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## Two-week meeting of bishops starts today: Pope seeks 'sincere, open' debate on family issues

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE SIDELINES?

**As occurs during any big Vatican meeting, church reform groups are descending on Rome in hopes of influencing the debate or at least grabbing some airtime while attention on the Vatican is high. A prominent reform group, We Are Church, hosted advocates for women's ordination and an end to priestly celibacy.**

The U.S.-based Catholic gay rights group New Ways Ministry is also here, encouraged by the fact that pastoral care for families headed by same-sex couples is a top area of discussion. The European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual Christian Groups, is hosting several events around Rome and across the ocean, the Human Rights Campaign - the largest LGBT advocacy group in the U.S. - is hosting a two-week, seven-city faith vigil "to send a message of acceptance while bishops meet."

On the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, a group of conservative legal scholars and policy makers wrote to the synod asking it to endorse the creation of networks of faithful married couples who could serve as support groups and mentors in parishes. Voice of the Family, which counts several pro-life groups as members, warned that while the synod could reinforce traditional church teaching, it also "risks confusing Catholics and non-Catholics worldwide on Catholic teaching on sexuality, family, and life."

<http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2014-10-05/world-news/Two-week-meeting-of-bishops-starts-today-Pope-seeks-sincere-open-debate-on-family-issues-6736123150>

<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20141004/news/141009216/>

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