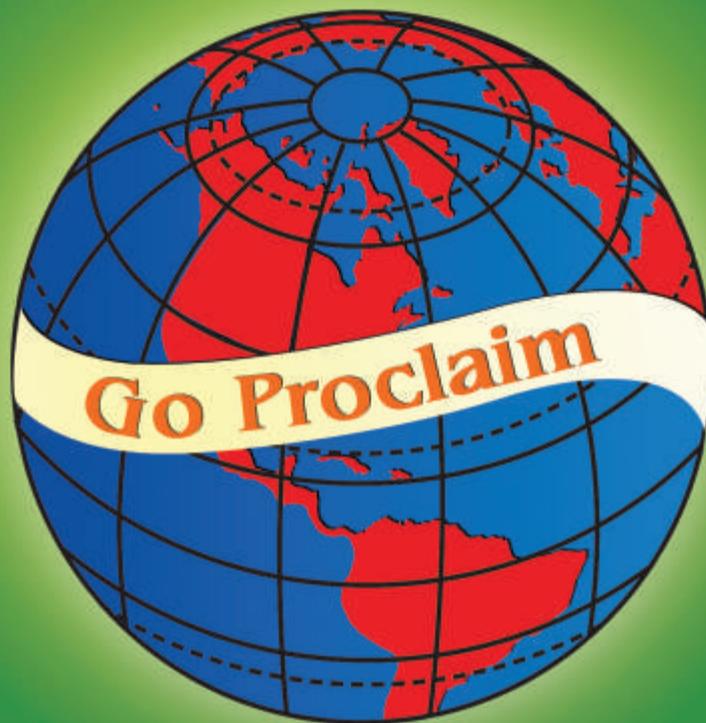


HOUSE TOP

MSMHC Missionary Journal
GO PROCLAIM

Vol. 15 No. 2

July - December 2016



Family the Foundation of Christian Life

HOUSE TOP

MSMHC Missionary Journal



Director : Sr. Philomena Mathew MSMHC
Editor : Sr. Christine Mynsong MSMHC
Associate Editor : Sr. Martina L. Thabah MSMHC
Members : Sr. Rani Mathew MSMHC
 : Sr. Shiji James MSMHC
Publisher : Missionary Animation Centre (M.A.C)

House Top: MSMHC Missionary Journal is a biannual missionary journal to disseminate current mission trends among us to give ample opportunities to our sisters to share the rich experiences of the various filed of our apostolate.

Editorial Office

Missionary Animation Centre (MAC)
Little Flower Convent
Hatigaon, Dispur
Guwahati- 781 038
Assam, India

For private circulation only

HOUSE TOP

MSMHC Missionary Journal

Family the Foundation of Christian Life

IN THIS ISSUE

1. Editorial	2
2. Message	3
3. Family: the Foundation of Christian Life : <i>Fr. Thomas Vijay SAC</i>	4
4. God Word: the Foundation of Family Life : <i>Sr. Martina L. Thabah MSMCH</i>	7
5. Positive Parenting and Responsible Parenting : <i>Dr. S. Loniak Marbanaing</i>	8
6. Some Challenges that the family faces today : <i>Fr. Jose Verikaseril SDB</i>	19
7. Family Apostolate : <i>Sr. Christine Mynsong MSMHC</i>	26
8. YAC Column : <i>Missionary Animation Center</i>	34
9. Remembering Sr. Susana Goi : <i>Sr. Shiji James MSMHC</i>	36



Editorial

Today families are being thrown open into variety of challenges more than ever with increasing number of broken families, divorces, separation, single parents, and children without parents and live- in relationships without any commitment. Intolerance in relationship, lack of respect for each other - among parents and parents with children, thus many families becoming dysfunctional. Still many other families are affected by poverty and deprivation, no access to basic education, health care and employment. The growing trends of fragmentation, casteism, monetization and addiction leading to death culture, women not accorded with due dignity and equality particularly in Indian society are leaving families in distress. The communities in the Northeast are undergoing a period of transition and the speed with which the changes have come about in the past few decades is unparalleled. Many communities especially tribals, the youth among them are uprooted from their cultural roots and swept off their feet by the onslaught of consumerism and globalization. One of the biggest challenges of the Church is to have an understanding of the effects of these rapid changes on the people.

In the word of St. John Paul II *“The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do. The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is....Each family finds within itself a summons that cannot be ignored and that specifies both its dignity and responsibility: family, become what you are”* (FC, 17). In God's plan, the Christian family is a community of life and love. It is a living cell of people committed to each other. It is a reflection of the Trinity—creating life out of love. Family is a haven and a space where an individual breathes, exists, develops and grows physically, emotionally, mentally, intellectually and spiritually, a place of his/her existential horizon, in which the whole network of social relations is grounded from the closest and most immediate to the most distant (JP II, 1994). This is a constant invitation for the human family especially the Christians to create a Christian family, a family where mutual love and care find daily expression, it may be one of the most difficult of all human tasks but it must.

Bishop Stephen Ferrando who knew the importance of family was convinced that nothing could substitute a *warm personal contact* with people through family visits and recommended the sisters to visit families, *“there are places and houses where Our Lord Jesus Christ is not certainly the King, and this is the reason why Our Lord Jesus Christ has sent you here. Because Our Lord has come into the world not to take care of those who are well but the sick. He has come to teach you to be good mothers to these children, the good Samaritan, the healer and therefore you must realize your great mission”* (F H F, pg 178) only through the regular family visits it is possible to enter into the inner world of people, which would otherwise remain remote and distant. Listening to the sharing of the people, abled one to understand, be with them, and accompany them in their struggles which lead to nourish, deepen and strengthening their faith, hope and build communities of love. Having Holy Family of Nazareth with all its struggles as an ideal family from which Jesus hailed our families should be encouraged and motivated to discover the beauty of family life.

Witnessing the varied problems families face, it is fitting that we the Church take up seriously the ministry of guiding and nourishing the families spiritually. The articles in this issue aim to give insights, understanding and enlightenment on the importance of family which is the *foundation of Christian life*.

Sr. Christine Mynsong
General Councilor for Evangelization

Superior General's Message

“Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching” (Proverbs 1:8)

The fast changing scenario of family life today poses numerous challenges. There is a growing structural vulnerability in marriage and family, caused by the 'anthropological and cultural changes' in the society, an extreme sense of 'individualism which weakens the family bond' and causes in the families an increased sense of 'independence and isolation, loneliness and disillusionment', and a poor understanding of individual freedom which leads to an arbitrary use of freedom resulting in the perversion of family values and permissiveness of life. These challenges make one wonder as to how relevant today are the words of the book of proverbs: *“Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.”* However, it can be said that in spite of the enormous challenges that the families face today, they continue to be the foundation of Christian life because no other human reality can ever substitute the role of the families in the church and the world. Therefore it is of vital importance that families become the centre of attention in every aspect of our mission: be it humanitarian, developmental, educational or the mission of evangelization.



There are various types of Christian families across the globe. On the one hand there are well functional families that take their vocation as beacons of light, but on the other hand there are also dysfunctional families that are clouded by the shadows of darkness. The functional Christian families consciously live their Christian vocation as “light of the world and salt of the earth” adding brightness and warmth, purity and flavour to the world by their life of Christian witness. Although constantly challenged to swim against the currents of personal and social evils which perpetuate a culture of selfishness and death, these Christians families stand firm in faith on the rock of Christ. In such families the children are taught to recognise and respect the role of their parents. They learn to love, respect and value them for what they are more than for what they do or what they give/provide them with. The parents teach and instruct their children by word and example and the children learn to listen to the instruction of their fathers and dare not forsake the teachings of their mothers. There is order and harmony, respect and collaboration, sacrifice and hard work, and mutual trust and entrustment in those families. They welcome new life and become promoters and guardians of life in all its forms. The helpless child and the aged/sick grandparents, the rebellious adolescent and the immature young adult, the motivated youth and the hardworking adult alike find a space for growth and freedom in a healthy Christian family. Such families become carriers of the message of love and forgiveness, healing the world's deceases with the balm of God's infinite love.

As we thank God for such cradles of faith and witness, we think of the thousands of dysfunctional and broken families in need of God's touch of healing through human interventions of understanding, compassion and accompaniment. As missionaries this challenge is ours today! Can we dodge this responsibility as disciples of Jesus and remain cocooned in our comfort zones, catering to our wellbeing and ignoring the cries of those who need us?

Sr. Philomena Mathew
Superior General

FAMILY: THE FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Dr. Thomas Vijay SAC

Marriage the Plan of God

In the book of Genesis we read that God commanded that the man should leave his father and mother and cling to his wife (Gen. 2:24). It is the man who is asked to leave his father and mother and cling on to his wife. This is not so much about new couples living in another building, leaving the parents; this “clinging on” relationship between spouses is a special bond that even his parents are restrained by God’s law from any sort of interference and man has the responsibility to protect and sustain this relationship as willed by God. This is so because that bond is divinely instituted and to be revered by all. When couples revere and obey this law, it gives the couple power to lay a firm foundation for their life and a new family, foundation on “rock” which stormy winds and rain cannot shake (Mt. 7:25). Yahweh says: “For I am the Lord your God: you shall therefore sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy, neither shall you defile yourselves like the creeping things (Lev. 11:44). The people of Israel ignored this divine law and fell victim to their bodily cravings. “The Lord will no longer accept your offerings and listen to your weeping and groaning because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you are faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, ...” (Mal. 2:14-16a).

Jesus' Teaching on Marriage

The Pharisees who were teachers of the law came to dispute with Jesus concerning divorce in marriage. They argued with Jesus that Moses allowed them to give divorce. Jesus told them that it was given because of the hardness of their heart and went on to reiterate the original teaching of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage to the surprise of all his disciples even (Mt. 19: 3-10). He also confirmed that this vocation can be lived only with the help of the grace of God (Mt. 19:11). Many people, like these Pharisees, think that marriage is their own plan and wish and they can follow their own bodily cravings in or outside marriage. They do not feel the need for God to live out their marriage vocation. But if they accept that marriage is divinely ordained and to be lived to realize the call of God to holiness, they would turn to God every day of their marriage.

St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honour, not with lustful passion like the gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord as an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness. Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority, but God” (1 Thes. 4:3-8).

St. Paul says to his successor Timothy that he is sure that Timothy has inherited the sincere faith of his grandmother Lois and also in his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). He could have such a deep and sincere faith on account of devout parents and family traditions. Even we know this from our own experiences those families which are faithful to the Church teachings and are God-fearing, are blessed by God. Paul urges Timothy to remain firmly rooted in the faith he has inherited. “But as for you continue in what you have leaned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation thorough faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:14-15). This is also exactly what families should do today.

Vatican II and Popes of Marriage

The Vatican II teaches that the intimate love partnership of married life is established by God and is qualified by His laws to make it an irrevocable conjugal consent¹.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church re-affirms that “marriage is a covenant by which man and woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the creator”². Human beings all through their history are prone to idol worship and have gone astray from God all the time. When God looked down from heaven, he could not see even one person who seeks after God; all alike are perverse and gone astray. (Ps.14:2-3).

St. John Paul teaches: “Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.”³

Influenced by the trends in the modern world, human beings increasingly look at marriage and sex as a mere biological action and to satisfy a biological need, not realizing that this has disastrous consequences for not only familial joy and meaning, but for the whole church and human society. Pope Francis exhorts families thus: “The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church. The unitive end of marriage is a constant summon to make this love grow and deepen.”⁴ It is the constant focus on this deepening of unitive love, a mutual gratuitous gift, which leads to a fatherhood and motherhood and familial bonding between parents and children, that becomes the firm foundation of families, Church and society.⁵ St. John Paul II stated that the future of the church and humanity passes through family.⁶ In a society in which the firm foundation of this unitive love is broken, selfishness abounds and divorces are plentiful. Then their love lacks the power of endurance and tolerance. Children grow up without parental care.

1. Gaudium et Spes, 48.

2. CCC, 1660

3. Familiaris Consortio 11

4. Amoris Laetitia, 88

5. Ibid, 88

6. FC, 1

7. Ibid, 3



Members of a family then are a bunch of selfish human persons who live under one roof, but seeks always self-gratification.

Christ is the Centre of Family Life

Families can realize the hopes and joys they place in marriage only with the power of the gospel. St. Paul teaches us that marriage is a great mystery so deeply linked to the mystery of redemption (Eph. 5:32), to be lived in faith by couples. A Christian couple is called to re-live the self-sacrificing love of Christ for His Church (Eph. 5:29) and he concludes his teaching on family quoting Genesis 2:24, asking the man to cling on to his wife. We can know by this how Christian families are founded on the sanctity of couple love and how Christ's love is poured into a family when they live the mystery of marriage in imitation of Christ. "Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to the fulfilment in Christ and have need of His grace in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restore their "beginning" that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan."⁸ This is why family is a "domestic Church"; it is the unique place where we can re-live Christ's self-sacrificing love for the Church in a unique way that allows the whole family to grow in it and witness to it.

Let me conclude with the prayer of St. Paul for families, praying for the same grace for all families. "I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and the length and the height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3: 14-19).

In this way we know that from the book of Genesis to this generation, God has been consistent in His teaching that marriages are divinely instituted and not by any human designs and thereby all must acknowledge the creator and his plan as the only path to lasting happiness in families and peace and harmony in the Church and society.

8. FC, 3

WORD OF GOD: THE FOUNDATION OF FAMILY LIFE

Sr. Martina L. Thabah MSMHC

Introduction

God has chosen parents to be His framework of a family and His plan for them. Therefore the structure of the family is vital to so many other laws, principles and teachings in the Bible. It is so important for the family to understand the plan of God and His word as it has its application to family life today.

“God like a good father and a good mother wants to give good gifts to his children,” and he wants to give his children “substantial food,” said Pope Francis in his homily while celebrating the Holy Mass in Sistine Chapel⁹ during the baptism of infants. The Pope asked, “What is this substantial food that God gives us”? It is his word. His word makes us grow, it makes us bear good fruit in life, as rain and snow are good for the earth and make it fruitful¹⁰. “What milk does to the body, the word of God does for the spirit: The word of God makes our faith grow.”¹¹

1. God's Word Instituted the Family

The LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (Genesis 2: 18). So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God has taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh (Genesis 2: 21-24).¹²

Within the family God has given its members responsibilities. He brought them both to establish the basis of family life. Without a man and a woman coming together in marriage, there is no family. God's desire for the family is to reproduce and multiply, *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Genesis 1: 27-28).¹³*

9. by CNA/EWTN NEWS01/12/2015 Comments (7)

10. ibid

11. ibid

12. The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition for India 1993

13. ibid

God desires that husbands and wives bring forth offspring. Obviously, not everyone is capable of producing children. However in God's plan for the family there should be a loving relationship so that God can play His role. Within the family God has given its members different roles and responsibilities to play like:

1.1. **Husband:** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind- yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (Ephesians 5:25-28).*¹⁴

*Husbands love your wives and never threat them harshly (Colossians 3:19)*¹⁵. God commands husbands to love their wives as their own flesh. When men do not love their wives as they should, they are not fulfilling God's plan as the father of the family. More women are likely to submit to their husbands if they love them as they should.

1.2. **Father:** *All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride (Ephesians 6:4)*¹⁶. *Fathers do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart (Colossians 3:21)*¹⁷. The word of God exhorts the fathers to bring up their children in the teaching of the Lord and not to provoke them to wrath and shame till they hate their father.

1.3. **Wife:** *Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour (Ephesians 5:22-23)*¹⁸. Submitting to their husbands wives show a proper relationship to authority. When they submit and respect authority, children in turn will understand their need to submit to the authority over them.

1.4. **Mother:** *So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us (1Timothy 5:14)*¹⁹ *So that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited (Titus 2:4-5)*²⁰. Young mothers are taught in the church by religious, catechists, and by married elderly women in catechism classes to bear children, love their husbands, guide the home, obey, submit and teach their children. By doing so their children will grow up being taught to honour God's Word.

14. ibid

15. ibid

16. ibid

17. ibid

18. ibid

19. ibid

20. ibid

- 1.5. Children:** *Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12). Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm (Ephesians 6:13)²¹. Children are to obey and honour their parents. It means that they not only need to obey, but to obey in a respectful way that adds value to the family unit and their parents. Those who honour their parents will live longer lives than they would. It does not mean mere obedience but humble and submissive obedience that will add long life to them.*
- 1.6. Siblings:** *Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters – with absolute purity. Honor widows who are really widows (1Timothy 5:1-3)²². St. Paul teaches that a family must behave with respect towards one another. They are to respect and honour others as they would as brothers, sisters, parents and even to the other neighbourhood families.*

2. God's Presence in the Family

A better understanding of God, His word and the teaching of the Church will exist in the family where there is respect. How will the children respect God, listen to His words whom they cannot see or hear Him, if they cannot respect their parents whom they see every day and cannot listen to what they hear or say? When parents teach their children that there is authority, responsibility and consequences for wrong actions, the children will quickly understand who God is and the authority He has in their lives. They will naturally obey His command “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. To the parents God keeps telling Recite them to your children, and talk about them, when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise*” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)²³.

From my varied experiences and through others perception, while getting in touch with families, it is sad to say that many families have failed to live the commandment of God, the Father of Mercy and Compassion which is the foundation of every living being and believer of God.

When we look around in spite of many good hearts who work tirelessly to lead all humanity to the Kingdom of God, there is still so much of misery, brokenness and broken relationships in families. Evil habits and practices spread faster than the good. Bad companies attract more easily than good ones. There is no peace and harmony in homes and society at large. There is no more caring for human being. Human life has no value these days. Taking away the lives of others is the saddest thing one can think about. We do not find security anywhere and there is so much of fear within. Many experience that there is lack of trust in one another. These are the daily issues in newspapers, and other means of communication. Who is responsible for all these events in today's life? From where do all these arise? These are the consequences from families where the presence of God is absent?

21. ibid

22. ibid

23. ibid

3. Return to the Word

The need of our time in this generation is to return to the word of God. *“Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Mathew 6:33)²⁴. *This is the essence of the daily Christian walk and it applies to train every child in the family and in other area.*

Only God has the answers to all their needs but many have failed even at times to trust God in His kindness and goodness. Some feel that life without God is still quite satisfactory. Every family needs to be in communion with God daily and to gain His wisdom and strength. *“If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly and it will be given you”* (James 1:5)²⁵.

In a world of competitive spirit, at times parents are puzzled with their children's behaviour. They failed even to think that they need to seek the guidance of God.

4. Word of God Lived by Parents becomes Legacy to Children

What an example it could be for the children if they see parents reading, reflecting and living the word of God on a regular basis. I am sure children will remember the consecrated life of their parents and will be inspired to live the same.

Parents who love the Word will enable to spread the fragrance of love to their children easily comparing to those parents who don't even have time to pray together as a family. I would like to emphasize on the very words of Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata who said, *“In the world today married people are having great difficulties because there is not that deepening of intimate love for each other - they are busy with so many things.we find that terrible poverty and so this is something that you and I must understand - that love begins at home, love begins in our own community. There we see each other very often. We can neglect each other by not even having time for each other.”*²⁶ Young children today may be lacking the love and care of parents in many areas. They do need a family life where they experience the love and care of the parents. So parents have to be diligent in many things, in loving and caring, in disciplining, in teaching them to pray and know the Word of God, and incorporating it throughout their daily life. *“Train children in the right way, and when old they will not stray”* (Proverbs 22: 6)²⁷.

Pope Francis too said, *“In all the families the Good News of God should resound, in both good and bad times, as a source of light all along the way”*²⁸. The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness...through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.²⁹

24. ibid

25. ibid

26. Where there is love there is God - What prevents me from love- Page 101, Mother Teresa, edited and with an Introduction by Brian Kolodiejchuk, MC, PhD

27. The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition for India 1993

28. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love: Chapter Seven 290, page 235, Pope Francis

29. ibid

True love of parents for their children implies in being proactive in teaching them to walk in the way of the Lord, guiding and correcting them lest they go astray. “*The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by a neglected child*” (Proverbs 29:15)³⁰.

If parents' life is always filled with frustrations and bad attitudes how can they reveal real love to the children? Here parents need to take a break and be well trained in bringing up family life. Learning can be a joy and bring contentment to their spirit. “.....couples and parents should be properly appreciated as active agents in catechesis....Family catechesis is of great assistance as an effective method in training young parents to be aware of their mission as the evangelizers of their own family.”³¹

Parents who love their children train them in directing to daily activities- right from childhood children can be of help in many ways; with putting away dirty clothes in basins or buckets, setting up table for lunch or dinner, emptying the dishes, sweeping, throwing garbage, changing the younger baby's diaper, clearing and wiping the table etc. These jobs are not distasteful to their children, because they see parents do them daily and these kids like to spend time with them. It takes at least twice the amount of time to do these things with their help, but they are spending their time in constructive learning with patience. These parents will reap the benefit in the years to come comparing to those parents who never allow their children to do these daily chores right from the time when they were small easy to guide and lead them. These children will be ever thankful that their life wasn't all about playing, making work burdensome in their older years. I think this is true love where parents hand down legacy to the children so that they can learn to work hard, face challenges and ready for any hard life.

5. Family Spirituality

I would like to emphasize on family spirituality on various important aspects from *Amoris Laetitia*:

The first aspect is the Trinitarian love: Pope Francis emphasized that God dwells in the hearts of those living in his grace. Today we can say that the Trinity is present in the temple of marital communion³². Just as God dwells in the praises of his people (*cf. Ps 22:3*), so He dwells deep within the marital love that gives him glory. If we are sincere to the call as Disciples of Christ and be true to His words then we are able to encounter the presence of the Trinitarian God within. It all depends on the family's decision to set aside time for family prayer. Sometimes we are so occupied in taking care of our physical health that we forget to nurture our soul. Does the soul need more care than the body? This may mean giving up a favorite hobby, an exercise class, or working outside the home. It may be painful but one will reap the benefits years later when we invest our time in things that are eternal rather than temporal, “*we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporal, but what cannot be seen is eternal.*” (2 Corinthians 4:18)³³

30. *ibid*

31. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of Love: Chapter Seven 287, page 232, Pope Francis

32. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of Love: Chapter Nine 314, page 359, Pope Francis

33. The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition for India 1993

The second aspect is the love of one's neighbour: In his exhortation Pope Francis said that the word of God points that “the one who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in the darkness” (1 Jn 2:11); such a person “abides in death” (1 Jn 3:14) and “does not know God” (1 Jn 4:8). If only “we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (Jn 4:12). Since “the human person has an inherent social dimension”, and the first and basic expression of that social dimension of the person is the married couple and the family”, spirituality becomes incarnate in the communion of the family. Hence, those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union³⁴.

The third aspect a family is centered on Christ: In the darkest hours of a family's life, union with Jesus in his abandonment can help avoid a breakup. Gradually, “with the grace of the Holy Spirit, (the spouses) grow in holiness through married life, also by sharing in the mystery of Christ's cross, which transforms difficulties and sufferings into an offering of love³⁵. Moreover, moments of joy, relaxation, celebration and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection. Married couples shaped with different daily gestures a “God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the risen Lord”³⁶. Today the best examples of a family centered on Christ are those families where they regularly meet once in a week in neighbourhood communities (SCCs). These families give space to the word of God to take control over them. Here they experienced the presence of the Risen Christ in their midst. These families' act what the Lord tells them to do.

The fourth aspect is a family prayer: A family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening the paschal faith. An atmosphere of time should be created for few minutes coming together each day before the living God, to tell him our worries, to ask for the needs of our family, to pray for someone experiencing difficulty, to ask for help in showing love, to give thanks for life and for its blessings and to ask Our Lady to protect us beneath her maternal mantle. The family's communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist, especially in the context of Sunday rest³⁷. Jesus knocks at the door of families, to share with them the Eucharistic supper (cf. Rev 3:20). For the food of the Eucharist offers the spouses the strength and incentive needed to live the marriage covenant each day as a “domestic church”³⁸

The fifth aspect is care and consolation: “Christian couples are, for each other, for their children and for their relatives, cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith”. God calls them to bestow life and to care for life. The family “has always been the nearest 'hospital”³⁹. So let us care for one another, guide and encourage one another, and experience this as a part of our family spirituality.⁴⁰ “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb

34. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love: Chapter Nine 316, page 260-261, Pope Francis

35. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love: Chapter Nine 317, page 261, Pope Francis

36. Ibid, page 262

37. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love: Chapter Nine 318, page 262, Pope Francis

38. Ibid, page 263

39. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love: Chapter Nine 321, page 265, Pope Francis

40. Ibid, page 265

13:2)⁴¹. The family lives its spirituality precisely by being at one and the same time a domestic church and a vital cell for transforming the world.⁴²

6. The Family Spent Time to Teach and to Inspire

Parents at time may experience of not having patience to impart to the children to experience the wonderful opportunity to let the Lord teach. All have different personalities but that is no excuse for not obeying simple Bible commands. He can give the strength and patience to do it by His Spirit. *“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice”* and God will take care the rests (Rom 12:1).⁴³

Well, all believe in this truth- *“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)⁴⁴. True to this teaching how much time should a family devote to understand it? For parents who are the primary teachers of teaching their children at home, imparting the word of God to the children is very important part of life. If so, children will learn to listen, to think, to pray with the word and even to learn to preach the word and to change one's own attitude.

The Bible teaches that God has given teachers to the Church *“to equip the saints.”*

(Ephesians 4: 12)⁴⁵. Personal or private reading of God's word is not enough for most people to be faithful Christians. All need human teachers to open the word and to get help to understand it and apply it in daily lives. Many parents have never ever thought to finance their children to the best Bible Schools available in the Church and in the Country as they do so with the excellent and expensive secular education for their children. This is a matter of reflection for all parents as they are the primary educators to impart catechesis to their children.

Family need to build up some traditions in family life to deepen the knowledge of God's word and to strengthen the children the capacity to grasp and digest it. Now what pattern of attendance and attention to God's word will the parents establish for themselves and for the family? It would be good to focus on some important points.

- Join the neighbourhood group who meet once in a week to share the word of God through Small Christian Communities (SCC). Integrate the Word of God in life and action (personally and as a family). A daily word of life lives in action.
- “Every day, get into the habit of reading a passage from the Gospel, a little one, and always carry a small Gospel in your pocket or purse to read. “This will be an example to the children: to see Dad, Mom, Godparents, Grandfather, Grandmother, Uncles and Aunts read the word of God.”⁴⁶

42. Ibid, page 268

43. The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition for India 1993

44. ibid

45. Ibid

46. CNA/EWTN NEWS 01/12/2015 Comments (7) by Pope Francis

- Be ready to be trained at any area of life. The family needs an on-going faith formation and it cannot be satisfied only with Sunday Mass. As the body develops each day so the soul, the spirit, and the mind too needs to grow.
- Build up relationship with a neighbouring family. “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Luke 10:27).⁴⁷
- A willingness to get out of one's own comfort zone and reaching out to a neighbour in need.

7. Conclusion

To make one's family more like God's family, take a look at the family of Bethlehem; examine at what is preventing us from having the ideal relationship. Pray together. Share thoughts and feelings about God and what He's doing in one's lives. Read and meditate on God's word, applying its principles to a family life.

In his exhortation Pope Francis said “.....one of the fundamental challenges facing families today is undoubtedly that of raising children, made all the more difficult and complex by today's cultural reality and the powerful influence of the media”⁴⁸. The Church assumes a valuable role in supporting families, starting with Christian initiation, through welcoming communities”⁴⁹ At the same time I feel it is important to reiterate that the overall education of children is a “most serious duty” and at the same time a “primary right” of parents.⁵⁰ In educating them, they build up the Church, and in so doing, they accept a God-given vocation.⁵¹

“Dear parents, dear godfathers and godmothers, if you want your children to become true Christians, help them grow, 'immersed' in the Holy Spirit, that is, in the heart of the love of God.”⁵²

He encouraged daily prayer to the Holy Spirit, saying this helps children “grow up in the atmosphere of the Holy Trinity.” Pope Francis especially recommended one short prayer: “*Come, Holy Spirit; fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.*”

47. The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition for India 1993

48. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of Love: Chapter Three 84, page 75, Pope Francis

49. *ibid*

50. *ibid*

51. *Ibid* 85, page 76-77

52. CNA/EWTN NEWS 01/12/2015 Comments (7) by Pope Francis

POSITIVE PARENTING AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTING

Dr. S. Loniak Marbaniang M.Sc., Ph.D.

The blame game is a very common characteristic of human beings. They usually give credit for whatever task they have performed, forgetting thereby the role played by others. If, however, something goes wrong or out of track, they readily point their fingers somewhere else or act somebody. Few have the audacity to take full responsibility and admit their mistakes. These are, of course, the true leaders, whose numbers is gradually dwindling with the passage of time. What a sad state of affairs, indeed!

This is, perhaps, an inherent quality since the time of our first parents on earth, namely Adam and Eve, which has been passed on to humankind from generation to generation. Regarding the sin of our first parents, the book of Genesis 3:6-13, tells us as follows:

And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened; and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons. And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the paradise at the afternoon air; Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of paradise. And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him; where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in paradise, and I was afraid, because I was naked and I hid myself. And he said to him: And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the fruit whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And Adam said: The woman, whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said to the woman: Why hast thou done this? And she answered: The serpent deceived me, and I did eat.

Nowadays, it is quite common to hear of parents who feel disgusted with their children and vice versa. Prior to this, it will be observed that couples, after some years of married life, tend to fight each other. This usually happens not because of serious differences that may arise due to some misunderstandings or petty mistakes that any of the partners has inadvertently committed. At this junctive, it is advisable to listen to the statement of Robert C. Dodds, “*The goal in marriage is not to think alike, but to think together.*”

The secret of successful parents is manifested in their offspring's who rise up in life due to hard work, honesty and sincerity. They develop these traits from their own parents. It is of no use for a father or mother to instruct and train their children on a path of justice or righteousness if they themselves deviate from it. Words and deeds should go together and remain inseparable. An Anonymous saying, “*Our deeds are like stones cast in the pool of time, they themselves may disappear, but their ripples extend to eternity*”, is very right and appropriate for the modern generation.

Dear parents, be slow, please, in judging your children. There is no use to tell them a thousand times to be honest and sincere if your own lives are quite the opposite. Children, nowadays, are neither fools nor blind. They grow up quite fast and mature early. Competition is tough. Gone are the days when jobs are within easy reach, even with insufficient grades or qualification. A few decades ago, after India achieved Independence on 15th August 1947, the ratio of job opportunities to suitable candidates was quite high. So, the problem of unemployed among youth was practically nil.

The position, as such, more or less was similar even a few years after Meghalaya achieved statehood on 21st January 1972. Gradually, however, the ratio became more and more decreased as the years rolled by and to such an extent that unemployment problem has resulted in chaos in social life, which is becoming more and more acute.

Family relationship is being disrupted. Parents do not comprehend the difficulties encountered by their children. Instead of trying to understand their plight, straightaway they scold and condemn them. On their part, children begin to distance themselves from their parents and choose the path of rebellion. Pride and vanity may prevent both sides to reconcile and patch up the differences. Nevertheless, the parents should take the initiative before the situation becomes worse and goes out of hand.

Parents ought to spend some times with their children, no matter how busy they may be. This habit should be cultivated right from childhood. Good parenting demands that the parents should be positive in their words and examples towards their kids. When parents are angry or in a bad mood, silence is much better. Only when everything is okay, especially the mind being clear and the head becoming cool, should the parents deal with their children. Father and mother are to complement each other.

O.A. Battista said, *“The best inheritance a parent can give to his children is a few minutes of his time each day.”* This implies for the mother as well. Let us listen to another great personality, Sydney J. Harris, who assured us: *“The best combination of parents consists of a father who is gentle beneath his firmness, and a mother who is firm beneath her gentleness.”* These are really words of wisdom which many of the parents and the would-be parents ought to remember and to put into practice.

Children are children, especially when they are young and growing up. They are happy and carefree. They have no worries and think the whole world is at their feet. They try to be independent and, at times, fall into mishaps. Responsible parents do not shout or humiliate them. Instead, they come to their rescue and tell them what is right and what is wrong. They are generous with their praise for the good they do and for their achievements. When a wrong is committed, they criticize the deeds and not the child. At the same time, they encourage them to do better.

It is very common to hear words used by parents in scolding their children for the wrongs they do or when they do not score good marks in their class, which are negative. “You are dumb ass!” “Child of a dog/pig, you are not fit to be our child at all!” “You lousy devil, why don't you think properly?” These are but few remarks uttered by a mother or a father when they think their children have let them down or when they are not up to their expectation. Sometimes, words which are more harsh and sentences which are unbearable of a parent, and quite inappropriate to be written here, are flowing incessantly and rapidly from the mouths of over good parents, much to the embarrassment and shame of their children. These will surely hamper the children and in the end they will begin to

believe what their parents say. The worst part is that they will live like what their parents describe them and so become the scams of the society.

Thoughtful parents will not force their children to choose a career. Instead, they ought to listen to their aptitude and so help them to further their ambition. Some parents will force their choice on their children, even if it is against their wishes. For example, these parents failed to achieve their goal of becoming a doctor or an engineer while they struggled during their student days. When they have grown up children, they next thrashed their lifelong ambition upon their children to succeed where they have failed. Such children will become misfits in their profession afterwards.

In the year 2005, the renewed magazine Reader's Digest devised a questionnaire for kids to tell how they felt about their parents. The survey was conducted for the Reader's Digest by the market researchers A.C. Nielsen ORG- MARG. A total of 606 middle class boys and girls from English knowing families in Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow, New Delhi, Kochi and Nagpur were interviewed. Kellogg India sponsored the survey. In such a sensitive and much-awaited result, parenting experts were involved.

The following results are quite interesting, with 73.5 percent giving their parents an overall grade of A (excellent) and 23.5 percent more giving them a B (pretty good). In many other aspects the parents received good on the average, although they fared below average in certain attitudes. The summary shows that honesty, working hard, providing children with safe and happy homes, and teaching them good values are their parent's greatest strengths. Parents who listened to their children and accordingly interacted with them scored high marks. Even in sensitive and delicate topics like sex, parents who tried to talk to their children were much appreciated. Instead of getting wrong information from friends and other sources which might mislead them, this openness between parents and children is a welcome gesture.

The writer would like to share the following story with the esteemed readers and which appeared in the Reader's Digest, a monthly magazine with wide coverage and enjoying a large number of readerships throughout the world. The moral lesson of the story shows the role played by the parents in bringing up their children, against all odds and difficulties of their children who finally succeeded beyond anybody's dream.

The Jadhav communities are a part of the Mahar caste which belongs to the Scheduled Caste category and which is generally classified as the untouchables or popularly called the Dalits. The four castes in the Hindu Caste System, in order of hierarchy are the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras. The Scheduled Castes, who constituted about 15 percent of India's population, are outside the Varna system. The Scheduled tribes, numbering more than 8 percent, are usually grouped together with the Scheduled Castes. The combined total of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) thus constitute about a quarter of India's population, which is quite sizable in a democracy where members count.

Sonu Jadhav and Damodar Jadhav were the couple who struggled against caste oppression. They have four sons and two daughters. Though the couple never went to school, yet they were determined to educate their children. Initially, they were sent to a Varathi-medium school where they performed well. The love and affection that the parents bestowed upon each other has a great impression on their children. The advice given by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the greatest

Schedules Caste leader, to his followers, “*Educate, Unite and Agitate,*” had a lasting impact on their father Damodar Jadhav, who in turn inspired the children. The father worked as a class IV employee for the Mumbai Port Trust.

All the children did very well in their life and occupied high positions in their respective professions. The eldest sibling, Jonardhan joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Next in line, Sudharkar worked for Gulf Air in Dubai, the third brother, Dinesh, retired as Mumbai Deputy Municipal Commissioner. The youngest, Narendra is a Ph.D. in Economics from abroad (USA). He briefly served as the Chief Economic Advisor to the Governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan was Vice- Chancellor of Pune University and Chief Economist of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). He wrote more than seven books mostly in Economic, one of which has been translated into Hindi, Tamil, Kanada, French, Spanish, Korea and other languages. The title of this book is *Outcaste* (titled *Untouchables* in some editions). Both sisters have bachelor degrees. One married a judicial magistrate, the other a sericulture expert.

In November 2005, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh released seven of Dr. Narendra Jadhav's books. Jairam Ramesh, who was then Congress Secretary and MP, dropped a bombshell in the audience when he confessed that for two years he had been trying to pressurize Narendra Jadhav to resign from his job as Chief Economist of the R. B.I. and join the Congress party. He next announced that he hoped that Jadhav would be India's Finance Minister someday. Just imagine! Among the distinguished audience was P. Chidamaram, India's Finance Minister, besides intellectuals and academicians, including several RBI Governors. Narendra Jadhav, who was then 53 years old, just smiled and declined the offer.

Whatever people might say about schools and education, none can doubt that the family is the earliest and the best institution where the parents are the first teachers. Their theoretical and practical teachings, however simple they may be, are the pillars of a human character. Good parents serve as the seeds that sprout and grow into beautiful and fruitful plants. Likewise, the evils that society witnesses are nothing but the offshoots of bad parenting. The Chinese proverb rightly says, “*A happy family is but an earlier heaven.*”

The father and mother mould their children and are constantly alert and awake for their journey in life. They continuously guide their children on the path of justice, honesty and righteousness. In the words of Frank A. Clark, “*A father is a man who expects his children to be as good the people as he meant to be.*” Mother's role, no doubt, is greater and therefore more vital. She is the one who nourishes a tiny being in her womb till the time to give birth to a human life and the summation of all humans, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, is the human race itself. Surely, this inspired Ellen Key to publicly proclaim, “*The mother is the most precious possession that society advances its highest well-being when it protects the functions of the mother.*”

In conclusion, positive and responsible parenting is of paramount importance. Nations grow and prosper due to these two essentials or they may perish in their absence.

References:

01. The Holy Family Edition of the Catholic Bible (1961)
02. Reader's Digest (September 2005)
03. Reader's Digest (October 2006)

SOME CHALLENGES THAT THE FAMILY FACES TODAY

Fr. Jose Verikaseril, SDB

Introduction

The Sacred Scriptures of various religious communities contain abundant material on the family which is a sacred unit of the society in God's plan. The Church magisterium of the Catholic Church time and again has brought to the attention of its members as well as to the world by and large how the family that occupies the primacy of place in any society is to be nurtured according to the design of the creator.⁵³ The various human sciences and in particular, sociology, anthropology and psychology offer a huge amount of material related to the family. Rightly so! If the family breaks down the entire fabric of the society crumbles. In this short reflection we want to mention a few of the challenges that face the family today. An awareness of these challenges is the first step to ward off the dangers that the family faces. We have no intention of being exhaustive. We are not burdening this write up with footnotes and bibliographical details. These are easily available. We are highlighting some of the challenges which have been already brought to our attention by the biblical authors and the teaching authority of the Church.

1. The challenge to nourish and cherish the spouse

Apostle Paul compares the love that should exist between husband and wife to the love that is seen on Calvary when the Church was born due to the blood that was shed by Jesus on the cross. This is love at its zenith. Jesus forgets himself for the sake of the world. It is this sort of *self-giving love* that Paul invites the spouses to have when he says that the husband must nourish and cherish the wife (Eph 5:21-33). This implies just as a man makes provision for his own bodily needs, he should do so also for his wife. Paul has prefaced it with an important jointer. It is not the husband alone who has the obligation to love the wife.⁵⁴ The wife should also love the husband. This love is a dynamic love

53 The readers stand to gain if they peruse the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) and the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam Actuositatem). See John Paul II, *The Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)*, 22 Nov 1981, see also John Paul II, *Letter to Families (Gratissimam Sane)*, 2 February 1994, Pope Francis, *The Joy of Life (Amoris Laetia)*, 19 March 2016). See also Joy Vellattukara, "Vatican II and Marriage and Family in Northeast India," in Isaac Padinarekuttu and Teiborlang Lyngdoh, Eds., *Catholic Church in Transition* (Shillong: Oriens Publications, Oriens Theological College, 2016) 273-293. For more details on the family in the Church's teachings, see the article of Jose Varickasseril, "Essential Features of a Christian Family" in James Thoppil and Thomas Manjaly, Eds., *Ministering to Christian Family: A North-East Indian Perspective* (Shillong: Oriens Publications, Oriens Theological College, 2005) 23-26. This above-mentioned volume also contains numerous articles of great value on the family.

54 See F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984) 391.

which calls for daily renewal. Love should ever remain fresh. Or as Jeremiah says the faithful love and affection of the bridal days is the icon and model (see Jere 2:1-4). In more than one sense the couple who ventures into a married life should be like the community of Israel that was willing to tread unfamiliar paths because they trusted Yahweh. Further just as the community was set apart for Yahweh alone the spouses are to be set apart for mutual enjoyment.⁵⁵

We could descend to the challenge of the daily living on this theme. Sharing the household chores is a challenge particularly today when both the husbands and the wives return home from a heavy work load of the day to complete the work that remains to be done at home. Or if the woman has been at home the whole day attending to manifold duties, the way she has to tenderly care for the husband who is coming home after the tension and tediousness of a day's work! The wife who awaits the husband with a cup of tea or a bucket of warm water makes the husband long to come home. Not simple to do it day in and day out, but, precious in order to give expression to nourishing and cherishing!

2. The challenge for the spouses to live in harmony and mutual understanding

The Gospel of Mark inserts the pericope on divorce (Mk 10:1-12) – the permission to abandon the older partner and marry another – between two important teachings. He has given an important aphorism of Jesus before and another episode after. The aphorism about the salt is significant. The salt-sacrifice metaphor is appropriate to a situation of suffering.⁵⁶ The disciples will face fiery ordeals including in one's efforts to remain loyal to the spouse. Jesus invites the disciples to live in with peace with one another (9:49-50). The episode is about children (10:13-16). If one examines the teaching on divorce in the light of this aphorism and the episode of the children, one realizes how important it is to preserve the integrity of the family. The flavour that we bring into the life of the other is important in order to preserve the family. Giving a thought to the wellbeing of the children is a great help in order to adjust the differences that arise between the husband and wife.

3. The challenge to forgive seven times a day the spouse who offends

The Scriptures abound in teachings related to forgiveness. Matthew in his capacity as an author has placed the teaching of Jesus on divorce after the parable of the unforgiving servant. This is a deeply insightful. Matthew thus shows that the solution for husband-wife conflict is not getting another partner! Instead it is a willingness to forgive seven times seventy times which is the right solution!

Luke speaks of forgiveness on several occasions. One of the sayings of Jesus that Luke has reproduced is a particularly powerful one. Luke recalls the words of Jesus: “And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent.' You must forgive” (Lk 17:4). This is a challenge of immense proportion. Usually, those who offend us are not someone remaining far away. It is those who are closest to us. It happens often. However if a family is to last, there is no other alternative rather than the ability to forgive each time and every time.

55. For more details on the love between Yahweh and the community of Israel, see J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980) 163-164.

56. See William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) 349.

4. The challenge to safeguard the little ones

In the family, in the neighbourhood, in the school, in the village there are numerous children. They are innocent and without guile. Unfortunately one hears today of numerous sad and untoward events. There are the corrupt and malevolent ones who take advantage of the innocent and little ones to quench their lust. Jesus gave unequivocal teaching here which underlines the obligation of mutual pastoral concern. Jesus made it clear that severe punishment awaits those who cause spiritual damage to the little ones (see Mt 18:6-9; Mk 9:42-48)⁵⁷. The unsuspecting ones are left with a negative traumatic experience which leaves the scar behind for years to come. In some cases the trauma lasts a life time. The parents have a grave obligation to instruct the guileless ones from such dangers. It is a challenge which calls for vigilance and prudence, much caution and discretion.⁵⁸

5. The challenge to pray together as a family on the day of Lord

Sunday is special (see Sir 33:7-12). The creator has made certain days special. They are meant for many a purpose and one such purpose is to worship the creator and the benevolent father who provides for his children. It goes without saying that there are several functions for which the entire family sets out together. Despite inconveniences and problems, people make it when they deem certain occasions of particular significance. In the life of the family, the challenge to keep Sunday as a special day to go to meet the Lord is not an easy one. It is important that in front of the Lord, along with fellow-worshippers, one spends time on a day like the Sunday. Pope John Paul II insisted upon this when he wrote his letter entitled *Dies Domini*.⁵⁹ Over and above the moments spent in the hearth of one's home in prayer and worship, to pray along with fellow-worshippers on Sunday is a necessity. In this regard it is important to initiate the children particularly to various forms of popular piety as Pope Francis has insisted upon.⁶⁰ If these challenges are accepted, it is going to make a world of a difference in the building of one's home.

6. The challenge to have a reasonably large number of children

Let me call raising a large number of children as a challenge.⁶¹ Pope Francis wrote, "Large families are a joy for the church."⁶² The first blessing and command that the creator has given to mankind is to reproduce themselves (Gen 1:27-28). John Paul II gave a clear presentation on this command of

57. See R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007) 680-684.

58. There was a write up in the Shillong Times titled, "Child Abuse a growing menace in society" (See The Shillong Times, 3 December 2016). It is imperative for parents to take the necessary precautions.

59. John Paul II speaks in detail on this topic. See *On the Lord's Day (Dies Domini)*, 31 May 1998).

60. See Pope Francis, *On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (Evangelii Gaudium)*, 24 November 2013). See articles 122-126.

61. The readers would do well to know the position of the Church on this topic from Paul VI's teaching in *Humanae Vitae* dated 25 July 1968. See also the teachings of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in the following documents: "Declaration on Procured Abortion (18 Nov 1974), Sterilization in Catholic Hospitals (13 March 1975), Declaration on Certain Problems of Sexual Ethics (29 Dec 1975).

62. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, (19th March 2016), no. 167.

the creator.⁶³ This is a blessing and a gift from God.⁶⁴ The Word also says that children are a gift from the Lord (see Psalm 127 and 128).⁶⁵ However, when I speak about numerous children, I am aware that I am stirring the hornet's nest!⁶⁶ It is a paradox that those who can afford to have numerous children (here I mean from the financial and health point of view) have the least amount of children! The poor who are not in a position to exercise a responsible parenthood have numerous children! It is important to look at the consequence of having a micro-family! Selfishness reigns supreme. The single child is pampered and cajoled. All his / her wants which are absolutely not justifiable are provided. The single child holds the parents to ransom. He/she knows that anything and everything is possible. When the number of children in a family is too few, there is no healthy growth! They face loneliness. Sometimes only the pets are there to play with. Or perhaps only the t. v. channels are there to provide entertainment which often are not wholesome! A reasonably large number of children properly spaced out with the ways which the creator himself has arranged; families can live a healthy life with the elder ones giving a helping hand to the parents by looking after the siblings. The challenge has to be accepted making use of what the society can provide such as free education, scholarships, sponsorships and benefits arising from numerous charitable associations. Adoption should come in as a last resource when a couple is unable to have children due to unavoidable circumstances. The temptation to live as a husband and wife without wanting to be a father and mother has to be overcome. To have a freelance sort of relationship between a man and a woman without going through the joys and burdens of the natural motherhood and fatherhood is a challenge that is fast spreading like gangrene. Our grandchildren must have their uncles and aunties!

7. The challenge to spend quality time with the spouse and the children

The preacher (Qoheleth) says that there is a time for everything (Qoh 3). Did he also mean that there should be a time for everything? Today the society exerts numerous pressures on a couple. To cope with the challenges arising due to such pressures is no easy task. It can happen that the bread-winner of a family is killing himself with work. He rightly feels that all his struggles are meant for the welfare and wellbeing of his spouse and children. However the family craves for not only *the things* that can be provided. There is a yearning to be together! Loneliness can be a crushing experience. Everyone in a family should give quality time for one another – the husband for the wife and vice versa, and the parents for the children, etc. Finding time to listen to another is among the best expressions of authentic love. Quality time, prime time for others in the family - there is no substitute for this if a healthy relationship and a happy atmosphere are to reign in a family!

63. For details, see John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (25th March 1995), no. 42-44

64. See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007) 139.

65. For more details on children as a gift, see the interpretation of Psalms 127 and 128 by Nancy DeClaissé-Walford, in Nancy DeClaissé-Walford et al. eds. *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014) 917-922.

66. The Shillong Times dated 13 December 2016, carried a write up titled "Family Planning Fund underused in State." The unnamed Reporter seems to be deploring the fact that the population rate is higher in Meghalaya than in other states of Northeast India! The birthrate of Meghalaya is 24.1%. The article is evidently indicating a distorted view on life prevalent in many circles!

8. The challenge to overcome the *throw-away culture* of the society

The throw-away culture is a topic that comes up frequently when Pope Francis addresses any group. The modern society is a victim of the throw-away culture. Everything is thrown away! Use and throw is the slogan! This can have its adverse effect in the society. Who decides what is useful and good? Relativism sets in making an individual the judge of everything. There is a danger that the sick, the elderly, the poor, the retarded and the crippled, the unemployed, etc. are all useless in one's judgement! The challenge to go counter-cultural is a challenge. We need to offer space for the other. That is how a healthy family and society need to develop.⁶⁷

9. The challenge to impart an all-round education

The wisdom corpus in the Bible covers a range of items to be communicated by the elders to the growing generation. One gets a surprise when one finds perennially valid lessons in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Sirach etc. written several centuries ago. We are facing the challenge of imparting an education which makes an individual fully equipped to live in the society. The physical, the intellectual, the spiritual, the moral, the emotional, the psychological, dimensions are to be kept in mind when training a young mind. Over-emphasis on any of these aspects and ignoring of another is bound to bring about havoc! Knowledge without morality is surprisingly on the increase. A balanced personality is the fruit of an education which caters to the various aspects of a growing generation. Apostle Peter is credited to have said: "You must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness and godliness with mutual affection and mutual affection with love" (2 Pet 1:5-7). That is a long list of eight virtues! This is true education and it is indeed a challenge.

A true education should help inculcate in the young wonder and love for nature. Not keeping public places clean, turning the roads into a dustbin, throwing items out of the window or from a moving vehicle, littering the floor of the train, letting taps flow, parking a vehicle at the cross-roads, jumping queue, etc. would indicate a lack of civic sense as well as lack of education! One may be literate but not educated! It is not sufficient to keep my house and my garden clean! There is need to consider the universe as the larger family to which I belong. This is a challenge.⁶⁸ An area that needs particular attention is work. Real human dignity comes when children are taught to appreciate the sacredness of work.⁶⁹ They should be trained from their childhood to make their contribution by doing household chores according to their age and capacity.

10. The challenge to get proactively involved in the life of the neighbour

No man is an island. Man is a social being who has to rub shoulders with other fellow-beings. Despite the humdrum duties in one's individual life and personal interest, everyone needs to find time for social obligations. It could be that today you need me and tomorrow I need you! One cannot remain neutral, indifferent and apathetic to what goes on in one's neighbourhood and society. There is need to budget one's

67. For more details related to this topic under consideration, see the document of the Sacred Congregation for the Defense of the Faith titled, "Declaration on Euthanasia" (5 May 1980).

68. For details on this topic, see John Paul II, *The Christian Family in the Modern World* (Familiaris Consortio, 22 Nov 1981), nos 36-41.

69. For details, see John Paul II, *On Human Work* (Laborem Exercens, 14 Sept 1981), nos 9-10.

time in such a manner that it becomes possible to be proactively involved in the life of another. Everyone has an obligation to the society. An *I don't care attitude* is simply not feasible even when it becomes a major challenge. Without intruding into another's privacy or without meddling into another's business, there is need for a judicious intervention in the lives of others. Visiting the sick, spending time with the lonely, a silent but assuring presence in the face of tragedies, not being tight-fisted when encountering the poor and indigent, taking part in a funeral are expressions of involvement.

11. The challenge to steer clear of unhealthy media and porn

The world of advertisement for consumerist purpose is taking its toll in the lives of young and old. The human body which is the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17 and 6:18-20) is being trivialized and commercialized with no qualms of conscience. Teenagers and little ones alike are being initiated far too early into the type of information that should have been conveyed with delicacy. Parents shy away from sex education which ought to be given in due measure to the children who are growing up. In the absence of such an education, a morbid curiosity leads the young ones to seek clandestinely and at times even defiantly for sources that can provide the knowledge that they are seeking. While the modern media contains a mine of useful information, no one can deny the fact that there are also inherent dangers. The challenge is to know that virtue lies in the middle. The parents need to be disciplined themselves and need to impart balance and discipline to others for whom they have a responsibility.

12. The challenge to adorn the inner self

Apostle Peter speaks of the mutual obligations of the spouses. He invites the wives to qualify their lives with purity and reverence. He invites them not to be over preoccupied about the external including the braiding of the hair, the wearing of golden ornaments and fine clothing. Instead, he invited them to adorn the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in God's sight (see 1 Pet 3:1-4). Similarly the husband is invited to show consideration towards their wives. They should honour them (1 Pet 3:5). Peter is focusing on true values here. What one is has more import than on what one has! As a corollary to what Peter has said, we could add something here. A practical application of this piece of advice of Apostle Peter's advice would be the ability to judge what is necessary and what is luxurious! It could happen that one starts hoarding what is not required simply because the neighbour has it! A judicious acquisition of what is essential in life is a challenge. By way of an example, it is not seldom that one finds parents who neglect the purchase of healthy food but spend much money not what is not required. To lead a virtuous life and having the courage to swim against the current is the challenge that the families are facing today!⁷⁰

Conclusion

We have drawn our attention to a dozen challenges that families are facing today. It is not that they are a modern phenomenon and people in the past never had such problems. However they are taking on a larger proportion in the lives of persons both as individuals and as members of a family and the society. A courageous step taken to tackle this situation can make a difference. It is bound to create happier families living in grater peace and harmony.

70. For a better grasp of wherein the dignity of women lies, see the Apostolic Letter of John Paul II titled *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year* (Mulieris Dignitatem, 15 August 1988).

FAMILY MINISTRY

Sr. Christine Mynsong MSMHC

Introduction: Family as Domestic Church

The Second Vatican Council described the family as “the domestic Church” (*ecclesia domestica*). Moreover, in his encyclical letter *Familiaris Consortio*, St. John Paul II speaks of the family as “a 'Church in miniature' in such a way that in its own way it is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church”⁷¹ Through this affirmation of the family's identity, the Pope confirmed that the family itself is a Church according to its own way of life. In his writings on evangelization, Pope Paul VI taught that the family possesses all the essential features of the Church. Therefore, it is somewhat inaccurate for families to say that they go to church, because they are already Church at home. It may be messy, terribly unstructured, noisy and disorganized, but it's still Church. St John Paul II has used this title for the family innumerable times in his writings and in his public addresses. This is a new way of thinking about and experiencing family life. Every particular task of the family is an expression and concrete actuation of that fundamental mission. We must therefore go deeper into the unique riches of the family's mission and probe its contents, which are both manifold and unified. The Domestic Church plays a key role in our sanctification because it is the primary place where we practice coming to intimately love other persons.

1. Family: A Foundation for Life

“Family is foundational to life, to Christian life, to society and to everything, especially during the early years of life; parents symbolize God for their children”⁷². In his teaching on the value of human life, St. John Paul II writes, “Within the 'people of life and the people for life,' the family has a decisive responsibility”⁷³.... Here it is a matter of God's own love, of which parents are co-workers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan”⁷⁴ Family is so fundamental to every human being. Family is a haven and a space where an individual breathes, exists, develops and grows physically, emotionally, mentally, intellectually and spiritually, a place of his/her existential horizon, in which the whole network of social relations is grounded from the closest and most immediate to the most distant”⁷⁵ The atmosphere for all this growth requires love, safety, security, freedom, respect, acceptance, and in an environment which is promoting, healing and guiding.

71. John Paul II, *Letter to Families from Pope John Paul II* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 1994) (no.49)

72. David Michael Thomas, Ph.D, Article, Pope John Paul II Renewal centre (2014)

73. Pope John Paul II *advice for Families*, Pope John Paul II Renewal centre (2014)

74. Bl. John Paul II talk on *Family as "sanctuary of life"* Jan 29, 2012

75. John Paul II, *Letter to Families gratisimam sane from Pope John Paul II* (1994,no.2)

St. JP II affirms that the family has its origin in that same love with which the Creator embraces the created world, as was already expressed “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1). In the Gospel, Jesus offers a supreme confirmation: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16). The only-begotten Son, of one substance with the Father, “God from God and Light from Light”, entered into human history through the family: “For by his incarnation the Son of God united himself in a certain way with every man. He laboured with human hands... and loved with a human heart. Born of Mary the Virgin, he truly became one of us and, except for sin, was like us in every respect”. If in fact Christ “fully discloses man to himself”, he does so beginning with the family in which he chose to be born and to grow up.

The family ministry, then, is a great challenge that the Church has in order to make every family a 'domestic church' empowered to meet the challenges of life. However the realities in the family are not always smooth, and peaceful.

2. The Realities of a Family Today and Its Challenges

Based on the worldwide consultation on families preceding the Synod on Family, Pope Francis presents: *The Experiences and Challenges of Families* (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, chapter II). He says: “Faithful to Christ’s teaching we look to the reality of the family today in all its *complexity*, with its lights and shadows”⁷⁶... A few of the salient features are the following:

1. Anthropological and cultural changes in our times influence all aspects of life including family life. Individuals and families are receiving less support from social institutions⁷⁷
2. Tensions created by an overly individualistic culture, caught up with possessions and pleasures leads to intolerance and hostility in families⁷⁸
3. Family at times is considered as a convenient station for asserting rights but relationships are left to the changing winds of personal desires⁷⁹
4. There is no use in simply decrying present-day evils, nor should we impose rules by sheer authority. What we need is more responsible and generous efforts to present the reasons and motivations for choosing marriage and family⁸⁰
5. We often present marriage in such a way that its unitive meaning, its call to grow in love and its ideal of mutual assistance are overshadowed by an almost exclusive insistence on the duty of procreation. Nor do we provide solid guidance to young couples... At times we have proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, etc.⁸¹
6. We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage and giving meaning to marital life⁸²

76. Cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, nos 33-37, and 40

77. AL no 32

78. AL 33

79. AL 34

80. AL 35

81. AL 36

82. AL 37

7. At the risk of oversimplifying, we might say we live in a culture which pressures young people not to start a family, because they lack possibilities for the future. Yet this same culture presents them with so many options that they too are dissuaded from starting a family⁸³
8. A crisis in a couple's relationship destabilizes the family and may lead to separation and divorce, to serious consequences for adults, children and society as a whole, weakening its individual and social bonds⁸⁴
9. Economic constraints prohibit a family's access to education, cultural activities and involvement in the life of society⁸⁵
10. A great number of children with single parents and thus no proper parental guidance and support for growth⁸⁶

3. Accompaniment of Families: The Need for Adequate Preparation

Like every other living reality, the family too is called upon to develop and grow⁸⁷ which shows that the family needs a constant guidance and accompaniment according to the developmental stages. Thus meaningful preparation for family life is an important dimension the Church has to pay attention to. *What is called 'preparation' in this document includes a broad and thorough process of education for married life which must be considered in the totality of its values. In fact, preparation is educating for the respect and care for life which, in the Sanctuary of families, must become a real and proper culture of human life in all its manifestations and stages for those who are part of the people of life and for life*⁸⁸ More than ever before, preparation of young people for marriage and family life is necessary today. In some cultures the families themselves according to ancient customs, ensure the passing on to young people of the values concerning married and family life, which they do through a gradual process of education or initiation. But the changes that have taken place within almost all modern societies demand that not only the family but also society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities⁸⁹ The proper understanding of the concept of marriage, the purpose and its related responsibilities will better prepare the couples to take up family life positively. "The Church must therefore promote better and more intensive programs of marriage preparation, in order to eliminate as far as possible the difficulties that many married couples find themselves in, and even more in order to favor positively the establishing and maturing of successful marriages. Marriage preparation has to be seen and put into practice as a gradual and continuous process. It includes three main stages: remote, proximate and immediate preparation"⁹⁰

83. AL 40

84. AL 41

85. AL 44

86. AL 45

87. John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris consortio* (1981 no. 65)

88. Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo *Preparation for the sacrament of marriage*, (1996, no.9-60)

89. John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris consortio* (1981 no. 66)

90. Ibid

3.1. Remote Preparation: This is the first stage and it includes the physical, social, psychological and spiritual growth of persons which takes place in the family and the environment around which implies the formation of character, development of personality and cultivating human values. The training in the family should lead children to discover themselves as being endowed with a set of rich and complex psychological faculties and unique personality, especially as Christians, the training is to have a solid spiritual, faith formation that will give an understanding that marriage is a “true vocation and mission”⁹¹

3.2. Proximate Preparation: Proximate preparation is the second stage of marriage preparation. This takes place when the parties have decided to get married. During this period of engagement, the specific programmes should be matters related to the maturation of human values like relationships, communications, dialogue, openness to change and new situations.⁹² Moreover, the aim here is to deepen the life of faith, community dimensions and the knowledge about the sacramentality of the Church.

According to CCEO can 783 the responsibility for making provisions for marriage preparation belongs to the local ordinary. The parish priest is to provide the necessary evangelization and catechetical formation for those seeking to celebrate any sacrament according to the norms issued by the competent authority (CIC can 843) It is vital that the young people who received these instructions should be able to understand the importance of the commitment they make through the exchange of consent, the purpose and meaning of the Christian marriage and be strengthened in the values concerning the defense of human life

3.3. Immediate Preparation: The final stage is called 'Immediate Preparation' and deals with canonical and liturgical structures of the marriage preparation. St. JP II exhorts: “The immediate preparation of the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony should take place in the months and weeks immediately preceding the wedding, so as to give new meaning, content and form to the so called pre- nuptial required by the Canon Law”.

The aims of immediate preparation could consist of the following:

- a) A synthesis of the previous preparation, especially its doctrinal, moral and spiritual content, thus filling in eventual gaps in basic formation;
- b) Experiences of prayer (retreats, spiritual exercises for the engaged) in which the encounter with the Lord can make them discover the depth and beauty of the supernatural life;
- c) A suitable liturgical preparation which also envisages the active participation of the engaged, with special attention to the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- d) Good use the canonical talks that are envisaged with the parish priest, so that everyone can get to know one another better.⁹³

91. Ibid

92. Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo Preparation for the sacrament of marriage, (1996, no.22)

93. Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo Preparation for the sacrament of marriage, no.50

3.4. Spiritual Preparation of Marriage (CCEO can 783): Spiritual preparation of marriage should help the candidates to understand marriage as a sacrament. The specific factors to be imparted are the sacredness of the sacrament of Matrimony, the importance of the covenantal relationship, the parental responsibility—the couple shares in the creative work of God, and assumes their responsibilities in human, moral, spiritual, psychological and religious formation and education of the prospective children.

4. Pastoral care after marriage:

Married couples need to have continued pastoral care in order to sustain them in this vocation and to help them live it in an ever more fruitful manner. This is especially important during the initial years of married life as the couple is adjusting to their new responsibilities as married people and possibly as parents. This holds true especially for young families, which, finding themselves in a context of new values and responsibilities, are more vulnerable, especially in the first years of marriage, to possible difficulties, such as those created by adaptation to life together or by the birth of children. Young married couples should learn to accept willingly, and make good use of, the discreet, tactful and generous help offered by other couples that already have more experience of married and family life⁹⁴ Continued pastoral care could take the form of "post-marriage courses, seminars, workshops on family life, spiritual retreats to be carried out in parishes or deaneries."

In order that the family may be ever more a true community of love, it is necessary that all its members should be helped and trained in their responsibilities as they face the new problems that arise: in mutual service, and in active sharing in family life, to learn and understand the dynamics in the family programmes on family counseling, interpersonal relationship skills etc. All this can be organized for the family members in the local church/parish.

5. Accompaniment of Families—especially Dysfunctional Families

Pope Francis speaks of accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness⁹⁵ what he wants to convey by this, I think, is to be present with the family in moment of struggles. In order to effectively accompany a community, we need to discern the factors that have made the community what it is today, accept it and lead it to another level.

5.1. Accompaniment means acceptance: What does accompaniment of difficult or dysfunctional families mean? First of all, I think, accompaniment of families means accepting these families as they are. Pope Francis always speaks about a pastoral approach in our ministries. More than anything else, a pastoral approach is a cultivation of an attitude—an attitude of acceptance of people as they are. Often these dysfunctional families will shy away from the Church. We have to look out for them: 'search for the lost sheep.' Even if they cannot receive the sacraments of the Church like communion, they should be encouraged and welcomed to attend church services and functions. Often times, regular attendance of church functions can bring about regularization of the married lives of couples, for example.

94. John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris consortio* no. 69

95. AL. 291

5.2. Accompaniment means to listen and understand: Often people know solutions to their problems, including dysfunctional families. They want somebody to listen and understand them. Listening to their struggles, pains, to their experiences make them feel cared, understood, accepted and supported. Listening to people is one of the most difficult things for a priest or religious in the ministry. Often we are too eager to give our precious pieces of advice. But more often than not, listening solves more problems than giving advice.

5.3. Accompaniment means giving priority to family ministry, and making personnel and facilities possible. In order to help families handle their issues and cope with the unchangeable situations, training personnel for the same ministry will indeed be the best way of accompanying families. Within the family ministry, conscious effort should be made to reach the difficult or dysfunctional families. They may not come forward to seek help; they should be sought out as the Lord speaks of the Good Shepherd searching for the lost sheep (Lk 15: 3-7).

5.4. Accompaniment means: 'To be like a beacon of a lighthouse'⁹⁶. The meaning and the rationale of accompaniment of difficult families can be summarized in the words of *Amoris Laetitia* "The Synod Fathers stated that, although the Church realizes that any breach of the marriage bond "is against the will of God," she is also "conscious of the frailty of many of her children." Illumined by the gaze of Jesus Christ, "she turns with love to those who participate in her life in an incomplete manner, recognizing that the grace of God works also in their lives by giving them the courage to do good, to care for one another in love and to be of service to the community in which they live and work. This approach is also confirmed by our celebration of this Jubilee Year devoted to mercy. Although she constantly holds up the call to perfection and asks for a fuller response to God, "the Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love, by restoring in them hope and confidence, like the beacon of a lighthouse in a port or a torch carried among the people to enlighten those who have lost their way or who are in the midst of storm. Let us not forget that the Church's task is often like that of a field hospital."

5.5. Accompaniment is a slow process: *Amoris Laetitia* speaks of "Gradualness in Pastoral Care:"⁹⁷ The Synod Fathers also considered situations of mere civil marriage or even simple cohabitation noting that even such unions in the course of time are characterized by 'deep affection and responsibility for their children and eventually can lead to celebration of the sacrament of marriage when pastoral accompaniment is available to them. We speak of lapsed Catholics. These become so, often times because of lack of pastoral accompaniment. The Synod also refers to many young people today who mistrust marriage but just live together putting off indefinitely the commitment of marriage. As members of the church they too need pastoral care that is merciful and helpful.

5.6. Accompaniment is the way of Jesus: 'Reinstatement, not casting off:'⁹⁸ Pope Francis speaks of 'discernment of irregular situations.' In his own words: "here I would like to reiterate something I sought to make clear to the whole Church, lest we take the wrong path: there are two ways of

96. ibid

97. AL 293

98. AL 296

thinking which recur throughout the Church's history: casting off and reinstating. The Church's way from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement... The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone forever; it is it is to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all who ask for it with a sincere heart... for true charity is always unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous." Consequently, there is a need to avoid judgments which do not take into account the complexity of various situations" and to be "attentive, by necessity, to how people experience distress because of their condition"

5.7. Accompaniment means reaching out: Accompaniment really means reaching to everyone, of needing to help each person find his or her proper way of participating in the ecclesial community and thus to experience being touched by "an unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous mercy. No one can be condemned forever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel"⁹⁹. Here Pope Francis excludes nobody. He says: "here I am not speaking only of the divorced and remarried, but of everyone, in whatever situation they find themselves. Naturally, if someone flaunts an objective sin as if it were a part of the Christian ideal, or wants to impose something other than what the Church teaches, he or she can in no way presume to teach or preach to others; this is a case of something which separates from the community (cf. Mt 18:17 "*If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector*"). For Pope Francis even that person cannot be excluded from pastoral accompaniment. He says "such a person needs to listen once more to the Gospel message and its call to conversion. Yet even for that person there can be some way of taking part in the life of community, whether in social service, prayer meetings or another way that his or her own initiative, together with the discernment of the parish priest, may suggest".

The best way to accompany people is through family visits, I remember when I was engaged in the family visits we could bring back many lapsed Christians to church. Many live-in couples and couples in cohabitations came over to the Church and rectified their marriages. Indeed, through family visits we can catechize families. As Bishop Stephen Ferrando SDB was convinced that nothing could substitute a *warm personal contact* with people through family visits 'there are places and houses where Our Lord Jesus Christ is not certainly the king, and this is the reason why Our Lord Jesus sent you here'¹⁰⁰

6. Jesus as a Model of Family Catechesis

Jesus was someone who involved himself in family catechesis. He visited the family of Lazarus, Martha and Mary at Bethany (Lk 10:38-42). This showed his close relationship with the family. Martha invited Jesus and his disciples to her home. She wanted to serve them a meal. However, she found that she was left alone to prepare it. Thus, she complained to Jesus: "Don't you care that my sister left me alone to work?" Jesus instructed Martha not to worry about trifles; for, just one thing was important. He said: "Mary has chosen the better part;" namely, to remain at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. In our visits to families we too can choose to listen to them and thereafter guide them to set priorities in life, and to choose that which is most important.

99 AL297

100. Sr. Elizabeth Pakumala MSMHC, *From the heart of A Father who loves you* Guwahati, (1995, 133)

Jesus attended various social celebrations in his time. He took part in the wedding of a family at Cana. When the wine ran out, Jesus showed deep concern to the newlyweds at the prompting of his mother. He miraculously turned water into wine, thereby ensuring that everyone had a good time (Jn 2:1-12). This shows that celebrations with family and friends were important for Jesus. They should also be important for us. By taking part in celebrations or family programmes, we can show our love, solidarity and support. The presence of Jesus in the celebration was a great consolation for the family. He eased their embarrassment. In our interaction families, we too can ease struggles or embarrassment.

Jesus healed the sick mother-in-law of Peter who was hospitable to Jesus and his disciples (Mk 1:29-31). In his visits to families, Jesus brings good news to the members. Part of God's reign is restoring wholeness to the people through casting out of demons and the turning aside of illnesses. In the case of Peter's mother-in-law, she was healed. Then, she began serving them. Our visits to families, too, should bring new life, hope and encouragement to people.

Jesus voluntarily goes to dine with Zacchaeus. He not only brings about a conversion of heart, but also proclaims salvation to his household (Lk 19:1-9). The gesture of Jesus calling Zacchaeus by name and offering to go to his house to dine with him is a sign of friendship and acceptance. This makes Zacchaeus repent for his past life. The joy of being loved and forgiven makes him give half of his possessions to the poor. He also adds that, if he has cheated anybody of anything, he will pay back four times the amount (v 8). Our visits to families can help people to change their life.

Jesus took part in the banquets of rich people like Simon (Lk 7:36-50). He was accused of being only interested in drunkards and tax collectors and being the friend of sinners. Yes, he was. But, he was not only just a friend of outcasts, sinners, and the riff-raff of society; but, he was a friend of all people. In this passage, he seizes an opportunity to point out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He teaches them that love and forgiveness go beyond the demands of ritual purity. In all this, Jesus is a model to us to be morally integral and to help people in their process of conversion. Very often, our own life can be a witness to what ought to be done and what ought to be avoided. Moreover, Jesus consoled families at the distressing moment of death by bringing back the life of their dear ones: the son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7:11-16), the daughter of Jairus (Lk 8:50-56) and his friend, Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44). His compassion went out to restore dignity and respect to all the needy.

7. Conclusion:

It is our duty through the family ministry to proclaim to all families that they are the 'Domestic Church'. The understanding of the family as a domestic church—expressed through the church documents—has to be communicated to the people, at large. A systematic preparation on Marriage and its spirituality, faith formation with creative ways of learning how to read the word of God and how to pray with the word of God could be the means to empower the families to live a meaningful life. Here, there are innumerable possibilities for you and for me. Let us joyfully and generously respond to the challenges of the family.

YAC COLUMN

Correct Answers of the Questions of July 2016

1. To send out labourers into his harvest (Mt 9:32)
2. Among the gentiles and the towns of the Samaritans (Mt 10:5)
3. They would lose it (Mt 10:39)
4. Jesus went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities (Mt 11:1)
5. John sent word by his disciples to Jesus to ask him whether he was the one who was to come or were they to wait for another (Mt 11:2-3)
6. The least in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 11:11)
7. That he had a demon (Mt 11:18)
8. The cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Mt 11:21-22)
9. Rest (Mt 11: 28)
10. He ate the bread of the Presence which was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests (Mt 12:3-4)
11. The Pharisees said that it was only by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons that he cast out the demons (Mt 12:24)
12. The sign of Jonah who stayed three days and three nights in the belly of a sea monster (Mt 12:40)
13. Whoever does the will of the Father in heaven (Mt 12:50)
14. In the parable of the sower how many kind of soil does Jesus mention?
 - a. Four (Mt 13:4-8)
15. To the seed sown on the path (Mt 13:19)
16. To the seed sown among thorns (Mt 13:22)
17. The mustard seed (Mt 13:32)
18. The Son of Man (Mt 13:37)
19. The treasure hidden in a field, a merchant in search of fine pearls and a net that was thrown into the sea (Mt 13:44-47)
20. Because he was rejected by his own people at Nazareth (Mt 13:54-58)
21. Herod (14:3)
22. Because John told Herod that it was not lawful for him to have Herodias, his brother's wife (Mt 14:4)
23. He feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet (Mt 14:5)
24. Jesus walking on the water
25. They brought to Jesus all who were sick to be healed by him (Mt 14:35-36)

WINNERS:

- First Prize : Jennifer Rani
Second Prize : Belinda Wanroi, Sincerely Sngibon
Third Prize : Nikchera Marak, Silva Mary Sohkhia

QUIZZ FOR THIS ISSUE: DECEMBER 2016

1. What will happen if one blind person guides another blind person?
2. Where was Jesus when the Canaanite woman begged Jesus to heal her?
3. Where did Jesus go after healing the daughter of the Canaanite woman
4. Which miracle of Jesus is narrated in Mathew 15:32-39?
5. What did Jesus call the Pharisees and the Sadducees when they asked for a sign from heaven?
6. What did Jesus mean when he warned the apostles about the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees?
7. What did Jesus ask his disciples when they came into the district of Caesarea Philippi?
8. Who was the first to answer when Jesus asked his disciples who they thought him to be?
9. What was Simon Peter's answer to Jesus' question who they thought him to be?
10. Hearing Simon Peter's reply, what did Jesus promise him?
11. What did Jesus say we should do to become his followers?
12. Which disciples were with Jesus when he was transfigured?
13. Who appeared with Jesus when he was transfigured?
14. When Jesus was transfigured, what did the voice from the cloud say?
15. When a man told Jesus that his disciples could not cure his son who was an epileptic, what was his reaction?
16. Who, according to Jesus, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
17. In Jesus' parable, what would a shepherd do if he lost one out of his hundred sheep?
18. How many times should one forgive another who sins against him?
19. How does Jesus ask us to forgive our brother or sister?
20. Speaking about divorce, what does Jesus say about the man who divorces his wife and marries another?
21. What did Jesus do when his disciples tried to stop children to him?
22. In addition to keeping all the commandments what was the rich young man asked to do to enter eternal life?
23. To what did Jesus compare the difficulty of a rich person who wished to enter the kingdom of heaven?
24. What reward did Jesus promise to those who left everything follow him?
25. In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, how were the labourers who came to work at the different times, some even at the last hour, rewarded?



REMEMBERING SR. SUSANA GOI

Sr. Susana Goi was born on 21 July 1922 at Sessa Tea Estate, Tezpur, Assam. She was the only daughter of Mr. Rugnath Goi and Mrs. Etwari Dungdung. She had two brothers and was second among the three siblings. Everyone loved her and she was affectionately called Mangri. The God fearing parents of Susana brought up their children in their loving home, instilling in them Christian values. After the completion of the secondary school, Susanna joined Aspirantate at Tezpur in 1942, the year which marks the foundation of the Congregation. Her Postulancy and Novitiate formation was at Guwahati. Having completed her Novitiate formation under the direction of Sr. Severina Schiappaelli FMA, the then Novice mistress, she made her first religious profession on 8 December 1945 at Guwahati.

The life of Sr. Susana tells the story of an untiring missionary enterprise with many trials and tests. Being one of the pioneers of the Congregation, she imbibed the original spirit and charism of the congregation. As the Congregation was in its early days of founding, she also had to face hardships, challenges and deprivations.

Sr. Susana was kind-hearted, humble, compassionate, warm and affectionate. She always desired the comfort of others and reached out to those in need. The warmest corner in her heart was for the poor and needy. She was always cheerful and jovial. As a religious, she was ever faithful to her rules and lived an exemplary life of obedience and punctuality. She had great devotion to Mother Mary and trusted in her maternal care, guidance and protection. She was enthusiastic and committed to the missionary charism and joyfully went about as a messenger of the Gospel. She has toured the

The life of Sr. Susana tells the story of an untiring missionary enterprise with many trials and tests. Being one of the pioneers of the Congregation, she imbibed the original spirit and charism of the congregation.

With so much fervour, eagerness and interest she carried Christ into many receptive hearts and homes.

villages of Tezpur, Rangapara, Tetenbari, Naharkatia, Golaghat, Moran, Dibrugarh and Doomdoma. She was zealous missionary, an excellent Grihini teacher and a vigilant assistant in the boarding. She loved visiting families and meeting people in the houses. With so much fervour, eagerness and interest she carried Christ into many receptive hearts and homes. Her life re-affirms the words of St. Paul, "life spent for the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

After her long years of active life in the mission field Sr. Susana came to St. Mary's, Dibrugarh in the year 1994. It was a period of time for her to reminisce over the past years and to become aware of the graciousness of the Lord in her life. She accepted gladly the discomforts and distresses of the aging years. Since the time she reached the community of St. Mary's Convent, she was found spending much time with the Lord interceding for the world and praying the Rosary. She remained in gratitude to God for all the blessings and expressed her thankfulness to all who stayed with her and visited her. The members in the community loved to be in her company. On special occasions it was her joy and delight to amuse the community with her melodious songs in high pitched tone to which she would add rhythmic steps. These indeed gave expressions to her innate joy, simplicity and openness.

Her health began to deteriorate from March 1996. She became highly diabetic and due to this she also suffered from memory loss. In March 2000 she was hospitalised at VG Hospital Dibrugarh and was recovered after days' of intensive care and medication. A few days later she was ill again and was suffering much. The constant presence and prayers of the sisters from St. Mary's and nearby communities helped her to remain brave and courageous. Finally, the Lord found her fully ready for Himself and thus came the day of her eternal home going on 29 March, 2000.

*Everyone felt at ease
in her company and
loved to be with her.
She prayed for all
people especially for
all the missionaries.*

The last six years of her retired life in the community of St. Mary's was something unique and remarkable. She was a Nani to all. Many affectionately called her Nanikutty and she loved that name. Her presence was considered as a blessing in the community. Everyone felt at ease in her company and loved to be with her. She prayed for all and all the missionaries. The name of Jesus was always on her lips. Her most favourite and often sung hymn was 'Maria Anxilium Christianorum ...'

Having lived 55 years of religious life in the Congregation, Sr. Susana was convinced of the preferential love of God for her. According to her, missionary zeal, prayer, sacrifice and willingness to do God's will are the essential qualities of a good MSMHC. The Sisters who have had the privilege to live with her know well that these qualities are an expression of her own life. The beautiful life she lived adds to the richness and beauty of the Congregation.

Sr. Susanna toiled hard and spent life, giving and enhancing the life of God's people, whom she considered as her own. She toured the villages of Assam plains, travelled long distance on foot. The path that she treaded proclaims Christ to the world, and the memory of her lingers in the hearts of all those who know her.

Sr. Shiji James MSMHC



Sr. Susana Goi



“Love bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.”

Cor. 13:7