

**PARISH MEETING TO DISCUSS  
AND COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE FAMILY**

- Welcome and Introductions
- Opening Prayer
- Brief introduction to the origin and purpose of the meeting (15 mins)
- Introducing the Questionnaire (5 mins)
- Completion of the Questionnaire individually (30 - 45 mins)
- Opportunity for Discussion & Comment (15 mins)
- Closing Prayer (5 mins)

**MEETING TIME IN TOTAL (85 MINS)**

## OPENING PRAYER

### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### FROM SCRIPTURE & THE CHURCH

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. (1John 4:16) *Pause*

Jesus answered, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. (John 14:23) *Pause*

How lovely is your dwelling place. O Lord of hosts!  
Happy are those who live in your house. (Psalm 84) *Pause*

There is no more vivid sign that God is alive, and that God loves, than Christian homes which are filled with love. (Handing on the faith in the Home, Irish Bishops' Conference) *Pause*

May {parents} be the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus. *Pause*

#### PRAYER

Creator God,  
out of love you created us to live in communion with one another.  
In the communion of the family you invite us to discover and experience your divine love  
so that we may bring this love to the world.  
In this time as we reflect on the life of the family today,  
help us to welcome your Spirit of wisdom and compassion among us.  
In the days ahead may our reflections bear fruit  
for the Church's on-going support and care of the family in today's world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

#### OUR FATHER

As Jesus taught us, let us pray to the Father,...Our Father

### SIGN OF THE CROSS

## BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Pope Francis has called a meeting of bishops, known as a Synod, with a particular focus on the modern day pastoral challenges to the family in the context of living and handing on the Gospel.

The Synod will take place in two stages. In 2014 the bishops will meet to gather their experiences and proposals in regard to families living the Gospel in a credible manner. In 2015 the bishops will meet to create working guidelines for the pastoral care of individuals and the family.

As part of the preparation for the 2014 meeting the committee responsible for preparing the synod in Rome has produced a document. The document begins by acknowledging some of the many situations that arise in modern societies;

- the widespread practice of cohabitation, which does not lead to marriage, and sometimes even excludes the idea of it
- same-sex unions between persons, who are, not infrequently, permitted to adopt children
- mixed or inter-religious marriages
- the single-parent family
- 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
- new interpretations of what is considered a human right

The document also acknowledges that 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.

All of these situations require the Church's attention and pastoral care and present challenges to sharing the good news of the Gospel.

The document also reminds us of some of the essential teaching of the Church on marriage and the family coming through Sacred Scripture and the documents of the Church. It specifically references *the Bible*,

*Familiaris Consortio, Gaudium et Spes, Humanae Vitae The Catechism of the Catholic Church and Lumen Fidei* and reminds us that

- the family has its roots in the creation of man and woman, both made in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Genesis* 1:24-31; 2:4-25)
- the nuptial love between man and woman as “the great mystery”, making present in the world the love of Christ and the Church (cf. *Ephesians* 5:31-32 ).
- “the family, in which the various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the very foundation of society” (*Gaudium et Spes /The Church in the Modern World*, 52).
- By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1660).
- *Lumen Fidei*, speaks of the family in the context of a reflection on how faith reveals “just how firm the bonds between people can be when God is present in their midst” (*Lumen Fidei/The Light of Faith*, 50). “The first setting in which faith enlightens the human city is the family.”(LF 52)

Finally, it contains a series of questions aimed at giving individual dioceses an opportunity to contribute to the Synod from the context of the local lived, situation.

This is a unique opportunity for members of the Church to reflect and respond thoughtfully on serious challenges to family life and to marriage. *The local responses to these questions will form the foundation of what each bishop will submit ahead of the synod.*

Now let’s take a moment to look at the questions.

**INTRODUCING THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**(5 MINS)**

The reason we have gathered is in response to Bishop Denis's invitation to take some time to complete this questionnaire.

At the bishop's request Faith Development Services have re-presented the questions in a way that it is hoped will facilitate us in completing the questionnaire.

This group may not be in a position to respond to every question but all responses will be welcomed by the bishop. Not only will they will be essential for the Synod but they will also provide invaluable insights and knowledge for all of us in the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin.

Handout the Questionnaire:

As you can see the questions are divided into nine sections:

1. Our understanding of the Church's teachings on the family
2. Our understanding of Marriage
3. How families are pastorally supported in living and handing on the faith
4. How single parents, cohabiting couples, separated, divorced and remarried people are pastorally supported
5. Our attitude to same-sex couples
6. The faith education of children whose parents are in irregular marriages ( *e.g. inter-church; inter-faith; remarried*)
7. The openness of married couples to having children
8. Is the family a place where Christ is encountered?
9. Other challenges

In particular sections the questions look for statistical information that is not readily available to parish groups or individuals. These questions have been omitted from this form of the questionnaire and the answers are being sought from the appropriate agencies. There are also two questions that Bishop Denis has asked a theologian to address.

**COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE INDIVIDUALLY**

**TIME FOR DISCUSSION AND COMMENT**

## CLOSING PRAYER

It has been said that the most significant work we ever do,  
in our whole world, in our whole life,  
is done within the four walls of our own home.

Wherever we each make our home,  
let us commit to doing  
all the good we can,  
by all the means we can,  
in all the ways we can,  
to all the people we can,  
as long as ever we can.

As we seek to live this we turn to our Mother Mary, the one who heard  
the word of God and did it.

*HAIL MARY...*