

# THE PRECIOUS PEARL



by Bro MARIANO DIVITO, OFM CAP.

From the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, the extraordinary Synod of Bishops met to consider “the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation.” The planning and organisation of this synod was not only the work of the experts and the hierarchy (the bishops, religious superiors, theologians...), but also expressly and directly of the whole Christian community. Thousands of questionnaires were mailed to all the dioceses of the world asking for ideas and suggestions on the more urgent, current and, in many cases, new problems characterising the state of the family in this pluralistic and ever evolving world.

What was, and is particular to this Synod was its not wanting to dwell and consider only and principally aspects strictly doctrinal or legislative but in wanting to tackle with courage and charity the new challenges and problems facing the Church: the spread of common-law couples, the rejection of the idea itself of matrimony, same sex unions, mixed and interreligious marriages, single parent families, the phenom-

enon of surrogate mothers..., and, behind it all the weakening and even rejection of faith in the sacrament of Matrimony.

The challenges are many and urgent, but the hopes and expectations are great. Thanks to the large numbers of the natural partakers of parents, spouses and children the outcome of the synod is, in fact, being looked to with increasing hope and especially for a renewed pastoral on behalf of those people who have suffered. And they are many!

To have started from those many who have suffered within the family institute and from those who make up the family was probably the most just and evangelical approach to challenge the problems and to try and find on behalf of the faithful, at the very least, all the possible openings to them in keeping with the Christian vision of matrimony and the family.

From the beginning of his Petrine ministry, the message in Pope Francis' discourses has always been that of mercy, kindness and dialogue prevailing over the culture of waste, as if he wishes to tell us that these

are the boundaries within which every problem and difficulty must be seen, studied and, as far as possible, resolved. The family is too precious and fragile a pearl to be submitted to the detailed analysis of the sociological and statistical sciences, that is to quantitative analysis alone... The warm and radiant light of the Holy Spirit is essential. It is to the Holy Spirit that we must listen and raise with faith our incessant prayers of petition. The whole ecclesial community must feel itself involved in the outcome of this synod and participating with humble and unceasing prayer, and remembering always that the fragility and failings of our lives will never be able to extinguish the sparkle and force of this precious pearl that God has placed in our hands, often hesitant and trembling, but always conscious of the protection and guidance of His providential love.

Among the thirteen couples who participated in the synod were two doctors from San Giovanni Rotondo, Peppino and Lucia Petracca/Miglionico who work in Padre Pio's hospital and have been committed for years in the Archdiocese pastoral for the family.

From the pages of our journal dedicated to Saint Pio, who was a great supporter of the family institute, we wish to express our support and prayers, invoking the protection and wisdom of the Holy Spirit and Saint Pio, upon them, the synod and its work, so that the light of this precious pearl of the family may never fade but shine always more intensely in our lives.

*Fr. Mariano Divito, OFM CAP.*