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Catholics to their Bishops: “Either all are in the center of the heart of God, or none of us are.”

Catholics from 18 dioceses across 15 states gathered in February and March to engage in 51 listening sessions in preparation for the Synod on the Family being held in Rome October 5 – 24, 2015.

“While those who engaged in these discussions raised a great diversity of concerns about the intersection of family life and the Church, on whole, the responses focused on the Church’s need to be a model of unconditional love by being more accepting, inclusive and welcoming,” said Sheila Peiffer of the American Catholic Council. “One participant summed it up perfectly saying, ‘Either all are in the center of the heart of God, or none of us are.’”

Of the 781 who participated in the listening sessions, 82% identified as weekly mass-goers and 76% identified as laity.

“Like many Catholics we work with on a daily basis, those who participated in these sessions cannot be easily dismissed as some fringe element, but are profoundly committed to building up the faith life in our communities,” said Deborah Rose-Milavec of FutureChurch. “They want a Church that is willing to engage and honor the reality of people’s lives.”

Other pressing issues identified by the participants included a) the acceptance of women as equals in the Church; b) the need to include both lay women and men at the Synod; c) the recognition that opposition towards the LGBT community and women drive younger Catholics away; d) the need to show greater care for those who are single, elderly, without children, disabled, poor and victims of violence; and e) the need to educate Catholics about the primacy of conscience.

The final report was sent to Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and all the U.S. cardinals and bishops.

“This report is important because it gives bishops the opportunity to hear the unfiltered voices of Catholics who care about the future of the people of God and the Church,” said Ryan Hoffman of Call to Action. “We ask our Bishop delegates to honor these

voices when they go to Rome in October and make sure they are included as decisions about pastoral practices are being finalized at the Synod.”

The report in its entirety can be found online at: <http://ourcatholicfamily.org/listening>.

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