

SAY IT JOYFULLY: MARRIAGE, FAMILY, SENSUS FIDELIUM,
AND THE EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD—SELECTED SESSION

- Topic: Say it Joyfully: Marriage, Family, *Sensus Fidelium*,
and the Extraordinary Synod
Convener: Mary Jo Iozzio, Boston College
Moderator: Mary Jo Iozzio, Boston College
Presenters: Bridget Burke Ravizza, St. Norbert's College
Mary M. Doyle Roche, College of the Holy Cross

In anticipation of the October 2015 Ordinary Synod on the Family and building on the work of the Extraordinary Synod of 2014, the CTSA Board welcomed this session presenting research and theological reflection on the pastoral challenges of married and family life.

In her paper, "Project Holiness: Wisdom from (Extra) Ordinary Couples," Bridget Burke Ravizza highlighted themes from ethnographic research conducted with her colleague Julie Donovan Massey in several parishes in mid-western United States. The study included conversations and focus groups with fifty married couples, identified by parishioners through a survey as local saints, who were then asked and then shared their wisdom about their marital relationships and families. Rather than talking about the relevance of particular Church teachings or documents on sacramental rubrics, Burke Ravizza found through her study that these "everyday saints" focused their reflections on the multiple meanings of friendship, erotic love, and mercy in sustaining their family lives in times of both joy and hardship.

In her paper, "Schools of Solidarity: Families Teaching With/in the Church," Mary M. Doyle Roche drew on themes from Catholic social teaching, specifically focusing on solidarity and the common good, to argue for the increased participation of married couples and families at the Ordinary Synod and beyond, for example, to national bishops' conferences, local dioceses, and home parishes. As Doyle Roche argues, families are not merely passive recipients of the Church's teachings but they are witnesses to the gospel. Their witness is to offer experience, other instances of expertise, and reflection to the realities facing the Church on the modern world. Recognition of the contributions that the laity brings to discussion is good news for all, especially in a Church that appears to observe rather than engage the faithful. Such recognition and welcomed participation is, then, especially liberating for those who struggle in poverty and insecurity, not as objects of charity but as equal to the task of evangelization. Moreover, Doyle Roche commends, families of all shapes and sizes, and members of families of all ages and abilities can share in building the common good that is the Church, a "family of families."

Discussion following the presentations included appreciation for the ethnographic work and the challenges of solidarity in comfortable lives. Burke Ravizza's kind of research in the field is breaking new ground and suggests—as it confirms—sources of wisdom in the tradition beyond the staple of articles, books, and collections in theological disciplines. One of the ongoing challenges remains the questions about the manner in which Burke Ravizza recruited couples to the study, that said, the project imagines an interactive interpersonal theological reflection on the importance and place of faith in (extra) ordinary lives. Doyle Roche's research found resonance both in the substance of her work integrating the insights of Catholic

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Social Teaching in local and global contexts and in the practical where and how do we, who live non-impoveryed circumstances, start effective work in solidarity with the rest of the world. Perhaps uncomfortably, Doyle Roche challenges the complacency in thinking that nothing “I” could do would matter as much as she exposes complicity in the evil that persists in “my” buying power.

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