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Bosnian cardinal says family is most important evangelizer

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Oct. 11, 2012
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Cardinal Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, said any evangelization he's done has always and only been a matter of building on the evangelization already begun within the family.

"My pastoral work is simply an addition to what the family has already built," he said Wednesday during a speech to the Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization.

Credit for the flowering of new vocations also lies with the family because it is "the first school of faith and truly encourages a personal encounter with Christ."

Puljic said in his own life, as well as in his ministry as a bishop, he also recognizes the family as "the first seminary."

"The family transmits the faith with its heart, life and practice," the cardinal told the synod.

During the war in the Balkans in the 1990s, he said, half the Catholic families of Bosnia-Herzegovina were forced to flee, and "thanks to the games of local and international politicians," many still have been unable to return.

After the breakup of the communist Yugoslavia, he said, the newly independent countries adopted democracy, but that brought with it relativism and a weakened appreciation for the traditional family.

"The new evangelization will succeed if it manages to restore the sanctity of marriage," on which the family is founded and graced to become a "domestic church." Strong Catholic families become "the strong drivers" of parishes that are alive and active in evangelization, he said.

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