its limitations. Nonetheless, we are able to say that we have constantly taken into consideration the families of the world, their joys and hopes, their sorrows and anxieties.

As Christ’s disciples, we know that “noth-

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