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Vatican to release synod preparatory document Thursday

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NCR Today

Synod on the Family

The Vatican is set to release on Thursday the document that will guide Catholic bishops around the world in preparing for a global October meeting on the church's family pastoral practices.

The meeting, known as a Synod of Bishops, has raised hopes that Pope Francis may be considering a change in the church's practices in a number of areas, particularly regarding the admittance of divorced and remarried persons to communion.

Thursday will see the release of the synod's *Instrumentum Laboris*, a working document prepared for the meeting by the Vatican's office for the synod after a worldwide consultation unusual for the breadth of comment it encouraged prelates to seek from priests and laity.

The Vatican is to release the document at noon Rome time (6 a.m. Eastern), after a press conference with three cardinals -- Lorenzo Baldisseri, the secretary general of the synod office; Péter Erdő, archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest in Hungary and the prelate who will be responsible for guiding the discussions during the synod; and André Vingt-Trois, archbishop of Paris and a delegate to the meeting -- and one archbishop: Bruno Forte, the synod's special secretary.

Adding to Monday's original bulletin announcing the release, the Vatican also said Wednesday the prelates will be joined during the press conference by a married couple, Italian professors Francesco Miano and Pina De Simone.

Called by Pope Francis last year, the 2014 synod is the first of two back-to-back yearly meetings of the world's Catholic bishops at the Vatican on the theme of "Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization."

The 2014 synod, considered an extraordinary synod, will be limited mainly to leaders of national bishops conferences. The 2015 meeting, however, will be much larger, consisting of several elected bishop-representatives from each country.

Prelates attending the 2014 synod are expected to review Thursday's document in preparation for whatever statements they might make during the meetings in October and for the following discussions.

Check back to *NCR* Thursday for reporting on the synod document's release.

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