



Catholics for Renewal Inc

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MEDIA RELEASE: October Synod on the Family – a challenge for Pope Francis

2 October 2014 – Pope Francis' Synod on the Family starts this Sunday 5 October. Many Catholics and others hope that this Synod will see a significant shift in the culture of the Catholic Church, as it lays the foundation for the general universal synod that will take place in October 2015.

This Synod will be a test for the leadership of Pope Francis. Many bishops and cardinals of the Church are already trying to prevent change towards a more Christian and merciful Church as publicly sought by Pope Francis. This Synod will indicate whether the institution listens to the Pope and the people of the Church.

The few lay people who have been invited as observers to the Synod generally come from a doctrinally conservative background, from organisations that are resistant to change, and are unlikely to use their very limited role to advocate necessary change.

There are many critical issues for the Church to address in thinking about family life. Issues include contraception, exclusion of divorced people, the role of women, discrimination against gay people, and the Church's disgraceful cover-up of clerical child sexual abuse. Regrettably, bishops may not hear the real views of the vast majority of Catholic families.

Peter Johnstone, Chair of Catholics for Renewal, commented: "Pope Francis has called for *'a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are'*. This call has the support and prayers of Catholics throughout the world who are losing patience with a Church overwhelmingly guided by unmarried celibate males, often isolated from community life and disproportionately aged, many of whom don't listen to God's people and yet claim final moral authority over the most sensitive aspects of Catholic family life. Too many Catholics have deserted their Church in despair. Catholics are now praying that the Synod will recognise the inspired guidance of Francis."

Paul Collins, a long-term commentator on Church matters in Australia, who is in Rome for the Synod, has observed that the Catholic Church faces a structural challenge: "The Vatican thinks its greatest issues are moral problems. Really, its greatest challenge is structural: as long as women, lay people and families are cut out of decision-making the Church will continue to be crippled by the clericalism and bad governance that wrought the Vatican Bank scandals and the child sexual



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abuse crisis."

Catholics for Renewal will be monitoring the progress of the synod and reporting progress on its website at <http://www.catholicsforrenewal.org/familysynod.htm>

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