



SUMMARY OF SURVEY

Provided by the Diocese of St. Petersburg
Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch, Bishop
in preparation for the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops

INTRODUCTION

In October 2013, I received a copy of the Preparatory Document in anticipation of the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod on the subject of *Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*.

After consulting with members of my Presbyteral Council and various Chancery officials, I decided to carry out the spirit of the Preparatory Document by offering a survey to adult members of the faithful throughout the Diocese of St. Petersburg. The survey to be offered in our diocese would be a simplified version of the questionnaire included at the end of the Preparatory Document. It was agreed that such a revision would encourage a greater number of the faithful to participate.

Over a period of three weeks, five separate versions of the survey were drafted. Each version was reviewed and edited by members of the aforementioned diocesan bodies, with the fifth draft serving as the final version, which was published on our diocesan website (www.dosp.org) and in the bulletins of our 74 parishes and 7 pastoral missions. Our diocesan radio station (www.spiritfm905.com) provided multiple media advertisements encouraging the faithful to take the survey, including actively-practicing Catholics and those who practiced their faith either marginally or not at all. In two separate “blog” entries, I also encouraged participation by as many as possible. At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to invite inactive Catholic family members and friends to participate.

Before it was activated, the survey was converted into an “online” format, which allowed participants to anonymously answer questions from their home computers or other electronic devices. Paper copies of the surveys were sent to pastors and administrators of all parishes and missions, for those who were uncomfortable with the use of a computer. Answers from the paper copies would be entered by volunteers into the online version of the survey, to allow for easier compilation of results. The survey was offered in both English and Spanish.

The survey opened on November 22, 2013 and was available to the faithful of the diocese until December 31, 2013. After it was removed from the diocesan website, Chancery officials, together with members of the diocesan Pastoral and Presbyteral Councils, worked together to summarize the answers received during the six-week period in which the survey was offered.

STRUCTURE OF THE SURVEY

While the original questionnaire in the Preparatory Document consisted solely of essay-format questions, my consultants agreed that the survey presented to the faithful of our diocese should include several multiple-choice items, in addition to essay questions.

In its final version, the survey consisted of 45 total items, including 7 questions concerning demographic information on each respondent, 25 multiple-choice opinion statements and 13 essay questions, all corresponding to the nine categories covered in the questionnaire at the end of the Preparatory Document. Paper versions of the survey in both English and Spanish are enclosed for your reference.

Questions included on our diocesan survey were listed under the following categories:

- I. The Catholic Church's teachings on the family, as noted in Sacred Scripture and Church documents
- II. The Catholic Church's teaching regarding marriage
- III. The Catholic Church's assistance to the family in handing on the Catholic faith
- IV. The Catholic Church's care of those in diverse relationships
- V. The Catholic Church's concern for those in same-sex unions
- VI. The Catholic Church's education of children in diverse family settings
- VII. The openness of married couples to new life
- VIII. Relationships between individuals and their families
- IX. Other thoughts and reflections

PARTICIPATION BY THE FAITHFUL

During the six weeks in which the survey was available, 6560 persons took the English-language version and 255 persons took the Spanish-language version, for a total of **6815** partially- or totally-completed surveys.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

From the responses provided by the faithful, the following information was discovered:

Age (Item #1)

Out of 6815 respondents to this item:

260 (4%) were from 18 to 29 years of age

1360 (20%) were from 30 to 49 years of age

3165 (46%) were from 50 to 69 years of age

2030 (30%) were 70 or more years of age

Gender (Item #2)

Out of 6814 respondents to this item:

2444 (36%) were male

4370 (64%) were female

Geographic Locations of Respondents (Item #3)

The Diocese of St. Petersburg covers five counties on the west-central coast of Florida, with the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater being the most populous areas of the diocese, with the greatest number of Catholic parishes. The greatest number of respondents came from these three cities, although all five counties were well-represented.

Parish Registration Status (Items #4 and 5)

Out of 6811 respondents to this item:

5810 (85%) reported being formally-registered members of Catholic parishes in the diocese

1001 (15%) stated that they were not formally-registered members of Catholic parishes in the diocese. Some respondents never registered in a parish while others were visitors to the Diocese of St. Petersburg at the time the survey was offered.

Mass Attendance (Item #6)

Out of 6807 respondents to this item:

619 (9%) reported that they attend Mass on a daily basis

2534 (37%) reported that they attend Mass on Sundays, holy days of obligation and on some weekdays

2779 (41%) reported that they attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation

516 (8%) reported that they attend Mass at least once per month but not every Sunday

170 (2%) reported that they attend Mass less than once per month

189 (3%) reported that they attend Mass either rarely or never

Marital Status (Item #7)

Out of 6806 respondents to this item:

739 (11%) were single (never married)

4166 (61%) were currently married

615 (9%) had been divorced and never remarried

298 (4%) had been divorced and remarried in the Catholic Church

245 (4%) had been divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church

628 (9%) were either widows or widowers

115 (2%) answered "other" when given the option. This includes but is not limited to those currently cohabitating with a person of the opposite sex outside of marriage and those in formal or casual same-sex relationships.

ANSWERS TO SURVEY QUESTIONS (Items #8 to 45)

I. The Catholic Church's teachings on the family, as noted in Sacred Scripture and Church documents

8. I think that most Catholics understand the Catholic Church's teachings on the role of the family in our society.

Out of 6321 respondents to this item:

917 (15%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

3199 (51%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1531 (24%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

586 (9%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

88 (1%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

9. As far as I know, most Catholics accept the Catholic Church's teachings on the role of the family in our society.

Out of 6318 respondents to this item:

571 (9%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

2884 (46%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1984 (31%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

731 (12%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

148 (2%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

10. I think that the Catholic Church provides its members with adequate teaching on how Christian families should live.

Out of 6315 respondents to this item:

1162 (18%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

2634 (42%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1673 (27%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

761 (12%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

85 (1%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

11. From what I can tell, most non-Catholics are accepting of the Catholic Church's teaching on the role of family in our society.

Out of 6307 respondents to this item:

249 (4%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1928 (30%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

2094 (33%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

1550 (25%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

486 (8%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

12. Essay Question - Required: What factors in our culture make it challenging for people to accept the Catholic Church's teaching on how Christian families should live?

Of the 6085 responses to this required item, the following themes were most prominent:

1. There is concern over the vast influence of the media in promoting moral values contrary to those upheld by the Church.
2. Many respondents reported a disagreement with and/or a misunderstanding of the Church's moral teachings.
3. Church leaders are perceived as "rigid" and ineffective in their response to family life and needs.

13. Essay Question - Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (The Catholic Church's teachings on the family, as noted in Sacred Scripture and Church documents)

Of the 2119 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. There is a tendency among Catholics to be selective of which Catholic teachings and rules they wish to follow.
2. The Church's teaching on the family and on moral issues must be presented more strongly, clearly and consistently at the local level. There is a lack of understanding in these areas by the faithful.
3. The Church's understanding of "family" needs to be more inclusive and not narrowly defined.

II. The Catholic Church's teaching regarding marriage

14. I accept the traditional understanding that marriage exists only between a man and a woman.

Out of 5925 respondents to this item:

4179 (70%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

601 (10%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

482 (8%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

569 (10%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

94 (2%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

15. Most Catholics whom I know accept the traditional understanding that marriage exists only between a man and a woman.

Out of 5926 respondents to this item:

2590 (44%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1995 (33%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

932(16%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

283 (5%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

126 (2%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

16. I believe that the Catholic Church is very helpful to non-practicing Catholics who wish to celebrate their marriages in the Catholic Church.

Out of 5923 respondents to this item:

882 (15%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1821 (31%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1151 (19%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

1021 (17%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

1048 (18%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

17. Essay Question - Required: What are some factors in our society that challenge the traditional understanding that marriage exists only between a man and a woman?

Of the 5888 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. There is a general acceptance of same-sex marriage by members of our society.
2. There has been government approval of same-sex marriages in many U.S. states.
3. There is a considerable promotion of same-sex unions by the media and in our culture.

18. Essay Question - Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (The Catholic Church's teaching regarding marriage)

Of the 2070 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. Most respondents still believe that marriage is between a man and a woman.
2. The annulment process is too difficult.
3. Marriage is for procreation. Couples who intend to marry should be open to the possibility of bringing children into the world.

III. The Catholic Church's assistance to the family in handing on the Catholic faith

19. I think that the Catholic Church is successful in encouraging the practice of the Catholic faith among those couples preparing for the sacrament of marriage.

Out of 5759 respondents to this item:

- 1495 (26%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement
- 2518 (44%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement
- 834 (14%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement
- 326 (6%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement
- 586 (10%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

20. I think that the Catholic Church effectively teaches families to pray together, especially in light of the challenges of today's culture.

Out of 5759 respondents to this item:

- 1281 (22%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement
- 2290 (40%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement
- 1416 (25%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement
- 565 (10%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement
- 207 (3%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

21. I believe that most Catholic couples I know have done well in passing on their Catholic faith and values to their children.

Out of 5759 respondents to this item:

- 700 (12%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement
- 2427 (42%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement
- 1775 (31%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement
- 723 (13%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement
- 134 (2%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

22. As far as I can tell, our Catholic parishes, schools, universities, hospitals and other Catholic organizations have done well in teaching families how to live according to the values of the Gospel.

Out of 5757 respondents to this item:

- 890 (15%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement
- 2462 (43%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement
- 1473 (26%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement
- 653 (11%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement
- 279 (5%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

23. Essay Question - Required: How can married couples and families do a better job of sharing the Catholic Church's view of marriage and family life to others?

Of the 5728 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. Couples and families must "lead by example," by living their faith as positive role models and sharing their values and beliefs.
2. Families should participate in small communities of families, emphasizing open dialogue, faith formation, Scripture study and discussion, supporting each other, and providing help to families in need.
3. The Church needs to offer family faith formation "classes" to include open dialogue, parental involvement and participation, and emphasis on family prayer.

24. Essay Question - Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (The Catholic Church's assistance to the family in handing on the Catholic faith)

Of the 1653 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. There needs to be a strengthening of faith formation efforts, including youth ministry. Parents, clergy and lay ministers must all play a part in these efforts.
2. We need to make education through our Catholic schools more available to middle class families. In addition, we need to promote a greater Catholic identity in our Catholic schools.
3. The Church needs to promote adult education and community involvement. There needs to be greater outreach to young couples, young families, and single adults through support groups, spiritual enrichment, parenting classes, etc.

IV. The Catholic Church's care of those in diverse relationships

25. Most couples whom I know believe in waiting until they are married before living together.

Out of 5660 respondents to this item:

- 176 (3%) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement
- 650 (11%) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement
- 1744 (31%) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement
- 2919 (52%) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement
- 172 (3%) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

26. I know of many Catholics who have divorced and remarried either in a civil marriage ceremony or another non-Catholic ceremony.

Out of 5660 respondents to this item:

- 2233 (39%) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement
- 2330 (41%) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement
- 436 (8%) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement
- 151 (3%) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement
- 511 (9%) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

27. I believe that the Catholic Church provides adequate support to divorced Catholics.

Out of 5659 respondents to this item:

- 280 (5%) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement
- 1086 (19%) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement
- 1479 (26%) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement
- 1737 (31%) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement
- 1078 (19%) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

28. I believe that the Catholic Church provides adequate support to Catholics who have divorced and remarried either in a civil marriage ceremony or another non-Catholic ceremony.

Out of 5657 respondents to this item:

- 210 (4%) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement
- 893 (16%) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement
- 1533 (27%) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement
- 1710 (30%) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement
- 1312 (23%) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

29. If the Catholic Church were to simplify its process for annulments of marriages, I believe that this would greatly help those who have been divorced and have remarried in a civil marriage ceremony or another non-Catholic ceremony.

Out of 5655 respondents to this item:

2380 (**42%**) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement

1607 (**28%**) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement

534 (**10%**) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement

522 (**9%**) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement

612 (**11%**) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

30. Essay Question – Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (The Catholic Church’s care of those in diverse relationships)

Of the 3064 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. The process of annulment needs to be simplified.
2. There is much misinformation concerning the Church’s teaching on divorce and the process of annulment.
3. There is a need for compassion and a loving welcome for those living in diverse relationships, especially concerning the reception of the Eucharist.

V. The Catholic Church's concern for those in same-sex unions

31. I believe that the Catholic Church shows compassion and concern toward persons who are in same-sex unions.

Out of 5628 respondents to this item:

- 503** (9%) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement
- 1419** (25%) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement
- 1106** (20%) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement
- 1501** (27%) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement
- 1099** (19%) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

32. From what I can tell, the Catholic Church is accepting of children who have been adopted by same-sex couples.

Out of 5628 respondents to this item:

- 523** (9%) reported that they “agree strongly” with this statement
- 1225** (22%) reported that they “agree somewhat” with this statement
- 624** (11%) reported that they “disagree somewhat” with this statement
- 751** (13%) reported that they “disagree strongly” with this statement
- 2505** (45%) reported that they were either “uncertain” or did not wish to answer

33. Essay Question – Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (The Catholic Church's concern for those in same-sex relationships)

Of the 2835 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. In reference to homosexuals, members of the faithful need to adopt the attitude of Pope Francis, who once stated, “Who am I to judge?”
2. There appears to be no concern toward those persons in a same-gender relationship. The frequently-used statement: “Love the sinner but not the sin” seems to be the simplistic and singular attempt of demonstrating the Church's concern.
3. Several respondents expressed mixed feelings about those in same-sex unions, asserting that we should respect them as individuals, while not promoting same-sex unions.

VI. The Catholic Church's education of children in diverse family settings

34. As far as I can tell, most children in my neighborhood have been born and raised in traditional families with both biological parents in the home.

Out of 5609 respondents to this item:

1191 (21%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1841 (33%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1257 (22%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

892 (16%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

428 (8%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

35. Most Catholic parents whom I know provide a religious education for their children either through the Catholic schools or through parish faith formation programs.

Out of 5608 respondents to this item:

1094 (20%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

2623 (47%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1177 (21%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

418 (7%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

296 (5%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

36. As far as I can tell, the Catholic Church effectively provides religious education and support to children of single parents.

Out of 5609 respondents to this item:

1407 (25%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

2085 (37%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

648 (12%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

325 (6%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

1144 (20%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

37. As far as I know, the Catholic Church effectively provides religious education and support to children whose parents have been divorced and remarried either in a civil marriage ceremony or another non-Catholic ceremony.

Out of 5608 respondents to this item:

1069 (19%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1822 (33%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

735 (13%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

393 (7%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

1589 (28%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

38. Essay Question – Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (*The Catholic Church's education of children in diverse family settings*)

Of the 2006 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. There is a great need of education to the families of the community to share the support systems in place for diverse families so that they can see Catholic education as affordable with the use of scholarships and other resources.
2. The Church needs to be welcoming to all by having the appropriate personnel to accurately teach the truth, while being accepting of all persons.
3. Faith formation programs need to better serve our children by way of teaching the faith.

VII. The openness of married couples to new life

39. Most Catholics whom I know have a good understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings regarding Natural Family Planning and other natural means of birth control.

Out of 5583 respondents to this item:

742 (13%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1794 (32%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1352 (24%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

1320 (24%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

375 (7%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

40. Most Catholics whom I know accept the Catholic Church's teachings regarding Natural Family Planning and other natural means of birth control.

Out of 5583 respondents to this item:

185 (3%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

556 (10%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

1414 (25%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

3113 (56%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

315 (6%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

41. I believe that the Catholic Church is clear in its teaching that marriage includes openness by both parties to the possibility of having children.

Out of 5583 respondents to this item:

2441 (44%) reported that they "agree strongly" with this statement

1970 (35%) reported that they "agree somewhat" with this statement

555 (10%) reported that they "disagree somewhat" with this statement

298 (5%) reported that they "disagree strongly" with this statement

319 (6%) reported that they were either "uncertain" or did not wish to answer

42. Essay Question – Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (The openness of married couples to new life)

Of the 2394 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. Most respondents believe that the majority of Catholics disagree with the Church's teaching on the use of birth control.
2. Financial unknowns play a large role in a person's decision to use contraception as a means of family planning.
3. Our society reinforces the use of birth control as a self-empowerment tool and does not support large families.

VIII. Relationships between individuals and their families

43. Essay Question – Required: What challenges in families today can make it difficult for a person to live a Christian life?

Of the 5477 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. There are many cultural influences and pressures which lack morality and do not promote human dignity.
2. It appears that, we have many poorly catechized adults without adequate support and tools to help them as they attempt to share their faith with their children.
3. There is a perceived lack of Christian community and support.

44. Essay Question – Optional: Please include any additional comments you wish to make on this subject (Relationships between individuals and their families)

Of the 1164 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. The Church needs to apply the teachings of Jesus to the difficulties of life in modern society: divorce, drug abuse, homosexuality, etc.
2. The culture in this country exposes families to teachings which are contrary to Church teachings. The Church has done poorly in its attempt to teach against these beliefs and has not helped its members to find ways to face them.

IX. Other thoughts and reflections

45. Essay Question – Optional: What other concerns regarding the care and support of families should be brought to the attention of Catholic Church leaders?

Of the 2277 responses to this question, the following themes were most prominent:

1. The Church must recognize the diversity of modern families (traditional, single parent, divorced, blended, same-sex, etc...) and minister to them with love and respect in the context of their real-life situations. The ideal is the sacramental marriage, but not all can live up to that ideal and they need to be welcomed. The Body of Christ is a family.
2. We need to heal wounds and nurture people back to their faith, not by focusing on sin and the negative, but presenting the Church as welcoming, inclusive and positive.
3. The Church should offer practical support to families in need. A faith community should provide help directly to its members going through tough times, to lift people out of poverty and to a state of dignity.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Before finalizing this summary and transmitting it to the Synod Office, I met with members of my diocesan Presbyteral Council to present the data contained in this report and to discuss the possibility of future diocesan initiatives that would best respond to the most frequently-addressed concerns by the faithful. At the same time, we eagerly await the outcome of the Extraordinary Synod in October 2014 and the subsequent Ordinary Synod in 2015, in order to receive clearer direction for effectively ministering to families in our local Church.

In both verbal and written communication, members of the faithful expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their needs, concerns, joys and sorrows in this survey. Overall, I was pleased with the number of respondents to this survey and with their great effort in thoughtfully answering the questions provided.