

**Response to the report of the Synod Assembly  
on the pastoral Challenges to the Family  
From The Exodus Community Leadership Team  
Discussions Jan/Feb 2015.**

With limited time we chose to discuss the pastoral perspectives of marriage preparation, support of marriage in the early years and the present understanding of the sacrament of marriage in our community.

There was many differing views concerning the availability, need for, cost and effectiveness of marriage preparation courses experienced by the participants of the discussion. These varied from positive to negative.

There was little understanding of the sacrament of marriage but the discussion time allowed for education and formation of all present. There has been little education, formation or support given through the Church to those married people present. Many older people have not been educated on the teaching on marriage/divorce/ remarriage and have carried fear and misunderstanding; and have felt judgement and rejection for many years thus being isolated from the praying community.

Today's culture is so different to that experienced by most of those people discussing this topic that it was hard to relate to some of the document 's statements. For example the use of the phrase 'mixed marriage' would mean nothing to our young adult children; nor to those people that we journey with in this very disadvantaged area. Many of these people are sole parents, divorced, 'blended' families and people with disabilities.

Looking at the section on caring for broken families it was agreed that the Exodus community, (an outreach of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Parish), which is housed in a very disadvantaged area definitely does care and journey with all those people included in this paragraph. This would include many of those we minister to. However there was concern about the difference in practical pastoral ministry within the official Catholic Church and the local level.

It was strongly stated and agreed that there must be a shift from the doctrinal stance on marriage to a theology of relationship based on the Trinity and we can learn from the actions of young married couples and families in our present day culture.

We hope our brief submission will be given consideration and our opinions included in the Diocesan response.

Thank you

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