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Archbishop says synod theme shows importance of family for pope

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Oct. 10, 2013
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Pope Francis' decision to call an extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family in 2014 demonstrates how important he believes the family is and the urgency he sees in responding to problems Christian families face, said the head of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, council president, said it is obvious that the pastoral challenge of divorced and civilly remarried Catholics will be part of the synod's discussions, just as it's obvious they were part of his private discussions with the pope in mid-September.

"You don't talk about a lunch without speaking of the food," Paglia told reporters Thursday when asked if the theme of divorced and remarried Catholics was something he discussed with the pope.

"It's obvious with the Holy Father I spoke about these themes and I think it's particularly important that the pope chose to make one of his first important magisterial acts the convocation of a synod on this theme," the archbishop said.

The Vatican announced Tuesday that Pope Francis called for an extraordinary synod Oct. 5-19, 2014, to discuss the "pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization."

"This demonstrates how quick the pope is in responding to the important problems that exist in our families," Paglia said.

The archbishop was also asked about his reaction to Pope Francis' statement in a September interview that the church does not have to speak always about abortion, gay marriage and contraception -- themes that are part of the Pontifical Council for the Family's brief.

"As president of the Pontifical Council for the Family -- and I emphasize 'pontifical' -- I can only agree fully with the pontiff," the archbishop said. "I think Pope Francis is underlining a journey we all must set out on with great wisdom, intelligence and boldness, standing alongside him."

Paglia spoke to reporters about preparations for the Oct. 23-25 plenary assembly of his council and for the Oct. 26-27 family pilgrimage to the Vatican as part of the Year of Faith.

The family pilgrimage and participants' meetings with Pope Francis both days are designed "to say that despite everything, families are society's most important resource, but more importantly, they are the most beautiful thing in the world," the archbishop said.

Conventual Franciscan Fr. Gianfranco Grieco, a council official, also announced Thursday that in time for the plenary, the council will publish -- in Spanish and Italian -- a collection of 35 speeches, homilies and texts by the former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio on family-related themes. The material from 1999 up until his

election as Pope Francis demonstrates how his teaching method hasn't changed, Grieco said.

The texts are marked by "clear, immediate and direct concepts that sensitize hearts, shake dozing consciences and provoke people's intelligence," he said. It's a step-by-step process that "starts from people's hearts, from wanting to touch hearts."

The council, he said, will try to have French and English translations of the book available in time for the synod in 2014.

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