



A letter from Bishop Paul S. Loverde



October 17, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you.” This advice from St. Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church, whose feast day we celebrated this past Wednesday, has been on my mind and heart as I contemplate the commentary in the media about the Extraordinary Synod on the Family taking place in Rome. There has been a significant amount of attention paid to the gathering of bishops from both secular and religious media outlets. Headlines, op-eds, and tweets alike are contributing to a cacophony of speculation about the Church’s teaching on marriage, divorce, same-sex unions, and cohabitation. The noise is deafening – and it moves me, as your shepherd, to encourage you to heed St. Teresa’s advice and remain undisturbed.

The Extraordinary Synod is a two-week meeting at which the Pope and bishops are discussing the challenges that face the family in our current times. Next year, they will meet again at an Ordinary Synod to develop clear pastoral approaches to these challenges. So far, the bishops have released an interim report, known as a *relatio post disceptationem*, which notes some of the themes and topics they have discussed and will revisit at the Ordinary Synod.

Many have read this document – which is merely a report summarizing discussions that were held in the sessions and not an authoritative text on Church teaching– and have speculated that the Church will change its 2,000 year-old teaching on the biblical view of marriage. That is simply not the case. We have consistently taught that the design of human sexuality is ordered toward marriage and children. And even when people do not accept or follow Church teaching, nonetheless they deserve compassion and understanding in our interactions.

What has been noted in the document by the bishops is that there are many challenges and trials facing married persons and families today. This interim document is divided into three parts, each of which reflects the synod fathers’ initial goals: *listening* to the personal testimonies of the faithful, *looking* at those who are in difficult circumstances with mercy and compassion; and *discussing* how to accompany those who are searching for Christ while proclaiming to them the demands of the Gospel. Unfortunately, it seems that many commentators are starting with the last part – discussion – instead of thoughtfully considering the document in light of the mission of the Church.

I conclude by reminding us that a final document summarizing the bishops’ reflections will be published at the end of the Extraordinary Synod and is intended as a preparation for next October’s Ordinary Synod. Instead of giving in to speculation or hysteria, I urge you to remain patient. Pray for your shepherds, the Holy Father and the bishops, who seek to work in accord with the movement of the Holy Spirit in order to meet the needs of their flocks. Do not be disturbed. Do not be frightened. Do not give into the temptation to interpret the proceedings of the Synod through an ideological lens. Have faith that the Lord Jesus is with the Church until the end of the age, as He promised. And continue to witness to others the joy of living the Gospel in its fullness.

Faithfully Yours in the Heart of Christ,

+ Paul S. Loverde
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