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God's dream for creation? The union of a man and woman, Pope says

by Elise Harris

POPE Francis formally opened the synod of bishops Sunday, telling participants that the union between a man and woman is the foundation of God's plan for the family, and a solution to the many forms of loneliness in today's world.

"This is God's dream for his beloved creation: to see it fulfilled in the loving union between a man and a woman, rejoicing in their shared journey, fruitful in their mutual gift of self," the Pope said in his opening Mass for the Synod of Bishops.

He explained that this plan is the same one presented in the day's Gospel for Mark, when Jesus says "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'"

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh."

Pope Francis' comments were made during his Oct. 4 Mass marking the official opening of this year's Ordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family.

Set to last from Oct. 4-25, this year's synod follows the theme "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the modern world," and follows last year's extraordinary synod on the family, which focused on pastoral challenges regarding family life.

In his homily, Francis noted how the first reading from Genesis, which recounts the story of creation, speaks to us of Adam's experience of solitude before the creation of Eve.

Although Adam was given dominion over the garden and the other creatures, he "felt alone, because there was not found a helper fit for him. He was lonely."

The Pope then pointed to several forms of loneliness in modern society, and said that despite living in a globalized world filled with mansions and skyscrapers, the warmth within families today is diminishing.

While people have great ambitions and many different forms of entertainment, they have little time



Pope Francis celebrates the opening Mass for the Ordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family Credit: Daniel Ibañez/CNA.

or freedom to enjoy them, he noted.

"There is a deep and growing interior emptiness," he said, adding that "the number of people who feel lonely keeps growing, as does the number of those who are caught up in selfishness, gloominess, destructive violence and slavery to pleasure and money."

Like Adam, the world today experiences power but also vulnerability and loneliness, Francis observed, explaining that this fits the image of the modern family.

"People are less and less serious about building a solid and fruitful relationship of love. Love which is lasting, faithful, conscientious, stable and fruitful is increasingly looked down upon, viewed as a quaint relic of the past," he said.

"It would seem that the most advanced societies are the very ones which have the lowest birth-rates and the highest percentages of abortion, divorce, suicide, and social and environmental pollution."

Pope Francis then noted how God was pained by Adam's loneliness when he said that "it is not

good that the man should be alone," and created a suitable partner for him.

God's words, the Pope said, "show that God did not create us to live in sorrow or to be alone. He made men and women for happiness, to share their journey with someone who complements them...to love and to be loved, and to see their love bear fruit in children."

Francis referred to how in the Gospel, Jesus was questioned about divorce by the crowd, who practiced and established it as an "inviolable fact," and wanted to trap him.

Jesus responds in "a straightforward and unexpected way" by bringing everything back to the beginning of creation, he said. By doing this, Jesus teaches us "that God blesses human love, that it is he who joins the hearts of two people who love one another, he who joins them in unity and indissolubility."

Turning to the role of the family, the Pope said that Jesus' command to "let not man put asunder" what God himself has joined is an

exhortation to believers "to overcome every form of individualism and legalism which conceals a narrow self-centeredness and a fear of accepting the true meaning of the couple and of human sexuality in God's plan."

Francis explained that for God, "marriage is not some adolescent utopia, but a dream without which his creatures will be doomed to solitude! Indeed, being afraid to accept this plan paralyzes the human heart."

Paradoxically, there are many people who ridicule this plan while continuing to be attracted to true, steadfast and faithful love, he said. "We see people chase after fleeting loves while dreaming of true love; they chase after carnal pleasures but desire total self-giving."

Quoting a text by Benedict XVI while he was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Francis said that in Genesis, "forbidden pleasures lost their attraction at the very moment they stopped being forbidden."

"Even if they are pushed to the extreme and endlessly renewed, they prove dull, for they are finite

realities, whereas we thirst for the infinite, he observed.

Francis then said the Church is called to carry out her mission regarding family life in fidelity, truth and love.

In fidelity to her master, the Church is called to defend faithful love and encourage families whose married life reveals of God's own love, he said.

The Church is also called to defend "the sacredness of life, of every life; in defending the unity and indissolubility of the conjugal bond."

He said the Church's mission must be carried out in truth, which doesn't change with passing fads or popular opinions. Truth, the Pope said, "protects individuals and humanity as a whole from the temptation of self-centeredness and from turning fruitful love into sterile selfishness, faithful union into temporary bonds."

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Finally, Pope Francis said that for the Church to carry out her mission in charity doesn't mean pointing fingers or judging others, but rather implies being conscious of her duty to seek out and care for wounded couples "with the balm of acceptance and mercy."

Quoting a speech of St. John Paul II from 1978, the Pope stressed that "error and evil must always be condemned and opposed; but the man who falls or who errs must be understood and loved."

The Church, he said, "must search out these persons, welcome and accompany them, for a Church with closed doors betrays herself and her mission, and, instead of being a bridge, becomes a roadblock."

Francis closed his homily by asking the Lord to accompany and guide the Church and the synod fathers during the upcoming discussions, and entrusted the gathering to intercession of Mary and her "most chaste spouse," St. Joseph.

CBC Youth Policy and Guidelines' Awareness Workshop - Alotau Diocese

ALOTAUDIocese had a week-long youth workshop on CBC Youth Policy and Guidelines from Sunday 27 September to Sunday 4th October 2015.

It was not planned in the CBC Youth and Laity Commission calendar but Sr. Crescentina, the Diocesan Youth Coordinator of Alotau really wanted it as she is new to the country and this is her first time to work with the youth. Fr. Shanthi Chacko Puthussery PIME accepted her invitation and he was the facilitator of the eight days of workshop.

Opening Holy Mass of the workshop was at the provincial prison with all the inmates and staff and it was organised very well.

Fr. Shanthi preached a very good inspiring and a moving homily and was very happy to shake the hands of almost all the inmates of the prison after celebrating the Holy Mass.

Later, Fr. Shanthi reminded all about the talks and respectful gestures of Pope Francis during his visits to the prisons and it is an act of genuine love of God and neighbour.

47 young people participated in the workshop from all

the parishes except from Woodlark parish, despite the difficulties of finding the boats and rough weather.

Five MSI aspirants and postulants, one seminarian and two religious sisters too participated in it. According to Fr. Shanthi the remarkable characteristic of Alotau diocese is that every parish participates in the diocesan formation activities in spite of all the difficulties of rough sea and getting a boat, comparing several other dioceses in Papua New Guinea which Alotau diocese can be really proud of!!!

To signify the 'Month of Rosary' 1st and 2nd October evenings the participants made processions with Rosary prayers to two different communities of the Cathedral Parish and prayed another Rosary with the respective communities.

It was a very good outreach experience. Also each one was asked to pray a Rosary while he/she was just walking in the market place in order to learn the need of concentration in prayer.

While most of the participants were sharing their experiences of saying a Rosary individually at the market place found it very difficult due to the

fact of meeting with the relatives, friends and others. Each participant could notice environmental difficulties and contextual factors of the market place too but each participant experienced and learnt the need of having a proper concentration in prayer with this experience.

Another novelty of the workshop was doing an interview with a stranger at a public place asking a question "what are the best qualities of a good leader?"

There were several appropriate qualities of a leader came out from the interviews and most repeated qualities were true love, care, trusting relationships, be an example, sincerity, transparency, knowing the people whom one serves and having proper organisation skills.

With these interviews participants could learn better "the expected outcome of the CBC Youth Policy and Guidelines."

All in all, the workshop was with full of exciting exercises and each participant has enjoyed with personal prayers, mediation sessions, reception of the Sacrament of reconciliation, Holy Hour, inner healing prayer and Holy Masses.

Personal conversation with

Fr. Shanthi has been very much encouraging and inspiring although some of the participants missed the opportunity due to the time constrain.

Sr. Crescentina truly deserved a special recognition and applause for her hard work for organising it as a new Diocesan Youth Coordinator and Bp. Rolando Santos, bishop of Alotau did thank her and encouraged her during the closing ceremony of the workshop.

Bp. Rolando along with the participants thanked Fr. Shanthi accepting the invitation and facilitating the workshop with his experiences and skills.

In a very special way Bp. Rolando also thanked every participant for accepting the invitation and participating in this workshop after making a long and tough journey by the boat coming from different parishes.

He expressed his gratitude to the Diocesan Finance Office and others who generously helped the workshop. He encouraged every participant to practice what each one has learnt during this week and reminded all to share with the other young people of the youth groups whom each one represents at the parish community.



The three-day festivities of the Bicentenary (200 years) Birth of St. John Bosco ("Don Bosco" as he was fondly called) last 14th to the 16th of August 2015 at Vunabosco Agro-Technical Secondary School, Kokopo - ENBP, was truly a celebration of life - Don Bosco's life that was lived with the young and spent for the young.

This celebration was an international event commemorated and celebrated all throughout the world where the presence of Don Bosco is found. And here in Papua New Guinea, we commemorated and celebrated it in the way we know... PNG style.

Friday, 14th of August, the first day of celebration focused on the theme: "Youth in Society". This was a proclamation of Don Bosco's belief in the youth that when properly formed into good Christians they could become productive and honest citizens that could transform the family, the Church and the society for the better.

Providing an environment for our students and invited student-representatives from the different educational institutions here in the province where they could learn and practice good manners, respect and appreciate the gift of each other and given an opportunity where they could deepen their religious faith had turned this day into something memorable for each of them. Organizing activities that brought out the best in the students through wholesome interactions, fun and sharing ones talents in dancing, singing, drama and even in school yell have shown that there's nothing to be afraid of our youth - the future of our society. What they needed was an opportunity to prove and be challenged...

The day started with a Thanksgiving Mass presided by Fr. David Buenaventura, SDB who was invited also for the occasion of the 25th Founding Anniversary of the school. He was the second Rector of Vunabosco way back in the early 1990s. He challenged the students in his homily to be saints. How? According to the mind of Don Bosco, by giving them an opportunity to be honest citizens by becoming good Christians first. How? By doing their ordinary duties, extra-ordinarily well and with cheerfulness. The many saintly members of the family of Don Bosco have proven this to be true like St. Dominic Savio, Blessed Zepherino Namuncura, Blessed Laura Vicuña and many others.

A variety show followed after the Holy Mass where talents of student-representatives from Malabunga, Kerevat, OLSH Vunapope, Rapolo Seminary, St. Peter's Chanel College and the host school, Vunabosco, was showcased. The song "Wantok Bosco" sang at the end of the mass and was repeated at the end of the program was a uniting song that brought students to their feet, dancing and swinging their colored neckerchief as they sang the song at the top of their voice. The effect was aptly described by Mr. Ouen, a lecturer at St. Peter's Chanel Teachers College when he shared: "It was so amazing that it made the hair on my neck stand....".

Saturday, the 15th of August, the second day of the celebration was an open house that focused on the projects and skills of the students as they showed off to their parents, friends, relatives and those interested public their technical skills and projects in the different technical courses offered: Carpentry, Motor Vehicle Mechanic, Maintenance Fitting and Machining, Welding, Electrical and Computer Technology. Students were exceedingly proud of what they could do.

The Synod of Bishops - Pastoral Care of Family

By Fr. Shanthi Chacko Puthussery PIME Secretary of Commission for Youth and Laity

BISHOP Anton Bal, bishop of Kundiawa diocese, the Deputy Bishop for Family Life Apostolate from the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands participates in the Synod of Bishops, to be held in Rome from 4 to 25 October 2015.

The complete list of synod participants and papal appointees was released Sept. 15 by the Vatican. Pope Francis' new additions included a total of 279 cardinals, bishops, and priests from all over the world, who will be able to actively take part in the synod, voting on documents and specific issues.

In addition to the 166 synod members elected by their national bishops' conferences, 22 heads of Eastern Catholic churches, 25 heads of Vatican congregations and councils and 10 heads of men's religious orders, Pope Francis appointed an additional 45 synod fathers to take part in the Oct. 4-25 gathering.

The ordinary synod will include many more people than last year's extraordinary synod, which met over the course of 15 days. The ordinary synod will bring together nine additional leaders of Eastern Catholic churches

and six more "fraternal delegates" from the Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant communities. The pope also named 45 voting members of the synod — up from 26 last year — and he appointed 51 observers and 23 experts, including a total of 18 married couples. At the extraordinary synod, there were 38 observers and 16 experts, which included a total of 14 couples.

Almost half of the 45 papal appointed voting members are from Europe with another 15 from the Americas, three from Africa, two from Oceania and one from Asia. At the extraordinary synod, almost all appointees were from Europe, and none of the papal appointees were from North America or other English-speaking countries. Pope Francis ensured that all the members of the synod's general council would be present at the October meeting.

Among the 51 observers and 23 experts appointed by the pope, the majority are laymen and laywomen, including the married couples. The non-voting 42 men and 32 women represent a more geographically diverse mix with fairly equal representation for Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East, and a slightly higher number from Europe.

The synod's voting members include officials from the Roman Curia, heads of the

Eastern churches, and archbishops of smaller Eastern Catholic churches, including Byzantine Archbishop William C. Skurla of Pittsburgh.

Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and Australian Cardinal George Pell, prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, were to attend as officials of the Roman Curia.

Pope Francis will serve as president of the synod and will be assisted by Cardinals Andre Vingt-Trois of Paris; Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila; Raymundo Damasceno Assis of Aparecida, Brazil, and Wilfrid F. Napier of Durban, South Africa.

As he did at last year's extraordinary synod, Hungarian

Cardinal Peter Erdo of Esztergom-Budapest will serve as relator with the duty of introducing the discussion and synthesizing its results, and Italian Archbishop Bruno Forte of Chieti-Vasto will serve again as special secretary.

The ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops is focusing on "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World." It will draw up pastoral guidelines responding to previous discussions looking at the challenges facing today's families. It is expected the pope will then write a post-synodal apostolic exhortation that takes up the themes of the synod and develops them further.



Bp Francesco Sarego

Bishops attend a Pastoral leadership workshop



Bishops who attended the workshop.

By LOUISE MARY KODOR

“THE Bishops must be there for the people just as Jesus is”.

This was stated by Bishop Rolando Santos, CM of Alotau Dioces

He made this statement at last week's workshop for the Bishops at the Emmaus Conference Centre, Don Bosco Technological Institute, Port Moresby.

Bishops from Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands gathered for a week-long pastoral leadership workshop.

The aim of the workshop was to help the Bishops to re-evaluate, reflect and empower them to lead the people.

Bishop Rolando said the workshop was important as it helps the Bishops to better serve the people and how to shepherd them and bring people closer to God.

“It is important that we know how to reach out to people and take care of them but they must also take care of the shepherd,” he said.

The workshop gets its theme from the story of the good shepherd.

The idea of the theme is to help the bishops to guide the people.

“If the shepherd is lost, then the sheep will be everywhere.

If we are not careful, wrong decisions will be made and this is a big challenge for us.

We must be able to shepherd the people during this time,” he said.

According to Fr. Arthur Ledger who was the facilitator, the reason for the workshop and the theme is to help address the problems in PNG using the image of the good shepherd.

Couples key towards discipleship

COUPLES For Christ (CFC) is all about family and how husbands and wives can work together and lead their lives towards true discipleship in the life of the Catholic Church in the country.

These reassuring words were made during the CFC 19th anniversary marking yet another significant achievement through this ministry with the Lae Catholic Diocese.

CFC Area Coordinator, Br

Boy Nunez, said the aim of the CFC is to conduct mission-life programs and thanked all who had been instrumental in setting the CFC ministry in Lae, Morobe Province.

“It is not only having a personal relationship with Christ but also growing in holiness,” Br Boy said during the anniversary celebrations held at the Lae Coronation College.

Br Boy said God showed values of how to show love to

others and this was no different to this ministry as it continues to see significant spiritual enrichment in the lives of its members.

CFC through prayer, bible studies and other programs has really strengthened their relationship with Christ and evangelizing to bless other people.

Lae Catholic Diocese Bishop, Christian Blouin, also shared similar thoughts and said, “Since Couples For Christ

was first introduced in the diocese, I always say you are a family together. But you also belong to the diocese.

But CFC, you are joined together but every time the diocese needs you, you are there.”

Meantime the 19th anniversary was marked with colourful contemporary and traditional dancing performances, dramas and food shared with those who attended this milestone event.



Don Bosco celebrates..

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The 16th of August, the birthday of Don Bosco, was truly a day of thanksgiving marked with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided by His Excellency, Archbishop Francesco Panfilo, SDB, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Rabaul. In his homily, he explained that the Church proposed Don Bosco to all of us as a “Father and Teacher of the young” not only to venerate but for us to imitate. Don Bosco loved the young not because they were good but because they could become good. He challenged the parents in the words of Don Bosco: “It is not enough that we love the young, the young must know that they are loved.” He stressed that this required additional efforts from the side of the parents and that they should be ready to pay personally through the spirit of self-sacrifice not only in believing nor imposing on children, but by putting it into practice.

His challenged to the young was what Don Bosco would tell them: “Be young and stay young!” Staying young meant fighting against evil and sin in you and against you. It's not the age or sickness that makes a person old but the dispositions towards evil and sin.’

The mass was followed by the Cultural Presentation of the students where the best of PNG culture was being showed off... not Tolai or Pomio or ARoB or New Ireland or Manus or West New Britain or the Mixed... but Papua New Guinea. Some parents have joined in the “sing-sing” as a show of celebrating and support to their children. The Filipino Salesian Cooperators have also joined in the celebration by the rendition of some of their Filipino Folk Dance.

Indeed, the three-days celebration was a PNG expression of how Don Bosco was truly loved... for we have been loved by Don Bosco first across space and time. This, we know.



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St Peter Channel mark Care of Creation day

By Sr. Daisy Anne Lisania MSC

ALL around the world, the encyclical of Pope Francis, 'Laudato Si' is being put into practice whether in a parish, local community, institution or organization.

This was made even more meaningful when His Holiness proclaimed September 1 as a Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

St Peter Chanel Catholic College of Secondary Teacher Education in the Archdiocese of Rabaul took heed to the Pope's call when together with the staff and students, teachers put up activities to mark the day.

Adorned with green t-shirts with 'Care of Creation' written on and green meri blouses, they were ready to be protectors of Mother Earth.

Although they celebrated on 4 September, the message was loud and clear- they want to carry on this



Archbishop Panfilo delivers his speech to the students and Staff of St Peter Chanel Catholic College of Secondary Teacher Education.

day for years to come as was stated by the Chief Executive Officer, John Maidang.

Present to witness the day were Archbishop Emeritus Karl Hesse MSC, Sr. Anita MSC, Sr. Susan

Markus MSC, parents and citizens who reside in the campus.

The Guest Speaker of the Day was Archbishop Francesco Panfilo.

Speaking on the overview of the

encyclical, he challenged all present to live the virtue of stewardship towards creation but the highlight of his message was from his Pastoral letter to the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Rabaul issued on the Solemnity of the Assumption.

The practical approaches include;

1. the church giving back land to people esp. from large plantations (Karlai and Putput) but that people are willing to share this land with each other as good stewards, and not to be selfish with it because God is the NAMBAWAN PAPA GRAUN.

2. Low income housing to provide homes to people, this will be built at the back of Kalabond Sports field.

3. the restructuring of the agreement of the Palm Oil Project of Sigite Mukus in West Pomio, for environmental friendly project and a consensus with parties concerned.

Speaking of disposing of land of large plantations, Archbishop

Francesco said; "The Church is not against the return of its lands to the people, in fact my predecessors have generously given up portions of prime land for free to the people of Takubar"

Drawing from Pope Francis words, he concluded by asking all present to work together with the bishop to make these practical approaches become a reality for the Common Good.

"For this reason I appeal to everyone to put aside personal interests and think about the good of all, especially of our children. "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us"? The Church does not have any other interest than "to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good" (LS 188).

The day ended with activities like pantomimes, songs, dances and speeches all related to the Care of Creation.

PNG & SI Catholic Bishops celebrate 50 years of diocese establishment



5 reps from each Archdiocese.

By Louise Mary Kodor

SUNDAY 27th September marked a very special day for the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The Catholic bishops from the dioceses of the two countries launched the celebration of 50 years of the establishment of the dioceses of PNG and Solomon Islands.

The launching of the jubilee attracted Catholic faithfuls in Port Moresby who packed the Mary Help of Christian's shrine at Don Bosco Technological

Institute (DBTI) for the Eucharistic mass which was celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Michael Banach.

Speaking to the congregation, the Nuncio highlighted the history of the Catholic Church in PNG and how it has been an authentic model to lead the people of God.

"For the last few years, the Catholic Church in PNG and Solomon Islands has been faithful to the words of Jesus, to do good, and lead others to the truth," he said.

The Catholic Church has deep roots in all parts of PNG and Solomon Islands

with the establishment of dioceses, 19 in PNG and 3 in Solomon Islands.

As part of the celebration, 5 Bishops representing the 4 regions of PNG and 1 from the diocese of Honiara in Solomon Islands were invited to share their experience and contribution of their region to the church in PNG, Solomon Islands and the universal church.

The Nuncio applauded the Church for its continuous service and urged the people to become involved with their parishes and contribute positively to building the country and most importantly be proud of the Catholic faith.

Saint Augustine's parish turns 14

THE Saint Augustine's parish of the Lae Catholic Diocese marked 14 years anniversary in colour and style on August 30, 2015 at its University of Technology chapel grounds.

Parish Chaplain, Fr Philemon Korake, who led the anniversary mass and addressed a filled-to-capacity chapel saying the parish has come a long way and seen significant spiritual growth.

The 14th anniversary celebrations was accompanied by traditional singing groups who adorned the day with singing to coincide with the parish's Feast Day of Saint Augustine of Hippo, and blessing of its new parish council executives.

Fr Philemon who also led the anniversary mass said faith within the St Augustine's parish has really grown over the years since the establishment of the chapel within the university campus.

"The faith here in the campus has really grown in the last 14 years. The Catholics along with other denominations were assigned a specific time to use the Christian Centre for worship on campus. Once this place (St Augustine's) parish was established, the faith has really grown because the community feel that they have a place to worship. On Sundays our chapels are filled to capacity and people sitting outside the chapel is a

testimony of how this parish has grown in its faith," St Augustine's Parish Chaplain Fr Philemon said.

He said working together in building a vibrant community at Saint Augustine's Catholic parish will be the main focus for its parishioners within the Lae Diocese in 2015.

Fr Philemon Korake after years of studies in the country and abroad was ordained as priest of St Augustine's parish in 2012 and finds his work very encouraging with the 25 male students who are accommodated at the chapel grounds and attend studies at UNITECH.

The new council executives of St Augustine are Chairman Chris Kobal, Vice Chairman Andrew Sariman, Secretary Joy Toniu and Treasurer Wilson Kobal.

Fr Philemon urged the new parish executives to reflect on the themes of love, truth and freedom to guide them during their three-year voluntary term.

St Augustine's new Chairman Chris Kobal said he has held an executive council role in previous years and is pleased to serve and believes this is a divine calling for him to serve in his parish.

"I hope my calling as the new parish council chairman will see many good things to come in the near future. I am about to start my new role," new parish Chairman Chris Kobal said.