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Synod of Bishops in Extraordinary Assembly
Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization

Survey results from the Diocese of Honolulu, compiled by Dr. Kristina DeNeve, Ph.D.
December 29, 2013 – Solemnity of the Holy Family

Survey results based on responses from 309 individuals, including 36 priests, 13 deacons, 162 lay people “in the pews”, 40 diocesan staff, 34 school staff and 24 parish staff.

Section 1. The Diffusion of the Teachings on the Family in Sacred Scripture and the Church’s Magisterium

a) Describe how the Catholic Church's teachings on the value of the family contained in the Bible, Gaudium et Spes, Familiaris Consortio and other documents of the post-conciliar Magisterium are understood by people today. What formation is given to our people on the Church’s teaching on family life?

Just under 80% of respondents (and 85% of priests) indicated that the people did not know these teachings. Respondents often commented that people do not know these teachings and what they do know comes from the media, from their own familial upbringing and to a lesser extent what is expressed in the homilies by priests.

Here is a typical reply by a priest: People today seem to have lost the idea of permanence connected the marriage bond. Most relationships are “trials” to see how compatible or non-compatible we are. When difficulties come (and they will) we can look for greener pastures. Plus many parents have children but they are not married and have no plans to get married.

Here is a typical reply by a lay person: They are not widely understood. There has been a paucity of education to the people in the pews that would provide practical knowledge and relevance to modern living which would appeal to an adult learner.

Some priests and lay people mentioned a generational difference in formation: The older generation is more so in the teaching than some of the below 50 people. This is reflected in the way some of them live their lives in co-habitation with the opposite sex, having children and not feeling they need to get married and invite the Lord into a relationship with them.

What formation is given to our people on the Church’s teaching on family life?

Priests responded three ways, 1) by indicating this came primarily in marriage preparation and engaged/marriage encounter or 2) that it was infused into everything in the parish, from homilies to RE to adult faith programs; or 3) very little to nothing is being done.

Lay people provided the same answers, but they most commonly indicated that their formation came from homilies or that there was little offered in this area. (Many lay people had trouble understanding the question suggesting they did not know they might be formed in this area.)

b) In those cases where the Church's teaching is known, is it accepted fully or are there difficulties in putting it into practice? If so, what are they?

NOTE: Respondents were asked only what difficulties existed and the question did not refer specifically to the Church's teachings on family life.

The majority of priests spoke of secularization, such as this priest, "The influence of secularistic mass media and communications to people post the greatest challenge to the Church's teaching into practice. A 7-minute Sunday homily on these teachings is nothing compared to how the mass media and social media control the minds of young people today. There is scarcity of Catholic mass media and communication to disseminate the teachings of the Church."

Lay people also spoke of a number of secular trends, esp. the fact that there are no/few models in the home, the community or society who live and exemplify what the church teaches about family structure, NFP, contraception, etc... Several people mentioned the fact that the clergy are all celibates makes it difficult for them to teach on and/or model healthy family life within the church.

c) How widespread is the Church's teaching in pastoral programmes at the national, diocesan and parish levels? What catechesis is done on the family?

An equal number of priests reported believing that the teaching was very widespread as those who reported believing that the teaching was very little known. This was true at all three levels of parish, diocese and nation.

There were some lay people who believed the Church's teachings were widespread at each level, but the vast majority felt the Church's teaching is not at all well known.

What catechesis is done on the family?

Priests indicated catechesis was done primarily through homilies, through religious education, through marriage preparation and through adult faith formation.

Lay respondents' most common answer was that no catechesis was being done. Homilies were the second most common response to what catechesis is done, with many of them adding that it was an occasional homily or that the homily focused on pro-life or opposition to same sex marriage.

d) To what extent-and what aspects in particular-is this teaching actually known, accepted, rejected and/or criticized in areas outside the Church? What are the cultural factors which hinder the full reception of the Church's teaching on the family?

Both priests and lay suggested that people know what the Church teaches about priestly celibacy, sexual activity before marriage, co-habitation, birth control, divorce, same sex marriage and

abortion. Respondents universally agreed that the Church's teachings in these areas are almost universally rejected, by Catholics as well as those outside the Church. On the other hand, People know very little about the Church's desire to strengthen and promote strong familial relationships. (Quote by a priest)

The primary cultural factors described were the media/TV, individualism, materialism, economic pressures, lessening of marriages and more alternative lifestyles in broader society. Here is a typical response (by a lay person): The media is our biggest detractor. The church is often the victim of ridicule. Of course the vast coverage of "abuses" as sorely hurt our image worldwide. Hence, we are clearly under persecution and must be very clear in the manner in which we speak and act. Our teachings are rejected by non-Catholics and "watered-down" by our membership mired in relativism. Our culture of materialism and "what's in it for me" attitude is opposed to what we should strive for as members of the Church. We need our teachings to be clear and thoughtful. How we communicate to our members at this time in our history is absolutely critical to our future.

Section 2. Marriage according to the Natural Law

a) What place does the idea of the natural law have in the cultural areas of society: in institutions, education, academic circles and among the people at large? What anthropological ideas underlie the discussion on the natural basis of the family?

Institutions – generally, lay people did not understand what institutions referred to and priests suggested it has little to no place.

Education – Respondents suggested that this was covered in Catholic schools, but not public schools. Some respondents suggested natural law is being emphasized less these days even in Catholic schools.

Academic Circles – Priests felt natural law is ignored or rejected in academic circles

People at Large – Priests felt that some people/Catholics were extremely well versed on natural law, but the majority do not know anything about it. Interestingly, lay respondents either did not know natural law themselves to answer the question or they said it needs to be better known (as they presumably did understand it). In this way, our lay sample confirmed the priests' sentiments.

What anthropological ideas underlie the discussion on the natural basis of the family?

Priests' answers varied from the basic complementarity of men and women to male offspring being more important than female to the idea of family now being separated from marriage. At this point in the survey, several lay people reported being irritated by the difficult questions they did not understand. Of those who did understand, the anthropological idea of procreation/offspring was a dominant theme.

b) Is the idea of the natural law in the union between a man and a woman commonly accepted as such by the baptized in general?

This question was asked as a yes-no question and 65% of lay people (66% of priests) responded "yes"

c) How is the theory and practice of natural law in the union between man and woman challenged in light of the formation of a family? How is it proposed and developed in civil and Church institutions?

Example response from the priests: Natural law required the union of man and woman to produce offspring (is being challenged). We all know this can happen with or without marriage, with or without love, with or without a family structure. It is basic biology. How the people involved nurture the child is another question that has many variations and "looks." Until the Church comes to understand that and accept it and then develop a spirituality based on that fact, the teachings of the Church will become more and more ignored if not disdained.

A well-articulated perspective by a lay person: Natural law in marriage played a crucial role in populating the world. And it is still necessary for the survival of the species. However marriage is not solely about procreation. Marriage historically predates the establishment of the Catholic Church. Family structures around the world have differed from the beginning of human history. Since we have a world with billions of people in it, it is no longer necessary that the essence of marriage is the biological ability to procreate. Love and care of partners is the essence of marriage.

This sentiment as more commonly articulated by a lay person: Civil institutions promote a negative view, why marry, just live as if you are married, we have laws to cover that, then if it doesn't work out you won't have to go through the trouble of a divorce. Church institutions are more positive but the message somehow gets twisted in young people's ears. They see it as a "have to get married in the church because of my parents" instead of a covenant with God or a sacrament of the church. Church weddings are not glamorous enough; they want the beach side wedding or will use the church as a backdrop if the gardens or hotels are not fancy enough. We really need to put more effort into promoting the covenant in the awesome light that it is.

d) In cases where non-practicing Catholics or declared non-believers request the celebration of marriage, describe how this pastoral challenge is dealt with?

Lay people often reported that this depended on the parish priest/deacon as to how it was handled. Some lay people felt these couples were denied and turned away while others felt it should be used as an opportunity to evangelize and be sensitive and pastoral to the couple.

Of the 17 written responses by priests, seven indicated they would use the situation for pre-evangelization, four would emphasize the Church's teaching of marriage, two would send the couple to the Tribunal, two said they no longer have this situation occur and two said they handle the situation on a case-by-case basis.

Section 3. The Pastoral Care of the Family in Evangelization

a) What experiences have emerged in recent decades regarding marriage preparation? What efforts are there to stimulate the task of evangelization of the couple and of the family? How can an awareness of the family as the "domestic Church" be promoted?

93-100% of respondents (depending on which group was sampled) indicated their parish offers marriage preparation. The most common marriage preparation response was Engaged Encounter followed by FOCCUS.

One priest commented: that it makes absolutely no difference in the solvency of marriage whether or not the couple goes through marriage preparation.....if something doesn't work we should ask what is wrong rather than keep on doing more of the same

And another said: As a priest, I am dealing with couples who are almost always in their middle to late 20's or 30's as opposed to years ago when I dealt with many younger couples. I also hear that fewer people are getting married and many are delaying marriage.

When asked if the Church has made any effort to stimulate the task of evangelization of the couple and of the family, the percentage of respondents who said "yes" was as follows:

Priests = 90% yes

Diocesan Staff = 77%

Parish Staff = 30%

Lay People = 50%

There is obviously a difference in perceptions on whether or not this is being done.

When asked what experiences respondents have had in promoting awareness of the family as the domestic Church, six priests spoke of the challenges and lack of success in this area while five priests spoke about their efforts tied to weekly Mass.

One priest described this specific effort: My work promoting the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the Home has been very effective in building a sense of the domestic church. Jesus Christ as the center of the family and the constant referent for its life is a source of strength. It provides not just techniques (e.g. communication, conflict management) but a true family spirituality. Granted this applies to a very small group of Catholic families.

b) How successful have you been in proposing a manner of praying within the family which can withstand life's complexities and today's culture?

When asked if their family (or families in their parish pray together), only 70% of the 73 lay respondents who answered this question said "yes." This is particularly troubling in the sense that the lay respondents to this survey do not match the general demographic of the "average Catholic in the pew" but appear to be more active, catechized and committed Catholics.

Of the 52 lay people who described when/how they pray as a family, prayers at meal time was mentioned most often and praying daily was the most commonly given frequency. When asked how successful prayer in the family has been in withstanding life's complexities and today's culture, 80% of lay respondents suggested prayer was somewhat or very successful.

c) In the current generational crisis, how have Christian families been able to fulfill their vocation of transmitting the faith?

This question was asked as a multiple choice question. Only 2% of lay people responded "very successful" and 49% indicated "very unsuccessful." By comparison, 65% of priests said families are very unsuccessful and no priests thought this was very successfully being accomplished.

d) In what ways have the local Church and movements on family spirituality been able to create ways of acting which are exemplary?

Priests responses ranged from there being nothing offered in this area to parish efforts to educate or involve families. Lay respondents commonly mentioned religious education and sacramental preparation.

e) What specific contribution can couples and families make to spreading a credible and holistic idea of the couple and the Christian family today?

The most common response by priests was about living out a sacramental marriage as a witness to the larger world. Several priests also mentioned being active at the parish.

One sample response: Couples living in sacramental marriage become authentic witnesses of the Gospel first for their children and for the neighborhood.

Lay people echoed these two responses with many of them giving examples of what that might look like.

Two sample responses by lay people are: The family can reflect the love the members share for each other as well as for others by being contributing, caring members of the community.

And another said, I think the most important thing is families participating in the life of the Church as families: performing functions at Mass, taking Communion as a family to someone who could not attend Mass, visiting the

homebound as a family, working together as a family at parish fund raisers. The Church needs to encourage families to learn and experience parish life together.

f) What pastoral care has the Church provided in supporting couples in formation and couples in crisis situations?

60% of priests indicated they provided support to couples in crisis while 65% of lay respondents indicated such support. Priests and lay people reported similar sources of support, such as marriage preparation, Married Encounter, and counseling/meetings with individuals and couples.

4. Pastoral Care in Certain Difficult Marital Situations

a) Is cohabitation *ad experimentum* a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage?

95% of priests and 93% of lay people indicated cohabitation is a pastoral reality in their parish. Priests guesstimated that between 16-60% of couples cohabitated while lay people thought the percentage was lower, between 5-50%.

b) Do unions which are not recognized either religiously or civilly exist? Are reliable statistics available?

70% of priests believed these unions existed in their parish while 92% of lay people believed this to be the case. One priest indicated the reliable statistic was that this figure was 30% of marriages in his parish. No other respondent knew of reliable statistics on this issue.

c) Are separated couples and those divorced and remarried a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage? How do you deal with this situation in appropriate pastoral programmes?

Virtually all respondents reported this to be a pastoral reality in their parish. Respondents estimated the percentage to vary from less than 5% to approximately 50% with 22% of all respondents believing the percentage falls between 21-25% of all couples.

80% of lay people did not believe there were pastoral programs in their parish for these couples. (There was not a large enough sample of priests responding to this question to reliably report a percentage.)

d) In all the above cases, how do the baptized live in this irregular situation? Are aware of it? Are they simply indifferent? Do they feel marginalized or suffer from the impossibility of receiving the sacraments?

For this question, 57 lay people responded. Of this number, 14% indicated they were aware of it, 42% reported the couples were indifferent to the irregularity, as many as 30% felt marginalized and 14% reported suffering in association with this situation.

e) What questions do divorced and remarried people pose to the Church concerning the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation? Among those persons who find themselves in these situations, how many ask for these sacraments?

There seemed to be two, interrelated sentiments expressed in regards to this question. First, both priests and lay people felt that many people do not ask, but just come for the sacraments anyway. A response from a priest along these lines: Many simply go to Holy Communion despite the fact that they are divorced and remarried. They have decided on their own that it doesn't matter, that it is OK to receive. Many don't feel marginalized because they just decide to ignore the Church's teaching, just like they ignore the requirement of getting married in the Church, of not using artificial contraceptives, etc. They don't feel guilty because they don't believe that they are doing anything wrong.

Second, the questions that are asked are about why they cannot receive Communion and what happens if they do receive. Some ask this question out of pain of feeling rejected by the Church.

A response from a priest: Why can they not participate fully in sacraments such as the Eucharist if that is suppose to nourish and strengthen efforts to live Jesus focus on the most important commandment to love God with all our being and love our neighbor as ourselves? How can they Church come up with strange justifications for

annulments that allow some to receive sacraments and others not? Why is Church involved in the legality of marriage which is a function of the state and why does the Church not exclusively focus on the sacrament of matrimony?

f) Could a simplification of canonical practice in recognizing a declaration of nullity of the marriage bond provide a positive contribution to solving the problems of the persons involved? If yes, what form would it take?

81% of all respondents answered “yes” to this question. Priests largely indicated the process could be “streamlined” and that additional circumstances (such as marriage to a non-Catholic) might be exempted from any process. Several lay people suggested having the process take place at the parish/local level by people who know the couple. A few lay people also mentioned adopting the practices of the Eastern Rite. Unfortunately, several people expressed opinions that annulments should be less expensive and not just available to “wealthy” people.

g) Does a ministry exist to attend to these cases? Describe this pastoral ministry? Do such programmes exist on the national and diocesan levels? How is God's mercy proclaimed to separated couples and those divorced and remarried, and how does the Church put into practice her support for them in their journey of faith?

84% of all respondents reported that no ministry exists for separated, divorced and remarried Catholics. New Beginnings was mentioned by one priest as a ministry in this area and one lay person mentioned Ridgewood, NJ as having a ministry here. The rest of responses by both lay people and priests were that they did not know what the ministry was/looked like.

65% of priests, but only 46% of lay people felt that God’s mercy was proclaimed to these groups. Several priests shared how they try to listen and provide compassionate assurance to people in these situations. Many lay people suggested this mercy is proclaimed generally by welcoming all to Mass and not singling people out.

5. On Unions of Persons of the Same Sex

a) Is there a law in your country recognizing civil unions for people of the same-sex and equating it in some way to marriage? Question was not asked on this survey.

b) What is the attitude of the local and particular Churches towards both the State as the promoter of civil unions between persons of the same sex and the people involved in this type of union?

Respondents indicated whether the attitude of parishioners towards the State of Hawaii was positive, negative or neutral. Overall, 15% of all respondents selected positive, 38% were neutral and 46% were negative.

c) What pastoral attention can be given to people who have chosen to live in these types of union?

88% of all respondents reported that their parish does not provide pastoral attention to people living in this situation. The responses of lay people to this question was similar to their response to the question about pastoral attention to separated, divorced and remarried in that they suggested either nothing is being done, that the situation is ignored at Church such that people are not set apart based on their home living status. Some lay people also suggested that people in this situation no longer come to their church.

d) In the case of unions of persons of the same sex who have adopted children, what can be done pastorally in light of transmitting the faith?

Three basic responses were given by the priests and lay people alike: conduct focus groups or listening sessions to learn more about their needs; reach out to these children and families in particular; and to treat them the same as every other child in the parish. Of those who indicated that these families should be specifically approached, some emphasized education to the family on this explicit issue as well.

For example, one priest stated “allow the children to receive the sacraments. Tell the parents that only Church teachings will be taught in religious education. If questions occur concerning same sex unions, it should be treated with compassion and mercy. The Sacrament of Matrimony in the Church is between one man and one woman. Secular marriage is not sacramental and is recognized by the State in many different forms.

6. The Education of Children in Irregular Marriages

a) What is the estimated proportion of children and adolescents in these cases, as regards children who are born and raised in regularly constituted families?

While this question was asked of respondents, they do not know the answer to this question as estimates ranged from 2% of children and adolescents to over 50%.

b) How do parents in these situations approach the Church? What do they ask? Do they request the sacraments only or do they also want catechesis and the general teaching of religion?

There is not a reliably large enough sample that responded to this question.

When asked if parents in these situations approach the church, only 71 people out of the total sample of 308 responded, with 26 respondents (26%) saying “yes” and 45 respondents (64%) saying “no.”

Only forty-four respondents answered the question as to what is being requested. Approximately half of these respondents indicated “all of the above” when given the choice of sacraments, catechesis, or general teaching of religion. Another 30% responded that they did not know the answer to this question.

c) How do the particular Churches attempt to meet the needs of the parents of these children to provide them with a Christian education?

Twenty-nine lay people and priests responded to this question. The most common answer is that these children are treated identically to other children in terms of sacramental preparation, religious education, etc....

d) What is the sacramental practice in these cases: preparation, administration of the sacrament and the accompaniment?

Sixty respondents answered this question with 40 of them (67%) reporting “all of the above.”

7. The Openness of the Married Couples to Life

a) **What knowledge do Christians have today of the teachings of *Humanae vitae* on responsible parenthood? Are they aware of how morally to evaluate the different methods of family planning? Could any insights be suggested in this regard pastorally?**

Among the lay respondents, 65% of people (38 out of 58) said they knew *Humanae vitae*'s teachings on responsible parenting. Twenty-five out of thirty-six people (70%) then indicated they agreed with this moral teaching regarding responsible parenthood.

No additional questions were asked on the survey in this area.

b) **Is this moral teaching accepted? What aspects pose the most difficulties in a large majority of couple's accepting this teaching?**

The survey asked "what aspects pose the most difficulties in a large majority of couple's accepting this teaching?" Thirty-five lay respondents answered this question. The most common answer was the ban against artificial contraceptives. In addition, several lay people indicated a difficulty in not knowing/trusting natural family planning while a final group reported that people do not have self-restraint or are willing to engage in self-denial.

One articulate lay person said, "The teaching on legitimate and illegitimate forms of birth control is unrealistic and ill-informed. The Magisterium might do better by in carrying out God's will by paying some attention to *sensus fidelium* rather than just its own preconceptions. In a sense, the Magisterium has applied the doctrine of infallibility to itself."

c) **What natural methods are promoted by the particular Churches to help spouses put into practice the teachings of *Humanae vitae*?**

When asked if their parish promoted natural methods to help spouses put into practice the teachings of *Humanae vitae*, 11 out of 20 priests responded "yes" while only 10 out of 41 lay people also reported "yes."

d) **What is your experience on this subject in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance and participation at the Eucharist?**

Fourteen out of 18 priests said they had experience on this subject. Of these, 8 priests wrote of their experiences, primarily in the confessional, reporting that the issue rarely comes up, but when it does come up, it is because the person has decided they want to follow the Church's teachings and are struggling to begin/do so.

e) **What differences are seen in this regard between the Church's teaching and civic education?**

Fully 91 of 95 respondents to this survey question indicated there is a difference between civic education and Church teaching. When asked to describe these differences, both priests and lay people reported that civic education promotes the use of contraceptives to avoid pregnancy and STDs when engaging in sexual intercourse.

An example of a typical response by a priest: Civil education sees no problem with using all sorts of contraception contrary to the Church's teaching

A subset of priests and lay people believed that civic education focused on science, such as this comment by a lay person: Civic teaching is based on science. The Church's teaching is not but should be as well.

f) How can a more open attitude towards having children be fostered? How can an increase in births be promoted?

Eleven priests offered suggestions in this area. Four priests suggested better catechesis on church teaching, three priests said the Church should become more active in family and child services, two priests indicated that financial support should be given to families and two priests suggested that social justice efforts with the world's poor is most needed.

One lay person said, "The question is should it promote this or should it instead focus on caring for the families that already have children."

Looking at the pattern of responses for lay people, most lay people reported one or the other of these "solutions." Lay people tended to emphasize how the Church might better promote/disseminate its teachings and programs (like NFP) or to emphasize the church providing more intentional and intense care of families that already exist, esp. those families already in the parish.

8. The Relationship between the Family and the Person

a) Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the human person. How can the family be a privileged place for this to happen?

Only the second question was asked, aka, "How can the family be a privileged place for this to happen?" with no reference being made to the initial statement about Jesus Christ. Therefore, responses given were not about the question being asked.

b) What critical situations in the family today can obstruct a person's encounter with Christ?

Thirteen priests responded to this question. Seven of them reported that strains on the couple ranging from financial to a lack of parenting skills were the most critical situation. Four suggested the lack of families fitting the traditional form is the most critical situation.

Lay people reported a wide variety of challenges, many of them captured by this respondent who said, "Anything that distracts - finances, medical needs, drugs, living outside a home, preferring others opinions to the Church's, hunger, no loving environment etc

Perhaps the four most common answers by lay people were: divorce and financially strained families; abuse, esp. child abuse; drug use; and secular values among people/families.

c) To what extent do the many crisis of faith which people can experience affect family life?

There was a strong tendency among the 10 priests and 37 lay people who commented on this question to think that crises of life or faith have a strong impact on family life and that, to some extent, the definition of a "crisis" implies an impact on family life.

Several lay people distinguished between faith and other life crises. These respondents tended to point out that crises could lead one closer to God such as reported by this respondent: Any crisis,

faith or otherwise, affects family life. Those who are able to call on Christ and the Holy Spirit for strength will be better able to survive.

9. Other Challenges and Proposals

What other challenges or proposals related to the topics in the above questions do you consider urgent and useful to treat?

Here are the unique answers of individuals responding to this question (NOTE: only responses of a new challenge/proposal area are reported below – In addition, several respondents indicated “none” or criticized the survey for its difficult, complex language.)

Priest 1:

- How can the Church be experienced as a place of healing and support for families that genuinely recognizes and ministers to all struggling with the complex challenges of diverse forms of families today?
- What is the responsibility of the Church to advocate for more family services and supports from their parishes, government?
- How can the Church be effectively involved in defending the rights of migrant families experiencing the separation of immigration, exploitative labor practices, lack of living wage all of which put tremendous pressures on marriage and families etc.?
- How can the Church more adequately address the changing roles of men and women in family relationships?

Priest 2: Economic situations require both parents to work or one parent to have two or three jobs. We need to look at ways to allow families to have more time to enjoy one another.

Priest 3: Seminarians need to be well formed in view all the issues facing marriage and family life today in the US. Ongoing formation of clergy is a necessity not an option on this matter.

Deacon 1: There should not be reluctance to call ecumenical councils more frequently. The early church had its second ecumenical council 56 years after the first Council at Nicea in 325. to say that Vatican II is still being implemented is not a valid reason for not calling ecumenical conferences more frequently. This did not prevent the early church from calling additional ecumenical councils. Arianism, for example, was a continuing problem but the church did not wait until that heresy was eliminated before calling additional councils. The Church is being challenged today and is facing situations which seriously jeopardize its adequate functioning. The Synod on the Family in October 2014 is certainly worthwhile but it will not have the authority of an ecumenical council. There are a number of serious problems facing the Church that can best be dealt by an ecumenical council.

Deacon 2: The democrat party is out of control and the church should encourage people of good faith to run against these ill advice people. These people are sitting in our congregation and need encouragement by the church to run for a political office so they can change the media, because it looks like "the church" needs the people of God in our mist to proclaim what they believe.

Parish Staff 1: No, but my comment and questions are: First, there are good programs like Catholics Returning Home and publicity is good, but the real issue is that many don't get the message. Second, how can we be more consistent in a parish level and get our pastors meeting in homes and gathering within smaller communities? They cannot just be in the parish and publicize Evangelization. They need to move beyond church grounds and the pulpit.

Parish Staff 2: We need more priest or pastor to be with their people. Please don't get me wrong. Our pastor works hard in getting things done right. When I grew up we had our pastors in our home sharing a meal with us. Now we have one priest to do cover all 3 churches. He doesn't have time with us on Sunday, because he off to do another mass a distance away. Many times people are much more comfortable in speaking to a priest if there is a problem than someone who is in the office answering the telephone. My prayer is that more young people will be in a good relationship with Jesus. I saw on TV someone say that Christianity was dying because the young people were not attending church. We have too much distraction in our modern world. How many of our people take the time to pray. Do we take time to say thank you Jesus before we sleep. Maybe we all need to do the basic simply thing, pray as a family a very short prayer. As a parish, print a short prayer to say in the morning and one during the evening. Something that is said everyday will be memorized by all even the little ones. Turn off TV, cell phones, etc, Sit down as a family and share a meal. Maybe our pastors need to say this and challenge their people to do this. I feel very deeply to do this. When we pray in numbers it's more powerful. If we can, give 10 minutes before Mass to pray for our Diocese in the State of Hawaii. A commitment that every pastor and parish will do for a year, and then we can go

worldwide. We need to tell Jesus we want changes and will do our very best. Imagine if all the dioceses in America will do this. Changes will happen.

Diocesan Staff 1: The most important challenge is to present the Church's teaching on marriage and the family with confidence and joy, including those teachings that are considered "difficult." Ambiguity and lack of confidence concerning the basic teaching of *Humanae Vitae* has been a disservice to the faithful, many of whom either do not know or do not understand this teaching. As a result, the pastors of our church community to realize that truth must always be spoken in love, but it must be spoken. We don't need sermons that tickle our ears, we need homilies that strike to core of our natural beings and prepare us for eternal life. Why would any of us want to gain the world, but lose our soul?

"Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile." (CCC 386)

"Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by His Word and by His Spirit, casts a living light on sin..." (CCC 1848)

We need shepherds who guide, not hide.

Diocesan Staff 2: How do we evangelize to fallen away family?

Diocesan Staff 3: How does the Church show they value families more without looking like they value religious life or clergy less?

Lay Person 1: I think the unspoken "big elephant" of our diocese is the complete overreliance on international priests as pastors/administrators of parishes. Half of our parishes are run by priests who are not from our country. The pattern for these parishes is to receive a foreign-born priest who spends Year 1 learning the language and culture and making no changes to the parish; Year 2 is spent making whatever changes he wants and/or is willing to allow the lay leaders to make; Year 3 is spent "detaching" from the parish and preparing to return home. And then the parish must begin this situation all over again with a new international priest who is the next to be assigned to their parish. This is completely unfair to the faithful. A much, much better solution that is evidently unacceptable to even mention is to allow religious and lay leaders to serve as parish "coordinators" who work with priests who serve as sacramental ministers. There are many models and best practices on the mainland to do this, yet it is not a serious consideration here. The faithful suffer greatly due to this episcopal blind eye.

Lay Person 2: Challenges: every parish has strengths and weaknesses, can't we learn from each other? Lack of help on the neighbor islands; volunteers with minimal skills, take their ministry personal/territorial; priests just let people do whatever; priests don't address the problems

Lay Person 3: Yes. While I understand the need, purpose, and function of the U.S. Conference of Bishops I cannot think of too many other national organizations that seem to go out of their way to make harmful public statements. For many non-Catholics, these statements and pronouncements are taken as the Church on teaching or leading, but resolving in absolute terms to impose its will on everyone in the United States. It too often is strident and pompous, acting as if it were an organization in a theocratic State. I find myself more often trying to defend (impossible on the Conference's position on Obamacare) or explain these actions than I do get to talk about the positive points about our Faith and the Church. In my opinion, the Church would be better served if the Conference stopped issuing its public statements of any kind and worked internally getting its message to its Bishops and Priests.

Lay Person 4: The hierarchy in the Church needs to be in touch with the lives of the laity. Women need to be involved in discussions and decision making. There is a disconnect between the rhetoric of the hierarchy and the reality of the lives lived by the laity.

Lay Person 5: I realize the extent of the items taught in seminaries could be impossibly long. It is also hard for priests to keep up with all the advances in psychology, counseling, therapy, etc. to become better pastoralists but something needs to be done to create/train/update the priesthood. Many times I have witnessed and been involved in situations whereby a priest would rather act imperially than use the lay talent available. My military training taught me that I have to trust and listen to my subordinates in order to have an effective unit. Priests seem to be taught or learn

that they only have the responsibility for a parish being good or bad so try to become the sole deciders of what happens in a parish. Many have a difficult time trusting others, and by that I mean lay people. They need better teaching/training on practical matters, trusting others, and group dynamics.

Lay Person 6: Child abuse (not necessarily sexual) within the family. The church has to have a moral teaching on this. Children because they are defenseless need the church to be a voice for them and their suffering. There is no justification for it (that includes I got beaten by my parents and I turned out great).

Lay Person 7: 1) Mandatory Celibacy MUST be eliminated. It has given rise to all kinds of sexual perversion in the Church. Scripturally, "it is not good for man to be alone." Psychologically, it's the same. To force clergy to give up one of God's beautiful gifts of life, (for God's sake??) does not make sense. Protestant Christians have seen the wisdom of allowing marriage as a natural occurrence for their ministers, why is Catholicism so stubborn on this issue?

2) Women SHOULD be allowed to be priests. Again, here is another area where our Protestant brothers/sisters are more sensible than Catholics. I love Pope Francis, but even he is still not open to this common sense idea. How can women be given more decision-making power in the church if the hierarchy above them is still Deacon, Priest/Pastor, Bishop? Women are only being placated; they continue to be disrespected as a whole by keeping them out of the ordained church office. This is NOT what Jesus would have wanted - HIS operations were not gender-biased. Yet historically the church has always pointed to the fact that he only chose men to follow him. This is NOT the same thing as being the religious leader of a community of followers.

Lay Person 8: Once again, the continued allowance of public figures confusing what the Church teaches leads to so much dissolution. Public condemnation needs to be stated. Excommunication is something to be used to help the sinner see their errors. It is not something automatic, but needs to be used after one on one has failed. And state clearly that voting immoral leaders has consequences. Will we hear how the gov. forced homosexual mockery of marriage upon us? Supporting such a person is a rejection of the Church. We didn't hear much when the pres openly rejected the Catholic Church, and over 50% of Catholics re-elected him. What a mockery of God's Church. Why is it Protestants seem comfortable rejecting political figures that mock God, and priests remain silent? Who is to be feared more?...God or man? There are ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES to that answer.

Bishop, know you are in our daily prayers. Be the lion and protector God has put in your heart!

Lay Person 9: I don't know if my comments were of any help; but I think we must be very mindful of how our priests speak to the pews. We need to step up to the tough questions, not just restate the readings in vague terms. The bishop must teach his staff to get the message out consistently, succinctly and clearly. If it means reading a monthly homily from him, then so be it. If it means preapproval for all homilies, so be it. Less "guidance" from lay people, please. Is anyone editing what is being said at mass every week? I believe this is the place to begin.

The reaction of Bishop Larry to Same-Sex Marriage in Hawaii was strong, but fell apart at the parish level. What can be learned from this and how can this knowledge be applied to future challenges? God Bless.

Lay Person 10: There is too much emphasis on the religious and discipline side of Church life, but what about feeding our spirituality. Holy Mother Church asks us to pray every day but many Catholics do not have a basic understanding of the three types of prayer. Prayer life needs to grow as well and Adoration needs to be emphasized more.

Lay Person 11: My biggest proposal would be to provide formation to the men/husbands of the parish. Based on the patriarchal teaching of the Church, we can deduce that the father's first place of discipleship and leadership is the home. The husband/father must be the spiritual leader of the home. To counter divorce and the further spread of same-same marriage, the men have to step up to the plate. Given the right formation and teaching, they will be good mentors and they will help in building a better family structure that others can emulate.

Lay Person 12: Nothing in particular, but I hope that more pastors will have the courage to speak the truth and educate their congregations on what the Church teaches - on what it means to be a Catholic Christian. Don't just give feel good homilies - we don't need you're ok, I'm ok, and we don't need fire and brimstone. We need help in knowing our faith, and guidance on how to live in the world we live in today.