

The Era of Pope Francis: Break or Beginning?

Pastoral care of the divorced and remarried with an open ear and a generous heart

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Abstract

Pope Francis speaks a clear language understandable to everyone even outside the Church. His Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* is an invitation to renewed pastoral care of marriage and the family with an open ear and a generous heart. *Amoris laetitia* speaks positively on love, marriage, partnership, sexuality, parenthood and family. It is an inspiring source for a life in marriage and in the family. His message of mercy with openness to the voices of local Churches, faithfulness to the message of the gospel and the tradition of the Church blended with his own pastoral experience shows the Church in a light of a welcoming spirit. He brings necessary attitudinal changes in teaching of Church's doctrines towards marriage and families. He breaks no norms. He alters no theology. Yet he seems to be a trendsetter and brings changes in everything. This article discusses the pastoral-moral issues particularly regarding communion to the divorced and remarried in the light of *amoris laetitia*.

Introduction

Pope Francis speaks a clear language understandable to everyone even outside the Church. He uses expressive metaphors instead of traditional speech patterns. For example, “the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems”.¹ His message of mercy found resonance worldwide in a short time and went straight into the hearts of those who are considered irregular or disorderly. His impact is huge in lives of many ordinary as well as influential personalities. Pope Francis speaks the language of a heart. His words and actions simply inspire people.

The carefree voice of the Pope has however shaken some heads and made surprises inside the Church. Pope Francis is has become a challenging and remarkable person globally. No other papal document has been so much discussed as his post-synodal Exhortation *amoris laetitia* (AL) – the Joy of Love.² Some critique his phrases to be vague and non-doctrinal and four cardinals raised doubts and sought clarifications on certain points in *amoris laetitia*. Unwillingness and stubbornness of certain conservatives not to understand the pastoral concern of the Pope can be compared to a willful ignorance “*ignoranta affectata*” and behind regret and allegation of unclear phrasing of Pope Francis lies a refusal to understand his call for a paradigm shift and reflects lack of openness to accept new pastoral solutions.³

¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013) 47: AAS 105 (2013), 1040.

² Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 19 March 2016): AAS CVIII (2016) N. 4. pp. 311-443.

³ Eberhard Schockenhoff, “Traditionsbruch oder notwendige Weiterbildung?: Zwei Lesarten des Nachsynodalen Schreibens *Amoris Laetitia*,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 3 (2017) 147-158: 147. See Bernhard Häring, *Das Gesetz Christi: Moraltheologie dargestellt für Priester und Laien*, Vol. 1 (Freiburg: Wewel, 1963) 153, 172.

In fact, Pope Francis does not break any doctrinal Catholic teaching. He cites John Paul II and Benedict XVI many times signifying the unbroken continuity in apostolic teachings. When we read *amoris laetitia* in contrast to *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) or the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), there are however significant differences in perspective with regard to sexuality and love, marriage and family. Very clearly, Pope Francis has switched from an objective moral teaching grounded on static metaphysics of essence to a gospel oriented practical theology characterized by relevance for a larger life.

The Message of Pastoral Mercy

1. The message of the gospel is the logic of Pope Francis marked by love, mercy and compassion. His heart is filled with the message of pastoral mercy. He proclaims a gospel of integration and not condemnation: “No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel” (AL 297). The religion is for salvation of people and not for condemning them, hence the Church should not condemn but embrace the sinners. He says, “The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care” (AL 299). His words are simple, sharp and to the point and out of his own lived-experience. He is often criticized for statements without doctrinal credentials, but one must well notice that his emphasis is not on doctrines or norms but humans. His message is clear that sabbath is for humans and not otherwise. He has not altered any doctrine, but only wants the Church to move from dogmatic rigidity to pastoral discernment. He wants the Church to be active in the pastoral care of the faithful and not remain a watchdog of norms. Doctrines and norms are applicable in normal conditions. In conflict situations, he suggests that we go back to the root message of the gospel for pastoral discernment. His teachings of love, mercy and compassion is

vividly seen in his own life and he comes across as a loving, merciful and compassionate face of God.

2. The papacy of Francis is marked by openness and humility. He is open to and humble to learn from the local Church. He says that “not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium. Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it [...]. Each country or region, moreover, can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs” (AL 3). He has given new direction in application and implementation of Church’s general norms in particular situations. Pastoral solutions and exceptions need not affect standard norms and should not become scandalous either. According to Marquard, “Hermeneutics is the art to find out from a text which is not in it?”⁴ We need to interpret a text and find something more from it, such as a general norm, for its implementation in many complex contexts. However, interpretations do not go against the spirit of the whole text. A general principle must be interpreted according to situations for applications in various cultures. It does not mean relativization or weakening of normative credentials. Hermeneutics helps to interpret the general norms for respective situations.

3. Pope Francis presents a positive account of doctrines on marriage and family with the most important aspects of unity, indissolubility, sacramentality, fidelity, openness for life in continuity with Vatican II (*Gaudium et Spes*), Pope Paul VI (*Humanae Vitae*), John

⁴ Odo Marquard, “Frage nach der Frage, auf die die Hermeneutik eine Antwort ist,” in: Odo Marquard, *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen* (Stuttgart: Philosophische Studien, 1981) 117-146, 117

Paul II (*Familiaris Consortio*) and Benedict XVI. (*Deus Caritas est*). Not even an iota of apostolic teachings of his predecessors has been changed by Pope Francis. He has changed nothing in core teachings, yet he changed everything through the message of mercy. Not only his message is of inclusion and integration, but his very method is inductive. *Amoris laetitia* is actually an inductive summary of the results of the preceding XIV ordinary 2014 and III extraordinary 2015 synodal explorations (*Relatio Synodi* und *Relatio finalis*) on family. Pope Francis wants to be inductive and is sceptic of a deductive method in application of general rules in particular pastoral situations or deriving undue general conclusions from particular theological considerations (AL 2). Pope Francis warns against the stereotyped ideal families ignoring real situations and difficulties. Cardinal Kasper says that the moral ideal is an optimum yet is unreachable by many that we may often have to choose the lesser evil. There is no black and white but only different nuances and shadings in pastoral situations.⁵ Rightly so, the Pope says, “we have been called to form consciences, not to replace them.” (AL 37) It means that we need to form consciences of people in the light of the moral norms and not replace them with moral norms, laws and rules. While stressing the need for education of the faithful in marriage and family, sexuality and love, Pope Francis promotes respect for personal conscience of the concerned persons to deal with conflict issues, such as, communion to the divorced and remarried, artificial contraception and same sex partnerships. Failures and difficulties in following the ideals do neither make these persons automatically objective offenders against the teachings of the Church nor do they lose human dignity due to the “irregular situations” in which there are in.

⁵ Walter Kasper, “*Amoris Laetitia*: Ein Bruch oder Abbruch? Eine Nachlese,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 11 (2016) 723-732, 725.

4. Mercy is the hallmark of Pope Francis who does not want to abandon even one sinner, as he says, “Jesus himself is the shepherd of the hundred, not just of the ninety-nine. He loves them all” (AL 309). In the variety of situations affecting families “the Church is commissioned to proclaim the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the mind and heart of every person. The Bride of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who goes out to everyone without exception.”⁶ Therefore, the Church should not lack mercy in her preaching and her witness, because “the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems” (AL 310).⁷ Therefore, Pope Francis wants the Church to *avoid* a cold bureaucratic morality in dealing with more sensitive issues and *adopt* a pastoral discernment filled with merciful love to understand, forgive, accompany, hope and above all integrate the concerned persons (AL 312). The Church must be a welcoming home for everyone who believes in Christ.

**From A Legal Morality to A Virtue Morality
Dealing with Frailty: Accompanying-Discerning-Integrating**

5. An Apostolic Exhortation of a Pope has a formal and binding character, so also *amoris laetitia*. There lies a sound theological position behind this pastoral document. There is however a paradigm shift in *amoris laetitia*, which does not replace the previous teaching. Cardinal Kasper confirms that “*amoris laetitia* does not change an iota of the teaching of the Church, yet it changes everything.” The Cardinal says that the Church with Pope Francis is

⁶ Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* (11 April 2015), 12: AAS 107 (2015): 407.

⁷ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 47: AAS 105 (2013), 1040.

gradually moving away from a “legal morality” toward a “virtue morality.”⁸ Thomas distinguishes between the speculative and practical reason. The speculative reason deduces conclusions logically from the principles strictly. In the practical world, it is not possible. At the practical level, objective norms are always incomplete, since they never can take account of all specific circumstances. Thus, the application cannot happen through logical deduction but through means of the virtue of prudence. It is the *recta ratio agibilium* according to the reason for the act (summa theologiae I/II q. 57 a.4). Prudence is root, measure, guiding and mother of all virtues (summa theologiae I/II q. 57 a. 6). Prudence uses the good, a goal approved by reason, to apply in the concrete situations (summa theologiae II/II q. 47 a. 2-6). Prudence does not establish norms out of situations. It does not make norms, but assumes the norm and applies in the concrete situation. Prudence will say what the norm here and now means. It applies with responsibility in the light of the norm to the actual reality of the situation. Prudence is actually based on love, which inspires and moves prudence. Thus, prudence is the root and characterising form of all virtues.⁹ Every Catholic is bound to follow what the Pope says in *amoris laetitia*, in which he promotes a positive and realistic understanding of love, sexuality, marriage and family. He begins his Exhortation with these words: “The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church” (AL 1). Again, he reaffirms his address at the meeting of families in Santiago de Cuba, “families are not a problem; they are first and foremost an opportunity” (AL 7) and gives respect to the genuine words of the local Bishops of Chile who stated that “the perfect families proposed by deceptive consumerist propaganda do not exist... Consumerist propaganda presents a fantasy that has nothing to do with the reality which must daily be faced by the heads of families”

⁸ Kasper, “Amoris Laetitia: Ein Bruch oder Abbruch?,” 725-26.

⁹ Kasper, “Amoris Laetitia: Ein Bruch oder Abbruch?,” 726.

(AL 135).¹⁰ In a very positive appreciation of love in families, Pope Francis says that erotic love should not be considered simply as a permissible evil or a burden to be tolerated for the good of the family. Erotic love is a gift from God that enriches the relationship of the spouses. Cardinal Kasper praises the realistic, open and relaxed way of dealing with sexuality and eroticism: “With a grain of salt, we can say that *amoris laetitia* distances itself from a predominantly negative Augustinian view of sexuality and turns toward the Thomistic view on affirming creation.”¹¹ Through *amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis reinstated the positive aspect of erotic love in marital relationships. This will have an impact in the Church’s teaching on sexual morals.

6. Marriage is a fulfilment in grace and not a lifelong burden. Marriage is such a fragile thing in the modern world that couples need constant support and encouragement. Relationships do sometimes break down, despite all good will of the couples and good preparation before marriages. The reasons can vary from personal self-doubt or shattered plans to economic woes. At times, hurt is so deep that couples are not able to stay together. A durational separation is ideal and can make room for healing, but circumstances lead some to get divorced from their relationships completely and among them some remarry after the civil divorce. Divorce is not permitted in the Church. The Church has objections to divorce of sacramental unions of an indissoluble nature as well as to a remarriage of divorced couples whose previous bond is still existing without annulment. Thus, the Church considers them to be in objective negation of Church’s teaching and denies communion to those divorcees.

¹⁰ Chilean Bishops’ Conference, *La vida y la familia: regalos de Dios para cada uno de nosotros* (21 July 2014).

¹¹ Kasper, *Amoris Laetitia: Ein Bruch oder Abbruch?*, 725. “Cum grano salis kann man sagen: „*Amoris laetitia*“ nimmt Abstand von einer vorwiegend negativen, augustinischen Sicht der Sexualität und wendet sich der schöpferischen thomistischen Sicht zu.”

Civil remarriage contradicts the visible symbol of the sacrament of marriage, but *amoris laetitia* does not stop at categorical exclusion from the sacraments. Pope Francis says that we cannot guide broken family sufficiently “simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace” (AL 37). Many of the divorcees may not be subjectively culpable in the grave situations of break-down in marital partnerships. Children of those failing relationships are most affected. Thus, we need to address here two issues: pastoral care of those children and failing couples, and communion to the divorced and civilly married. Pope Francis has given pastoral solutions to both aspects in *amoris laetitia*. However, he holds the sacramental teaching of the Church that the indissolubility of marriage is part and parcel of the Church’s indispensable set of beliefs inherited from Christ himself.

7. Pope Francis is absolutely within the tradition when he makes concession of forgiveness to sinners. The Old Testament tradition writes off debts during the jubilee years. The New Testament goes after the one sheep leaving the ninety-nine and welcomes the prodigal son. That is the sense of integration and the logic of the gospel (AL 297). In complex irregular situations, we cannot apply norms geometrically, but the unconditional love and mercy of God would justify integration of those who are in serious sin but have earnest desire to return to God. The Church should thus “avoid judgements which do not take into account the complexity of various situations” and “to be attentive, by necessity, to how people experience distress because of their condition” (AL 79, 296).¹² Therefore, Pope Francis asks the divorced and civilly married to use “internal forum” of pastors whom he suggests the

¹² *Relatio Finalis* 2015, 51.

three aspects of “accompanying, discerning and integrating” as guiding principle. Those affected should not feel excommunicated from the Church but as living members able to experience her as a mother who welcomes the always (AL 299). Here, the existing canon law (915 or 916 CIC/1983)¹³ is not violated, since *amoris laetitia* does not offer a general rule of automatic mechanism to admit all divorced and civilly remarried to the sacraments. Nor do canons 915 and 916, or any canon of CIC 1983 exclusively mention the divorced and remarried or prohibition on reception of the Eucharist by them. With *amoris laetitia*, as Cardinal Kasper comments, remarried divorcees are now no more punished with automatic excommunication but instead are invited to participate as living members of Church life in ecclesiastical, liturgical, pastoral, educational, and institutional services (AL 299). The term “excommunication” is not even once mentioned in *amoris laetitia*. The position of Pope Francis is similar to the concessional position of John Paul II who gave permission to the remarried divorcees to receive Communion, if they lived as brother and sister though sexual abstinence. John Paul II had clarified that, “There is in fact a difference between those who have sincerely tried to save their first marriage and have been unjustly abandoned, and those who through their own grave fault have destroyed a canonically valid marriage. Finally, there are those who have entered into a second union for the sake of the children's upbringing, and who are sometimes subjectively certain in conscience that their previous and irreparably destroyed marriage had never been valid” (*Familiaris Consortio* 84). Yet, John Paul II

¹³ Can. 915: Those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion. Can. 916: A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.

continued the status quo of the general ban on receiving communion by the divorced and remarried based on Sacred Scripture and on the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist (*Familiaris Consortio* 84). Pope Benedict XVI maintained the position of his predecessor and suggested that the remarried Catholics following a divorce should make a spiritual communion. Pope Francis has now permitted communion to the divorced and remarried couples after pastoral discernment of individual cases. This is the turning point with a new beginning in the Catholic Church giving importance to the personal conscience and subjective status of the persons involved due to particular circumstances. According to Pope Francis, no sinner is eternally condemned and no sin is greater than the mercy of God.

8. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (n. 2352) mentions that “imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors” (AL 302). Therefore, an objective contradiction need not lead to the culpability of the person. Therefore, the Pope confirms the statement of the synod fathers: “Therefore, while upholding a general rule, it is necessary to recognize that responsibility with respect to certain actions or decisions is not the same in all cases. Pastoral discernment, while taking into account a person’s properly formed conscience, must take responsibility for these situations. Even the consequences of actions taken are not necessarily the same in all cases” (AL 302).¹⁴ The traditional approach differentiates the material from the formal dimension

¹⁴ *Relatio Finalis* 2015, 85.

in relation to the gravity of the sin. The material dimension refers to the objective facts of the case and the formal depends on the disposition of the acting subject. A serious offense, which is contrary to a basic standard, is not a grave sin subjectively because there are limitations in knowledge, will or freedom of the acting subject. The objective facts are not enough to judge an act to be sinful. *Amoris laetitia* takes this differentiation between formal and material dimension seriously and considers mitigating conditions or limitations to evaluate the individual situations of the people (AL 301-303, 305, 308). Thus, *amoris laetitia* accepts the differentiation between objective and subjective situations made by the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts and not the opinion of the c. 915 (CIC 1983) that a serious sin in the objective sense is a sufficient reason for the exclusion.¹⁵ In addition, the logic of mercy and compassion (the logic of the Gospel) assumes the responsibility for inclusion. *Amoris laetitia* underscores: “No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!” (AL 297).

9. According to the magisterial teaching, the remarried divorcees find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law (CCC 1650) and a remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery (CCC 2384). In contrast, *amoris laetitia* opts for a differencing and respecting views. It distinguishes not only between the objective situation and the subjective condition of a sinner, but also acknowledges the grace of God effective in these situations as well as takes into consideration the subjective life on love and loyalty. Situations, that do not fully comply with a moral norm or a moral ideal, need not be

¹⁵ Eva-Maria Faber and Martin M. Lintner, “Theologische Entwicklungen in *Amoris laetitia* hinsichtlich der Frage der wiederverheirateten Geschiedenen,“ in: Stephan Goertz and Caroline Witting (eds.), *Amoris laetitia – Wendepunkt für die Moraltheologie?* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016) 279-320, 288f.

subjectively culpable. Thus, *amoris laetitia* describes the corresponding life no longer is simply a contradiction to the ideal of sacramental marriage. Hence, “it is can no longer simply be said that all those in any “irregular” situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace” (AL 301). Those affected must anyway make an assessment themselves in their conscience. This position is given a high priority and strengthened in *amoris laetitia* without relativism or subjectivism. The emphasis on the value of conscience does also correspond to the importance on formation of personal conscience and its competence. The spiritual and pastoral accompaniment serves, similar to the process of discernment, the formation of conscience that one may become aware of one’s situation before God and correspond to the best of one’s own will even in situations that may not (quite) correspond to a norm or an ideal. Thereby, *amoris laetitia* does not question the fruitfulness of “the ideal of marriage, marked by a commitment to exclusivity and stability” (AL 34). The document demands clarification and differentiation of the specific situation of a civil remarriage after divorce characterized as a permanent and public adultery (CCC 2384) is whether subjectively culpable. In the light of the new perspective initiated by Pope Francis, we may need to revise or at least formulate the numbers 1650 and 2384 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church precisely and differently following *amoris laetitia*.¹⁶

10. Pope Francis has clearly introduced a paradigm shift in *amoris laetitia* with extraordinary permissions in individual cases to receive the Eucharist following a responsible personal and pastoral discernment. As Cardinal Kasper and Eberhard Schockenhoff explain, extraordinary permissions, as granted by Pope Francis in individual

¹⁶ Faber and Lintner, 315-6.

cases, do not abolish the objective contradiction of the ongoing bond of marriage of the first sacramental marriage and the second civil marriage.¹⁷ In this way, Pope Francis does not break the norm, but much more brings an alternative solution to the existing problem. He relies on the Thomistic teaching that the circumstances must be taken into consideration in applying a norm to evaluate an act. Following Aristotelian tradition, Aquinas says that a human act is good or bad depending on the final goal - *telos* at which all human actions aim. According to the teaching of Thomas Aquinas (+1274) and Alphonse Liguori (+1787), a judgement on the moral quality of a human act as crime or sin is not reliable exclusively from *forum externum* and its external object. To a free, responsible and moral act of humans belong much more the intention of the actors and circumstances than mere object of the act. That is why, it is not possible to make a judgment on an act without taking into consideration of the will of the person in his conscience and of the pastoral assessment of the life situation in *forum internum*. In our context, it might mean that some of the divorced and remarried are subjectively convinced in their conscience that their previous marriage was really invalid. Thus, according to the new perspective of Pope Francis following the Thomistic tradition, pastors need an open ear and a generous heart to listen to those affected and make right distinction of each individual situation. Thus, it is no longer possible to claim that all who live in any so-called irregular situation are in a state of mortal sin and lost the sanctifying grace (AL 301). The new position eliminates the condition under which the sanction of exclusion from the sacraments of the Church to such situations was considered the only possible response. Pope Francis has thus shown a new way that pastoral discernment is an alternative solution to permit reconciled persons in irregular situations to receive the

¹⁷ Kasper, "Amoris Laetitia: Ein Bruch oder Abbruch?," 729-31; Schockenhoff, „Traditionsbruch oder notwendige Weiterbildung?," 150-51.

Eucharist following the sacrament of confession, penance and reconciliation. If the Church attends prudently to the competence of the conscience of her believers and differentiates the respective life situations carefully, she cannot automatically judge every irregular situation to be an objective state of mortal sin that could separate God permanently. Careful pastoral discernment can help to detect whether the bond of the first marriage was really valid or a fiction, thereby can help for a speedy annulment and successive nuptial blessing of the existing civil marriage.

Concluding Remarks **The Mercy of God and the Way of Love**

The teaching of moral theology should not fail to incorporate the pastoral considerations of gratuitous offer of God's love, although concern must be shown for the integrity of the Church's moral teaching. In support of his view, the International Theological Commission confirms that "natural law could not be presented as an already established set of rules that impose themselves a priori on the moral subject; rather, it is a source of objective inspiration for the deeply personal process of making decisions."¹⁸ The synodal Fathers regretted that "rather than offering the healing power of grace and the light of the Gospel message, some would "indoctrinate" that message, turning it into "dead stones to be hurled at others" (AL 49).¹⁹ Thus, Pope Francis critiques the rigidity of pastors that "we put so many conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real

¹⁸ International Theological Commission, *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at Natural Law* (2009), 59

¹⁹ Concluding Address of the Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (24 October 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26-27 October 2015, p. 13.

significance. That is the worst way of watering down the Gospel” (AL 311). Pastors must rather make room for God’s unconditional love in pastoral activity with an open heart and a generous heart especially to those living on the outermost fringes of society²⁰ (AL 312). With these distinctive words, Pope Francis says that the logic of exclusion and condemnation should no longer determine the path of the Church. Pastors must invite everyone to continue the journey on the way of love in which they recognize a possible response to the call of God in their consciences (cf. AL 303). Further, the Pope warns that “a pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in “irregular” situations, as if they were stones to throw at people’s lives” 305). The force of the language of Pope Francis with deep compassion of the message of mercy reveals that he will leave a spiritual legacy which will have a telling impact on the understanding of sexuality, marriage and family in days to come. It is a great beginning of renewal and revival for the Catholic Church to be a compassionate mother. With an open ear to the concerns of the synod’s reflections, the Pope says that “there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems. The situations that concern us are challenges. We should not be trapped into wasting our energy in doleful laments, but rather seek new forms of missionary creativity” (Al 57). Today, the pastoral effort to strengthen marriages in order to prevent their breakdown is much more important than the pastoral care of failures (AL 307). The salvation of souls, as the final canon CIC 1752 states, must always be the supreme law of the Church.

²⁰ *Misericordiae Vultus* (11 April 2015), 15: AAS 107 (2015), 409.