

A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 27TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY STUDENTS (NACATHS) NIGERIA AT THE NATIONAL MISSIONARY SEMINARY OF ST PAUL, GWAGWALADA-ABUJA, NIGERIA FROM 7TH - 11TH OF MARCH, 2016.

In the spirit of the 2015 Ordinary General Assembly on "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in Contemporary World," we the members of The National Association of Catholic Theology Students (NACATHS), held our 27th National Convention at The National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Gwagwalada-Abuja, from March 7th – 11th, 2016 on the theme: Christian Family on Mission in Africa. From the deliberations of the Convention, we hereby present the following observations and recommendations in this communiqué:

1. Marriage preparation should be targeted at training youths in all facets that concern marriage and family life such as religious, socio-cultural, economic, psychological, biological and medical.
2. Youths should be encouraged and helped by parents and teachers to discover their talents and inclinations, and gainfully harness them towards building a strong economic base.
3. Sexual education should be given from early stages to youths in various suitable moods to boost an integral understanding of sexual urge and intercourse.
4. Youths should be educated through credible models, and parents should also endeavour to be good models to their children.
5. Pastors should get involved in the very life of youths so as to understand where help is mostly needed.
6. Youths should be pastorally accompanied by constant dialogue on the dangers of pre-marital sex.
7. Pastors and those who work with the youth should organise both social and religious programme around "sex crazy" periods like Christmas, Valentine Day celebration and others. This would help to keep the youths in check during these periods.
8. Parental influence as regards the choice of spouses for their children should be regarded as secondary. Parents should give approval and not consent. In

addition, consent must be between two adults. Engagement, betrothal or agreement cannot establish the sacramentality of marriage right.

9. Only marriages that are of heterosexual union, and are open to procreation and transmission of life should be recognised by the Church.

10. Love must be the motivating factor for consent to marriage and not procreation.

11. The African traditional marital morality which includes virginity, fidelity, respect, identity, status in the society, companionship and sharing of life should be the attitude towards marriage.

12. Christians who are faced with the problem of childlessness are constantly challenged with being truly Christians and Africans. It is therefore the Church's duty to catechise her members on the theology and sacramentality of marriage.

13. High bride price portrays women as commodity. This can lead to subjugation and degradation of women. Some women from some regions are also unable to marry because of high bride price.

14. High bride price can encourage pre-marital sex as some men may see engaging in pre-marital sex with the would-be wife as a way of avoiding high bride price. Bride price therefore should be seen as a symbolic ritual rather than a means for the family to enrich themselves.

15. The Church should organise programmes for couples whose marriages are at the verge of collapse. There should also be an avenue of reconciliation for divorced couples instead of denying them the sacrament which is a sort of exclusion and discrimination, since they are still members of the church. The three months marriage course should also be well planned to enrich the intending couples.

16. Since the concluded Synod concerns the family, the Church should give an authoritative pronouncement on the synod on the family and the faithful should be taught the proceeds.

17. The search for children through scientific practices and other genetic engineering and reproductive technology reduces the dignity of the individual and mutilates the sense of sacred that should be present in the families.

18. Pornography constitutes a problem to the family since it leads to unending quest for sexual pleasure. Contraceptives also is a problem since it is without

corresponding responsibility of procreation. The Church therefore has a lot to teach the faithful.

19. Divorce and re-marriage have negative effects on the children. It makes the children timid and lack self confidence.

20. Parents should see the education of their children as one of the ends of marriage.

As we look forward to the end of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we commend our families into the hands of God. May he protect, sustain and preserve them. May he show his mercy on them especially broken homes. And may the family of Nazareth continually intercede for us all.

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