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Human Fraternity: A Pathway to the Future

MISSIONARY ANIMATION CENTRE

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"Fraternity means an outstretched hand. Fraternity means respect. Fraternity means listening with an open heart. Fraternity means firmness in one's own convictions because there is no true fraternity if one's convictions are negotiated."

(Pope Francis)

Foreword

Becoming Sisters! Becoming Brothers!

We are surrounded by "dark clouds over a closed world!" In the first eight chapters of *Fratelli Tutti* which is entitled "Dark Clouds over a Closed World", Pope Francis reflects on the many distortions of the contemporary era: the manipulation and deformation of concepts such as democracy, freedom, justice; the loss of the meaning of the social community and history; selfishness and indifference towards the common good; the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and the culture of waste; unemployment, racism, poverty; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, trafficking, women subjugated and then forced to abort, organ trafficking, and so on.

'The dark clouds' get thicker as the battle with corona virus continues on the one hand, and the violence and wars on the other, resulting in traumatic experiences of the loss of loved ones, increased number of orphans, and accelerated percentages of unemployment leading to poverty and famine. A collective feeling of gloom and helplessness seem to grip us, as our cry for help keep rising before the throne of God. Pope Francis, like many other leaders, stresses that this situation demands a new beginning of solidarity and fraternity in the global economic and political configuration.

While we witnessed commendable examples of solidarity amidst this crisis, the uncertainties, inequalities and divisions have become more and more visible to the detriment of the most vulnerable. At this point of time, the best and only path to the future seems to be the **path of fraternity**. We need to stand with one another and our fellow brothers and sisters and become beacons of hope even in

the most hopeless situations. And for us Christians, the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In what is potentially the boldest move towards fraternity and solidarity after the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis has announced a Synod on Sinodality on March 7 this year. The Pope will formally open the synod on 9-10 October 2021 in the Vatican, and a week later each diocese will do the same with a celebration of the Eucharist in an "opening session". The "diocesan phase" from October 2021 to April 2022 will form the basis for a "continental phase", from September 2022 to March 2023 and the process will conclude with a "universal church phase" in Rome in October 2023. The pandemic has upended traditional pastoral models, and digital and technological upheavals have created opportunities for the Church to be more agile and creative. To meet the challenges, the Synod process will be "carried out through listening to all the baptised". The Pope speaks of the Church as an "inverted pyramid", with "the top located beneath the base".

The Synod aims at walking together. But it is very difficult to walk together if we do not experience closeness. "It is important to feel physical closeness which, however, must be accompanied by compassionate closeness. God is in communion with the pain and suffering of his people," Card. Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and President of Caritas Internationalis, said this in his opening remarks at the second day of the Joint Assembly of the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) and USG (Union of Superiors General) on the theme "Becoming sisters, becoming brothers: Consecrated life at the service of fraternity in a wounded world". According to Card. Tagle, "spiritual, physical and existential closeness helps us to walk with the people towards a more just and peaceful world. But where are we as pastors and religious leaders? Can we also fall into the trap of being far removed from the poor and the suffering? Of

offering solutions to situations that we try to avoid?" The perfect God with no feelings, who does not change when sad or happy, does not come from the Bible. This is philosophy. God's perfection lies in compassion, forgiveness and mercy. If we walk with God, then we always walk with people. And if we walk with people, then we always walk with God. This according to me is fraternity, which is but becoming brothers and sisters.

We experience God's solidarity with us, a solidarity that is never depleted, a solidarity that never ceases to amaze us. He makes himself close to us, in the sacrifice of the Cross he humbles himself, entering the darkness of death to give us his life which overcomes evil, selfishness and death. Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist, shares our journey, indeed he makes himself food, the true food that sustains our life also in moments when the road becomes hard-going and obstacles slow our steps. In every Eucharist the Lord makes us walk on his road, of service, of sharing, of giving; and if it is shared, that little we have, that little we are, becomes riches, for the power of God - which is the power of love - comes down into our poverty to transform it. The question we need to ask ourselves: do I let myself be transformed by him? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guides me to go out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others?

Sr. Philomena Mathew MSMHC
Superior General

Message

Christian Living and Evangelization

The first missionaries of the early Church were those who were baptized on Pentecost day. They not only received the Good News but became its heralds to share the New Life in Jesus Christ. For example, the Apostle Peter boldly shared his faith in Christ on the Day of Pentecost in the streets of Jerusalem, and 3,000 people were converted to Christ and baptized as a result (cf. Acts 2:41). Shortly afterwards, he and the other apostles were taking action to meet the needs of widows (cf. Acts 6:1-7). In addition, members of the early Church were known for their good works, being "highly regarded by the people" (Acts 5:13). At the same time, they were obeying God's command to "tell the people the full message of this new life" (verse 20). A combination of vibrant faith and a vibrant sharing of faith is the proper balance. Paul exhorted Timothy; "keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching" (1 Tim 4:16). Paul emphasized that Timothy's lifestyle and preaching were both important in the effort to evangelize others. Paul affirmed the same principle in Ephesian 4:1-3: "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

One cannot live the faith fully if it is not shared. "Faith is strengthened when we give it to others" (RM, 2). Though we are called to boldly proclaim Jesus (cf. Rom 1:16), we also have a clear call to live a life reflective of the message of Christ. Evangelization is carried about by the way we live out our lives in the world (witness) and how we explicitly share our faith with others (sharing).

The whole Christian community should be a witnessing and evangelizing community. It is the basic duty of the people of God as the Decree on Mission says: "Since the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God, this sacred synod invites all to a deep interior renewal; so that, having a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the Gospel, they may do their share in missionary work among the nations. As members of the living Christ, incorporated into Him and made like unto Him through baptism and through confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful are duty-bound to cooperate in the expansion and spreading out of His Body, to bring it to fullness as soon as may be" (cf. Eph. 4:13, AG 35, 36).

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Faithful to the Lord's gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful (EG 24). An evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness (EG 24). The Good News we preach is made credible by our acts of love and service within the church as well as outside the church.

As evangelizers we have to shine before others. How can we shine before others in our times? It is not a form of Political Campaign; it is not a threat to people's cultural heritage. The first thing to be done is to come into the lives of the people. We are amazed at the way that Jesus kept walking into the lives of the people. He is

sensitive to the needs of others. Water from Samaritan woman; seeks to stay with Zacchaeus; relaxes at the house of Martha; dines with Simon the leper. To be a real Missionary is to get involved in the lives of the people. Meaningful solidarity with the needy is the central act of Evangelization. Ultimate purpose of Evangelization is the glory of the Heavenly Father (Mt. 5:14-16).

In order that our witness may be effective, over and above it is the knowledge which comes from catechesis. A good and exemplary Christian life is an attitude that is absolutely necessary in the Church. A good and exemplary Christian life of the people of God is a life of love and brotherhood, a life of justice and honesty, a life concerns for an interest in neighbors. This life confirms the truth of our proclamation, attracts people and draws them to Jesus and the Church. Christian goodness and love were the characteristics of the Primitive Church. According to history, non-Christians used to say, "See, how the Christians love one another!" Certainly, this attracted many non-Christians to the faith. The Church, because of this goodness and love among the Christians was like a city built on a mountain and a beacon-light that all could clearly see. The Christians at that time took seriously the exhortation of Jesus Christ and became the light and salt of the human race. This was certainly the secret of success in the Church. And hence, Christian preachers were most effective in their proclamation of the Good News. St. John Paul II comments on this, "The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of ecclesial communities, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of Christ" (RM, 42).

The way we live our lives can be a wonderful way to show faith in action in a world that needs to see what true Christianity looks like. To His disciples Christ said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12). What Christ

commanded to his disciples is relevant to Christians of all time and space. Hence, let us be kind to one another, tenderhearted and forgiving one another, as Christ has forgiven us (cf. Eph 4:32). Relying on the help of God as guaranteed by Christ's solemn promise, Behold I am with you always till the end of time; we shall be able to accomplish the task of proclaiming and witnessing the Good News to all.

Sr. Bridget Diengdoh MSMHC
General Councillor for Evangelization

"Peace, however, is not merely a gift to be received: it is also a task to be undertaken. In order to be true peacemakers, we must educate ourselves in compassion, solidarity, working together, fraternity, in being active within the community and concerned to raise awareness about national and international issues and the importance of seeking adequate mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth, the promotion of growth, cooperation for development and conflict resolution. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God', as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount."

(Pope Benedict XVI)

Editorial

Human Fraternity: The Necessary Bond of Harmony in the Universe

God created the universe with so much of love and wellbeing for the inhabitants of the universe. Among the inhabitants, human beings are communitarian beings by nature. They journey together towards the horizon as social beings in an organized society. Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or a sister to be supported and loved. Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings, the believers are called to express human fraternity by safeguarding the creation and the entire universe, supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need. The term fraternity is linked to many sibling ideas. The idea of being bond to and with each other and the idea of friendship provide a strong positive vibe to the concept of fraternity. The word fraternity in fact is derived from *fraternité* which means brotherhood, friendship, community and cooperation. The perfect example of communion is found in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, all the human societies and human groupings are created in the principle of communion. It is in all these senses that, while drafting India's Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar laid great stress on fraternity. He indicated fraternity as a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life. Undoubtedly, only in human communities, human beings can become truly human because communities provide the means necessary for human unfolding as human. This true sense of social relationship is the most important means for human development. Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied. Hence, fraternity

is the source of affirming the dignity of the individual and the bond of unity in the community. Certainly, in fraternity every individual recognizes the moral equality of one another, shows mutual respect despite all our differences of religious belief, caste, language, culture, ethnicity, class and gender.

Human fraternity is closely connected to social solidarity. In our human family everything and everyone is connected. We need to have a compassionate heart to accept everyone in the society. However, it is difficult to achieve without community understanding. It is true that human beings who look different, wear different clothes, worship different gods, speak different languages, who have different political persuasions, actually have exactly the same intrinsic, human dignity and experience the same emotions, they too have dreams, hopes, despair, pain, happiness, anger, love, achievements and setbacks. Fraternity in fact develops a sense of mutual belonging and respect that transcends all other differences between the people. The idea of standing together, a strong feeling of *we are together*, recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone are some of the definitive features of fraternity. They are expressed in caring, sharing, compassion, empathy and love.

Fraternity and solidarity has a long history in Catholic Social Teaching and the Magisterium as well, going back to *Gaudium et Spes* in Vatican II, the teaching of John XXIII and John Paul II. Pope Francis has used solidarity in his own teaching from the beginning of his papal ministry. The term appears 19 times in *Evangelii Gaudium* and in various talks that he has given throughout the years. In *Fratelli Tutti* it appears 24 times in the text, and there is a short section devoted to the idea in paragraphs 114 to 117. All three of his encyclicals highlight profoundly on the connectedness, connected to God, connected to nature and connected to one another. The clear sense of Pope Francis' solidarity is a moral virtue and a social attitude born of personal conversion. It means thinking and acting in terms of

community. He proposes it in relation to common good, of opposition to the structures that dehumanise women and men, and commitment to care of earth. This enables the people to look beyond themselves and their affinity.

The basis of solidarity is reaching beyond, the self with the sentiments of truly human. We need to be sensible of the world around us especially of our immediate neighbour. Life after all, amidst its oppositions, is the art of encounter. Solidarity in fact creates sisterhood, brotherhood, builds up social friendship and opens to us a huge ambience for growth. Thus, each one of us should be disturbed in this dark clouds over a closed world to achieve the virtue of solidarity. Each of our families must be the first place where the values of love and fraternity, togetherness and sharing, concern and care for others is lived out and passed on to the next generation. It is clear in this context how the family as the fundamental nucleus of society and humanity is essential in bringing children into the world, raising them, educating them, and providing them with solid moral formation and domestic security. To attack the institution of the family, to regard it with contempt or to doubt its important role, is one of the most threatening evils of our era.

Solidarity is often emerged from a crisis. This issue is based on the theme of building bridges in Human fraternity for a better future. Perhaps, it has many exciting and thought provoking concepts and ideas which ignite our minds to recognize the uniqueness of our human family. Our connectedness to one another in this planet earth motivate us to move forward to create healthier societies and more dignified communities and a world without boundaries. Let us open our hearts to all the peoples and nations of the earth to identify the goodness and beauty thus to strengthen the bonds of unity and enjoy full harmony in our common home.

Sr. Viji John MSMHC

"To be honest with you, I don't have the words to make you feel better, but I do have the arms to give you a hug, ears to listen to whatever you want to talk about, and I have a heart; a heart that's aching to see you smile again."

(Laura Ortiz)

The Transforming Power of Family Spirit in the Life of MSMHC

Sr. Christine Mynsong MSMHC

Introduction

Human families are intimate domestic and social groups made up of parents and their children. However, it is also applied to a group of people who share an ancestor or living in the same household. Family is a source of strength, for it is a way to connect with other people. Every family is holy, just like the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Every action within a family that strengthens love between members is holy and sacred. It is described as the domestic church or the household of faith. When a family discovers and experiences both the joy of having a gift, and of being a gift for the Church and society, it can serve as a bright light in the dark world, especially in today's condition when the society is experiencing darkness and confusion caused by the Coronavirus. Due to lockdown, many positive realities are occurring in terms of family relationships. For many parents, the opportunity to spend more time at home with their children, the chance to work from home, and a slower pace of life are all positive developments. The focus of many parents is now on the family and personal relationships, with many reporting a desire to achieve a better balance between work and family life. However, some studies have shown that spending more time as a family benefits the individuals especially the children. Parental priorities were often placed on their child's welfare before educational attainment during this time. An

overwhelming majority of parents also felt that their children gained progressive reading, writing, and language skills from one-on-one teaching at home. Members of the family were able to eat together and spend time together, so that they were better able to understand one another. So a spirituality of family life was born. The love that flows among the family members is the most important element of the family. Family Spirit means acceptance, belongingness and care for everyone. It means to capture the importance of every person to have and experience "the family spirit", a place where one is accepted, belongs and receives unconditional care and support. This is true with the religious community too. To a religious, community is like a family to civilian. In a religious community, where the family spirit reigns there is love, joy, peace, acceptance, care and support which promote growth in the persons and in being authentic with their life.

Family Spirit and Salesians of Don Bosco

The Salesian Family Spirit is rooted in John Bosco's home in the presence of his mother mamma Margaret who taught him the art of living, loving, and working. Don Bosco's appreciation and imitation of the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales too had an impact on the Salesian family spirit. The gentleness and genuine relationships of St. Francis caught the heart of John Bosco. When founding his first educational set up in Turin, Don Bosco's priority was to create a family atmosphere. For a Salesian school, education is a matter of the heart, a process of accompaniment, extended to families as primary partners through formal and informal teaching of a student. This is achieved and maintained through a family spirit.[1] St. Mary Mazzarello and the first Salesian Sisters developed the same art of leading people in the ways of the Spirit towards configuration with Christ. This tradition was an important and ever-relevant way of

[1] E. DIAS, *Don Bosco: A Symphony of Grace*, Bangalore, Christu Jyoti Publications, 2015, p. 386-387.

living and inculturating the Gospel. The first community of Mornese was stamped with a simple, serene, family atmosphere. This enhanced the building of authentic relationships, attracts young people, and predisposes them to listening, making them more open to the plan God has for them in life.

Taking it upon ourselves to seek out the young in every situation, we make it our joy to share in even the simplest activities of life with others. Through the respect, sincere interest, and cheerfulness, which we radiate in our lives, we are able to draw the young to God, who is the source of every good thing said Don Bosco as he wanted everyone to feel at ease in the Oratory. Family Spirit, therefore is not an optional element of our style of education, it is a dimension that weaves across every aspect of the Salesian life and mission.

Family Spirit and Bishop Ferrando

Bishop Ferrando like his founder St. John Bosco, grew up on the lap of the good Christian family where faith and life were intimately connected. Fr. Stephen could say in all truth, "From my family I received a rich heritage, a great love for God and Madonna, a spirit of sacrifice and temperament inclined for joy." The family upbringing was further strengthened in the cradle of Salesian family where he received his education. Thus, he made the family spirit a project of his life. As a Rector and formator he was full of spirit and zeal for missionary work and the novices emulated the same. He created a profound community spirit within the formation house where everyone felt at home, happy, serene and accepted. His sense of humor, unassuming attitude, concern, loving care and simplicity made him a father and friend to his students and collaborators. Speaking of the family spirit, Stephen Fernando writes in his memoirs, "The family spirit brought along with it an atmosphere of serenity, joy and warmth, and making the house indeed worthy of its name Our Lady's House." As a formator, his

creativity found new ways and means to acquaint the novices with the challenges of the missions. He often took them to the villages, walking miles together, these visits helped them to learn the customs of the people and to adapt themselves to various circumstances. Bishop Ferrando had an extraordinary way of keeping the Family spirit of the community alive. While being the novice master, he found sufficient time and opportunity to be with the people in the villages, and regularly wrote about the Assam Missions to the superiors in Rome. He felt the greatness of God fully manifested in the multi- cultural and multi- lingual system in the Assam Missions. For him it was a real Pentecost.

Family Spirit in the Pastoral Ministry

Stephen Ferrando was not only a giant of family Spirit within the community but in his apostolic ventures too. As a Bishop he took up the leadership of a vast diocese of Shillong. He had a vision for the whole region, to lead the whole of North East India to Christ. To achieve this goal, he made use of all the means that could be harnessed. He built a good rapport with the priests and lay people in the diocese and civilians. His missionary methods were completely people oriented. He made regular pastoral visits to his flocks scattered throughout the region. He constantly toured the villages, visiting people in their humble huts sitting around the hearth and listened to the woes and worries of the people, gradually paving way to their entry into the Christian Community. While visiting the families, he paid attention to the sick and the dying. He strongly believed that there was no better substitute for warm personal contact than visiting people in their homes. He often told the missionaries that they cannot convert the souls if they always move around in vehicles. To be close to the people and to know their problems they need to go on foot.[2] He freely mingled with the

[2] Cf. PHILOMENA Mathew, *A Man sent by God. A Life Sketch of Bishop Stephen Ferrando*, Guwahati, MSMHC Publication, 2006, p. 97.

people sharing their meals and sleeping in their small huts. His ability to create an atmosphere of trust and freedom among the priests made room for a bonding and collaboration in the apostolic ventures especially in the field of evangelization. He fostered inventiveness and creativity that the priests were able to take initiatives in the missions. His human and friendly nature made his priests to feel at home and welcomed. Priests and missionaries longed to come to Archbishop's House because of the family atmosphere created by Bishop Ferrando.

Family Spirit that Empowered Laity for the Works of Evangelization

Realizing the vastness of the mission of the entire North East region, Bishop Ferrando visualized that the locally trained leaders could be entrusted with the work to give catechetical instruction to the people. In his undaunted spirit of optimism, he placed great trust in the local catechists and leaders who knew the language, the culture, and traditions of the people to approach new areas, villages, to look for fresh opportunities for a new conversion, and to instruct people. He then organized the training for the local church leaders to teach catechism, to lead on Sundays' prayer services in their villages. Thus the local catechists were trained and sent to the villages to conduct Sunday services, teach catechism, preach the Word of God, and prepare peoples for the sacraments. The presence of the local catechists created confidence in the people. It is with the help of these catechists that a single priest was able to look after a mission station or parish, with even a hundred and more Christian communities or sub-stations, spread over many villages.[3] He echoed the missionary call of St. Paul who said, woe to me if I do not preach the Good News (1 Cor 9:16). Following his Master, Bishop Ferrando was always on the move his diocese to teach, to strengthen the faith, to encourage and to lead the thirsting souls to

[3] Cf. PHILOMENA Mathew, *A Man sent by God*, p. 111.

Christ. He put enthusiasm in the hearts of his priests, religious, catechists and every Christian for the cause of evangelization. As the shepherded of the Diocese, right from the start, he excelled in winning the hearts of all and gained their love, and reverence and obedience. He was able to coordinate the clergy and laity for the works of evangelization. Bishop Ferrando was able to visualize the potentials of all groups, from small children to adults when he said the children are like small apostles who can carry the good news to their parents and family members. Schools in the villages are entry tickets to visit the families and create contacts.[4] His presence brought added joy to the flock and enkindled enthusiasm and love in all. He moved around as a servant of all bent on bringing the love, peace and joy of Christ to all his spiritual children.

Family Spirit and MSMHC

Bishop Ferrando, who was fully aware of the value and benefits of Family Spirit exhorted the sisters to "preserve always the spirit of family, of joy, joy which makes even the walls of the convent smile."[5] He insisted that each sister make every effort to foster Family Spirit, to make everyone feel loved, accepted, respected and cared for, to feel a sense of belongingness. The directory of the on-going formation states: "Every sister must remove from her heart prejudices based on cultural background, ethnic origin, linguistic differences etc. We shall make positive effort to avoid "groupism" based on tribe, caste, language, province, state, etc. which are detrimental to the spirit of the MSMHC."[6] The need for a family spirit is further emphasized in the Constitutions that say,

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4 S. FERRANDO, Entry Ticket in Pagan Villages, in *Salesian Bulletin*, 81 (Jan 1957), n. 24, p. 24.

5 Cf. Ferrando, Letter, 12 August 1970, in *From the Heart of a Father who loves you*, E. Packumala (ed.), Guwahati, MSMHC Publications, 1995, 122.

6 *Directory of On-going Formation and Religious Discipline: Norms and Principles*, Guwahati, MSMHC Generalate, 2010, 58.

"We take great care to foster charity in the community and patiently bear the defects of each other. The multicultural nature of our communities call for warm, hospitality, openness, mutual trust and dialogue."[7] Bishop Ferrando made it clear that every member of the Congregation has the duty to preserve the family spirit of joy, hope, peace and love in the community in order to be effective and meaningful religious and missionaries.[8] In all our communities the family spirit is lived faithfully, there is joy, love, concern, mutual trust, unity, cooperation and open dialogue among the members and the sisters are very enthusiastic about the mission and the development of the people. Their witnessing life often inspires joy, hope, and peace to the neighbourhood. Such communities become a reflection of the mystery of the Holy Trinity in its unity and diversity of persons. The unity of the sisters is the symbol of the coming of Christ and a source of great apostolic power.[9]

Family Spirit Fosters Community Living

Bishop Ferrando wanted that family spirit flourish in the community of MSMHC, where every sister feels loved, esteemed and supported by the other members. Article 47 of our Constitutions states that the local Superior plays an important role in fostering the family spirit as she animates the sisters according to the Charism and Spirit of the Congregation. She shall endeavor to preserve the unity, coordinate its apostolic works and facilitate the observance of the Constitutions and Regulations by everyone in the community. And the sisters on their part recognize the responsibility and authority of the Superior and readily obey and collaborate with her especially in apostolic activities.[10] Similarly, directory of the ongoing formation

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7 *Constitutions and Regulations of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians*, Guwahati, MSMHC Generalate, 2013, art. 46 (Hereafter, it shall be referred to as constitutions and Regulations).

8 S. Ferrando, Letter, 12 August 1970, in *From the Heart*, 123.

9 Cf. *Constitutions and Regulations*, art. 45.

10 Cf. *Constitutions and Regulations*, art. 48.

attests, "She shall take initiatives to foster family spirit in the community especially through proper animation and communication between members of the community and apostolic departments. She shall see that the community lives in an atmosphere of love, affection and respect towards one another, the older members towards the younger and the younger towards the older. Above all, she has to be a loving sister to the community and to each Sister. She shall see that secrecy is maintained by all the sisters in matters concerning the community."[11] This is a clarion call to every MSMHC to make community a place where we live as a family, where we are accepted, feel the sense of belonging and supported, with our duties to fulfill and privileges to enjoy. We can't expect only to enjoy the privileges to maintain ourselves at the expenses of the community/congregation. Our duty is to live our lives according to the Charism and Spirit of the congregation and commit ourselves to its mission. The privileges referred to here is that our needs both spiritual and material are taken care by the Congregation. Family spirit, must reign in all the houses, since each religious community is "a true family gathered together in the Lord's name and rejoicing in His presence."[12]

As *Vita Consecrata* clearly teaches, there can be no true unity without that unconditional mutual love which demands a readiness to serve others generously, a willingness to welcome them as they are, without "judging" them (cf. Mt 7:1-2), and an ability to forgive up to "seventy times seven" (*Mt* 18:22).[13] The document clearly describes the necessary climate for growth in holiness when it says: "In community life, the power of the Holy Spirit at work in one individual passes at the same time to all. Here not only does each enjoy his own gift, but makes it abound by sharing it with others;

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11 *Directory of On-Going Formation*, 63.
12 Cf. Paul VI Oct 28 1965, *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 15
13 Cf. John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* 1996, n. 42

and each one enjoys the fruits of the other's gift as if they were his own community life, then, it should in some way be evident that, more than an instrument for carrying out a specific mission, fraternal communion is *a God-enlightened space* in which one experiences the hidden presence of the Risen Lord (cf. Mt 18:20). This comes about through the mutual love of all the members of the community, a love nourished by the word and by the Eucharist, purified in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and sustained by prayer for unity, the special gift of the Spirit to those who obediently listen to the Gospel" are various ways we can maintain the family spirit."[14] It challenges every religious community and member to make it a reality. Each of us is called to preserve and foster the family spirit. Article 44 of the Constitutions says, "Sincere reciprocal affection among the Missionary Sisters must make the family spirit flourish in each community, where every sister feels she is loved, esteemed, understood and supported by all the members. Each one should be careful to banish from her heart all sentiments of envy and jealousy, which are so inimical to the family spirit."[15] Thus, family spirit promotes and affect all our life and apostolic undertakings.

Family Spirit Deepens Prayer Life

Prayer is fundamental to our life of consecration. In the words of our dear Founder "one who prays well lives well, the saints assured us that it is prayer that draws down upon us those special graces."[16] While personal prayer is important for one's growth the community prayer becomes witnessing when it is expressed with the spirit of union and charity that animates and build every community and pray together with reconciled and united hearts. To pray well we need a good relationship, we need connectedness, a proper atmosphere. The community that fosters family spirit will enable

14 John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 42.
15 *Constitutions and Regulations MSMHC* 1991, art. 44.
16 Cf. Ferrando, Letter, 24 April 1954, in *Father who loves you*, 51.

the members to pray well and stay connected to God. I have witnessed some of our communities where there is love, concern, acceptance and understanding among the members, despite of the multiple responsibilities they hold yet they pray actively and wholeheartedly and the result is serenity and peacefulness in the community. Article 56, states that the first and principal duty of all religious is the contemplation of things divine and constant union with God in prayer (Can. 663. $1). In all circumstances religious take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God, which is the source and stimulus of the love of the neighbor, the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church. For this we assiduously cultivate the spirit of prayer. As religious we are set apart for spiritual well-being, we are called to pray and intercede at all times in all circumstances so that we can commit ourselves to the personal and community prayer, bearing in mind that a deep interior life is the guarantee of a fruitful apostolate- saving souls and building up the Church. Thus, our common prayer expresses our adoration, praise and thanksgiving, reparation and petitions with the spirit of union and charity (cf art 63, 2013), bring down blessings when we pray for the others especially for our community members and their family and dear ones particularly, for the people in our mission and in the whole world especially in times of illness, death and difficulties, thus we show our love, care and concern and share their pains and sorrows through our prayers and intercessions.

Family Spirit Strengthens Vocation

When there is unity and oneness, there is sharing in spiritual experiences, material goods talents and services, foster and strengthen the vocation of the individuals. St. John Paul II highlights the importance of family spirit in *Vita Consecrata,* " Consecrated persons, who become 'of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32), through the love poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5), experience an interior call to share everything

in common: material goods and spiritual experiences, talents and inspirations, apostolic ideals and charitable service."[17] The personal experience of a young religious is one of the many examples. She said: "The family spirit that reigns in the community with so much of trust, genuine concern and care is so encouraging. It strengthens my vocation', I feel accepted and loved for who I am. I can be by myself, and that increase my creativity in the mission." Such experiences lead persons to take up life responsibly with freedom and become committed. The community environment we live makes a difference and contributes in strengthening our faith and vocation. Underlining the importance of God's grace in living our religious vocation faithfully, Bishop Ferrando said: "If you want to respond to the grace of your vocation in a very practical way and so become wise virgins, truly pleasing to God, there are things which you must bear in mind: the spirit of prayer, the spirit of sacrifice and the love for the Apostolate."[18] In other words, in order to foster family spirit in religious community each one should make an effort to acquire the spirit of prayer, the spirit of sacrifice and love for the apostolate by habitually practicing them.

Family Spirit Promotes Commitment in the Mission

Touring the villages, meeting the people, preaching the Good News, catechizing people especially the new Christians really gives joy and a sense of fulfillment. In many of his writings, Bishop Ferrando underscored the importance of the proclamation of the gospel, the most beautiful work in announcing the Good News to those who do not know Christ. Through this saying, Bishop Ferrando wanted to emphasize the importance of the mission in the religious life especially the work of Missionary Evangelization, the mission of the Church. For the MSMHC, every apostolic undertaking is always a community activity. For effective missionary tours, the

17 John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 42.

18 Cf. S. Ferrando, Letter, 24 April 1954, in *From the Heart*, 50.

community's support is a must. In this context, the undersigned would like to share personal experiences.

When I was touring I remembered very vividly how the superior of the community played a great role. Before embarking a village tour, the superior of the community would procure, medicines, food stuff, and sufficient beddings. Since we had to stay longer days in the villages, the superior used to make an inquiry about our health, food, and accommodation, in some places, she and some boarding girls would visit the village on Sundays to join us for the Eucharistic celebration or Sunday services. When we returned from the village the food is kept ready, some time for rest was given. At the table, during meals, the community members would enquire about the people, village programs and they would eagerly listen to our sharing. These gestures were very encouraging and promoting. It was always very exciting experience when there were new converts to instruct, to baptize, new villages to visit, new people to meet, we were never tired to move on. "I must go on to the other villages. I have to preach in them also because that is why I came" (Mk 1:38). I felt that we always had the energy to preach, teach, and instruct people. On entering new villages there were oppositions, non-acceptance initially but we were not afraid or disappointed. We enjoyed doing all those activities, journeys, meetings and we could go on because of the cooperation from the sisters and their prayerful support, concern, and care. There was a lot of personal learning, renewal as I was preparing my talks, classes, and when preaching. Today as I recall back I could see the hand of God protecting, guiding, and directing us. Another aspect that could be a point of inspiration for people could be the unity between both of us the touring sisters, while we were in the villages we always supported each other, helped and shared the classes among the two of us, and prayed together.

The fraternal life plays a fundamental role in the spiritual journey of consecrated persons, both for their constant renewal and for the full accomplishment of their mission in the world.[19] Our community should seek to be an image of the Church which gathers all people in love and radiate joy to all, pay special attention to the poor and needy and hospitality to all we come in contact. The Church wishes to hold up before the world the example of communities in which solitude is overcome through concern for one another, in which communication inspires in everyone a sense of shared responsibility, and in which wounds are healed through forgiveness, and each person's commitment to communion is strengthened. The nature of the charism in communities of this kind directs their energies, sustains their fidelity and directs the apostolic work of all towards the one mission. If the Church is to reveal her true face to today's world, she urgently needs such fraternal communities, which, by their very existence, contribute to the new evangelization, in as much as they disclose in a concrete way the fruitfulness of the new commandment.[20]

Factors Contributing to the Family Spirit

The multicultural nature of our communities calls for warm hospitality, openness, mutual trust and dialogue. The Constitutions and directory of ongoing formation offer guidelines for fostering family spirit. Article 46 of our Constitutions states very clearly how we can create family spirit and build our communities: "We pledge to build up the community to which we belong, we give good example to one another by meaningful living the Spirit of the Constitutions. We accept sisterly correction and are careful to avoid anything that goes against the community spirit. We take great care to foster charity in the community and patiently bear the defects of others." Other factors that contribute to the family spirit are: spirit

19 Cf. John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 45.
20 Cf. John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 45.

of co-operation and co-responsibility among all the members of the community, dialogue, hard work and the right application of the principle of subsidiary. Our Constitutions insists on recreations that are joyful and relaxing and marked by cordiality and an affability. Each sister is expected to contribute to the common cheerfulness, and to carefully avoid anything that might disturb the general harmony and happiness. The family spirit flourishes only in a climate of mutual confidence between the Superior and her Sisters and between the Sisters themselves. It is this mutual confidence that leads to an opening of hearts, to sincere and intense intercommunication, and to joy in sharing, not only material things, but thoughts, sentiments, projects, joys and sorrows; in everything. Where this spirit reigns, active relationships are regulated, not by recourse to law and authority, not by regulations or by convenience, not by fear or force, but by faith and love. Each Sister is only too happy to make her personal, generous contribution to the common good and common happiness, without counting the cost.[21] Further we foster Family Spirit in our midst by the mutual sharing of our lives, mission, values, experiences and following a common life-style. We make use of every opportunity to appreciate each other's ability, talents and qualities. We celebrate the feast day/birthday of each sister and pray for her in the community. On the occasion of the death or misfortune to the family members of a sister, the community shall show solidarity by organizing prayer service for the family.[22]

Way Forward to Preserve the Family Spirit

How vitally important it is that all the Sisters should earnestly strive, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, to make the family spirit reign in all the houses of the Congregation. Some of the points are given below which will help the community to maintain the Family

21 Cf. *Directory of On-Going Formation*, 104.
22 Cf. *Constitutions and Regulations*, 2004, art.73.

Spirit. They should not be reduced to routine fulfilment but means to enhance the family spirit to become a reality, reigning in all the houses of the Congregation.

- To have regular community meeting and dialogue in a prayerful atmosphere, where the members share among themselves the experiences of prayer life, community life and apostolic life, express their views and opinions on matters affecting their life, community, and draw up plans to achieve their goals. Thus fostering cooperation, collaboration among the members.
- To pray for one another on various occasions of feast day, birthday, success and even solidarity in times of struggles, misfortunes of illness or deaths of family members etc..
- To be present for the community activities such as meals, prayers, works, etc. It gives an occasion to strengthen the sisterly bond and family spirit.
- To participate in the common work to take care of the good of the community, and the mission, and to go out of the way to help others in need. To take up manual work every day as a community.
- To participate in the common recreation and physical games in order to share the joys, affection and laughter and to re-energize each other.
- To care for the elderly and the sick in the community as stated in Art. 53 and 54 of our Constitutions. It is constitutional for the msmhcs to take care of the elderly and the sick. On their parts the sick shall bear in mind that sickness and suffering are to be accepted because they are efficacious means of personal sanctification.

- Picnics and walks fosters unity, bonding and team spirit. So Community picnic once a year is a must, in order to relax, enjoy each other's company and lighter moments to share.
- Community Evaluation is to monitor our plans and goals and its achievements. To ensure once in quarterly to come together for sharing and to evaluate the effectiveness, the results of life in the community and in the mission."[23]

Conclusion

At the end of a lengthy discourse on family spirit, one might still have quarries as to how family spirit can flourish. Article 44, 1991 of the Constitutions answers that question in these words: "Sincere reciprocal affection among the Missionary Sisters must make the family spirit flourish in each community, where every sister feels she is loved, esteemed, understood and supported by all the members. Each one should be careful to banish from her heart all sentiments of envy and jealousy, so inimical to the family spirit". This is clarion call for each of us to make this family Spirit reign in our communities through our love and acceptance of each other, respect for one another, with their background and cultures without judgments. To go beyond to forgive and to allow one to start again.

[23] Cf. *Constitutions and Regulations*, 2004, 73.

Fraternal Life Flows from Divine Love

Sr. Asha Mao MSMHC

Introduction

Fraternal life embodies Divine love. Divine Love is the essence and substance of God. Creation is the outpouring and manifestation of Divine Love. Love is the existence. Being created in the "image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26) of God, we are a part of the Divine Love itself. Created in love, we are love itself. Therefore, the commandment of Jesus to love (Jn.15:12) as the summation of all the Old Testament commandments (Mk.12:28-34; Lk. 10:27) highlight the core of our being. It is essential to realize that love being the essence of existence, it is in love the meaning of life is found. Love of God is revealed among us when he sent his only Son into the world that we might live through him in love. God took the initiative to love us through his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. God first loved us and his invitation is to fraternal life and fraternity in the community is our response to the invitation. Fraternal life is the participation in the Divine love. Fraternal life is possible as Divine love permeates and helps us to transcend the narrow barriers of selfishness and self-centeredness. For, if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is realized in us. (cf. 1Jn. 4:9-12). In this article we will look into certain characteristic of Divine love and how they qualify fraternal life in the community through their interpersonal relationship. Living these characteristics is at the same time a challenge but not an impossibility.

Characteristics of the Divine Fraternity

Unity/ Union

In the ancient Greek, *énosis* is the classical word for mystical "oneness", "union" or "unity". Jesus claims that all whom the Father gave him are his. And he prays to the Father to protect them in His name that they may be one as I and Father are one, being in each other. In doing so, Jesus unites the believers and brings them into the union with the Father and the Son. In union with Christ, the believers know and experience the love of the Father and the fellowship of Christ, being separated from the world. Thus he encompasses the love of the Father to the humanity (Jn. 17:10-11, 21, 23). The religious communities participate in the Mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ, as a living expression of communion after the will of the Father.

Religious community is a gift of God, who "wishes to share a life of communion."[1] United in love is the foundation of communion in the community. St. Paul writing to the Romans exhorts, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another" (Rom.13:8). The community life progresses and develops as the members open up to each other and be united despite the human differences. Unity can be built upon the individual's known and unknown characteristics when one willingly shares oneself and is willing to receive and accept the other.[2] In interactions and dealings, there can be unavoidable variances which require self-sacrifice for greater unity and need to keep aside all their personal agendas, desires and plans for the sake of the community. For, community life necessitates adaptation, adjustment and dying to oneself. Pope Francis says, "Community that is not mystical has no soul, but

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1 Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, *Fraternal Life in Community*, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1996, 7, (Hereafter referred as Fraternal Life in Community).

2 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community 7.

community that is not ascetic has no body."[3] And therefore, to build an incarnated or transformed community, combination of the gift of God and selfless giving becomes prerequisite.[4] Dying to self and becoming man in humility, Jesus reveals the love and union of the Father with him, and through his incarnation he shares the same with the humanity. This reality strengthens the bond, unity and oneness in the members of the community and at the same time it challenges the community to live in unity with the diversity.

Honor and Respect

In the Old Testament 'honor' is to show reverence to the one who deserves respect, attention, or obedience. In the ancient Greek culture, 'honor' was in reference to the action of the person and it determines the person's worth of work or the value to the community. Every person has the right to live with honor and dignity and to advance in life as created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27). Honor and respect are basic principles of human life. It is essential that dignity and development of the person is taken into consideration, whoever it be and in whatever situation. Honor everyone (1Pet. 2:17a), because the worth of a person is in the 'being' and not the 'external'.[5]

In the community the individual differences are inevitable. There is a tendency to overlook the intrinsic reality of the person's worth and show disregard or disrespect based on the external characteristics. Such attitude comes in the way of growth and promotion in the community. In the book of Proverbs, we read, "oppression and insult to another is an insult to God, its maker" (Pro. 14:31). And with God partiality is out of question (Acts 10:34). For, he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends

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3 Francis, Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Life *Fratelli Tutti*, St. Pauls, Mumbai, 2020, 23.

4 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community, 23.

5 Cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 107.

rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (Mt. 5:45). Any violation done to the person, the soul cries out to God for vengeance (Gen. 4:10). Detrimentation to human respect and honor endangers not only the present situation but also the future fraternity, even the survival of humanity itself.[6]

Respect for the person in any social structures be it politics, economy, community will without fail enhance promotion of the organization. Pope Francis has this to say, "… we must put back human dignity (respect, honor) back at the center and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need."[7] When human relationship is built mutually with respect and with an attitude of giving and accepting the other as a loving gift from God,[8] there is assurance of human advancement and transformation in personal and social life. And it is honorable for persons with greater fortune be generous to help those in need to find self-fulfillment.[9] Loving neighbour as oneself (Mk. 12:31) is, the stronger ones putting up with the weak and not pleasing oneself, rather please their neighbor in order to build them up (Rom. 15:1-2). For God allows both the wheat and the weeds to grow together until harvest time (Mt. 13. 28b-29). Constant union with God progresses altruistic "delicate and respectful" attitude towards the other and liberates selfishness.[10] It goes a long way when an understanding mind that has concern for the poor in the community, be it spiritual, emotional, psychological, gifts and talents, accompanied with words of encouragement and appreciation, and acceptance which conveys message of love and brings about transformation.

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6 Cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 107.

7 *Fratelli Tutti*, 168.

8 Cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 241.

9 Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Joy of the Gospel *Evangelii Gaudium*, Carmel International Publishing House, Trivandrum, 2013, 190, (Hereafter referred as *Evangelii Gaudium*).

10 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community, 10.

Essence and Strength in Diversity

In the Divine love, the divisiveness in the community is bonded by the blood of Christ; for the dividing wall of hostility is broken and creating in himself one new humanity (Eph. 2:13-15). Just as the different parts of the body contributes to the overall functioning of the body, St Paul continues to say that in Christ the community members share their gifts at the service of the community. And this sharing strengthens the community (1Cor. 12:12). For, every culture has two sides - strengths and weaknesses. All the good the members bring in becomes the wealth and strength of the community, like the many parts but one body.

In the context of cultural differences, everyone is influenced by the cultural background, their world view, values, manners and etiquettes, humors, loyalties, anxieties and fears. So, in a community, every member brings in these varieties of culture, traditions, language and creates the community in diversity.

Accepting these differences with sense of wonder and gratitude, the Divine communion in diversity can be visibly created in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit promotes communion and harmony, prompts multiplicity of gifts, generates unanimity though not uniformity (1 Cor. 12:11). The blending of the multi cultures beautifies the community when its member welcomes and accommodates their cultures along with others. Every culture offers constructive values and customs which enhances the community life and the apostolate,[11] for it becomes like precious pearls of a necklace. The assimilation of cultures, acceptance, sharing of ideas and views ultimately brings forth innovations in the community for personal and apostolic enhancement. In openness it inspires expansion of world view, instills respect and tolerance in relationships. The members from diverse culture acts as mediators

[11] Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 116

and heightens friendliness towards each other's cultures.[12] Interacting and listening to the sharing of different customs and practices enriches and favors sincere discussions. This eventually bring about intercultural picturesque contributions, elevating the community[13] immeasurably. For no one culture can home the fullness of the community life and the message of Christ.[14]

Difference is not an impediment, rather an opportunity to face the reality; because no community is exempted of conflicts. Wide-range of knowledge, appreciation and acceptance of different cultures along with one's own, minimizes and resolves problems of diversity. In fact, concealment and denial prolongs the gap of communion. If it is constructively rectified with the aim of common good, without fail can lead to realistic lovability in personal freedom and fraternal communion.[15] Therefore, facing them squarely results in positive changes. With the perspective of common interest, genuine openness and optimism conflict turns into relationship bondage and strengthens resolution and acceptance to building communion amidst variance.[16] Thus despite the differences of each individual, dealing with respect personally and socially, community life strengthens and thrives. In the spirit of Christ, the multicultural community builds up love, unity and fraternity. The oneness portraits the essence and strength of the community.

Authority: God's institution

God instituted all authority; whoever resists the authority, resists the ordinance of God and those who resist shall receive themselves

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12 Cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, New Wine in New Wineskin, Carmel International Publishing House, Trivandrum, 38. (Hereafter New Wine in New Wineskin)

13 Cf. New Wine in New Wineskin, 40.

14 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 117, 118.

15 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community, 42.

16 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community, 226-228.

condemnation (Rom. 13:1-2). In the New Testament ***Authority*** denotes right, permission, freedom. In Mt. 8:9, the centurion said: "…I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my salve, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." He acknowledged that there were superior officials over him with the right to rule or govern him; and he himself had the authority over some soldiers, over whom he has the right to rule or govern. This affirms his faith in Jesus' authority, and his right to rule or govern and command, which was necessary to heal the servant. St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to respect those in authority and those among them with love and hold high because of their work (1Thes. 5:12-13). The function of authority in a community is both necessary for the growth of fraternal life and for the spiritual journey of the members.[17]

Often there is misconception between authority and power. Power is enforcement on others wherein the others are obliged to obey. While authority is the right to direct and command, to be listened to or obeyed by others. Power in the absence of authority is oppression. Under a mature human and spiritual authority, the atmosphere in the community experiences sympathetic and generosity of heart, far sightedness, openness, height and depth in words, works and fraternity firmly grounded.[18] At the same time, fraternity spiritual fulfilment and accomplishments of the mission as per the charism takes ahead in the community.[19] The legitimate authority grooms the members' sense of belongingness so as to be able to contribute to the well-being of the community. She/he encourages participation by everyone, irrespective of generational diversity and assures suitable communal results. The members are

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17 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community, 49.

18 Cf. I. Puthiadam, *Religious Life and Maturity*, ATC, Bangalore, 2005, 129-130.

19 Cf. New Wine in New Wineskin, 20; Fraternal Life in Community, 36.

supported and held together in the midst of differences (Rom. 10:12). Thus the thought that no one has the absolute hold of the will of God prevails with respect. The members contribute generously, deal constructively with reality, adaptive to change, able to find satisfaction in giving, to relate to others in consistent manner with mutual satisfaction and helpfulness, able to sublimate, to direct instinctive hostile energy to creative and constructive outlets, take responsibility of one's emotions on oneself and above all able to love in sincerity.[20] In such an atmosphere, the superior receives mutual support from the members and on her part find meaning of their commitment as she functions with the spirit of service, patient listening and empathetic, respect the individual's originality, responsibility and cordial fraternal relationship.[21] The result would be authentic sharing of life. Therefore, in the exercise of the authority, the spirit of service after the model of Christ who "came not to be served but to serve" (Mt. 20:28) is the premium guide.

The person in authority with respect has the major role as agent and coordinator of the Divine love in the community. The members on their part are also accountable to contribute to live witnessing fraternal communion. Their personal obedience out of conviction proves of their faith in God which strengthens the fraternity in the community. Thus the community to be fraternal in factual is in the person in authority and every member.

Transcends beyond Self

The transcendent love of God, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, (Jn. 3:16) … and He laid down his life for us" (1Jn. 3:16). According to St. Paul love is patient, kind, gentle not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in

20 Cf. I. Puthiadam, Religious Life and Maturity, 65-67, 102.
21 Cf. New Wine in New Wineskin, 21, 26.

wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1Cor. 13:4-7). All of these is concerning relationship with self, the other and God. Love is built on relationship. It is realized in genuine and mutual relationship. Love transcends seeking self-gratification to the good of the other, which is the nature of Divine love. Transcendence reminds us that that there is something beyond. Divine love prompts to bless those who persecute and bless those who curse; rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, repays evil with good. Feeds the hungry enemy and give drink when thirsty (Rom. 12:14-15, 17, 20). There is always something which is beyond visibility, audibility and cognition. Self is not everything. Life at every moment is a challenge to transcend. Transcendence is possible in love and faith. Selfless love and self-sacrifices manifest growth in Divine love. The person who is able to go beyond the visibility and sensibility becomes more caring, responding to what would fetch good for the other. Thus relationship becomes a revelation of the invisible reality to the visible life.[22]

The religious call to love is a commitment, to participate in the Divine fraternity. Celibacy does not do away with the feminine nature and the qualities: mother, sister, friend etc. Rather it calls for and demands transcendence of mere human love: intimacy, commitment, and passion. The circle of love is after the model of the love of God (1Jn. 4:7-8).

In the pursuit of building fraternal community, individualism is an obstruction. The ability to make choices between common good and individual needs resolve the community well-being. Some of the traits could be: respect for the human dignity the community's apostolate over personal charisms. When discerning for the betterment of the community, there is a need to giving up or

[22] Cf. S. Vadakkedam, *Pilgrimage to the Heart*, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2006, 49-52.

accommodate self to common welfare in order to accomplish the commitment and the ministry entrusted to the community; shifting from personal interest to things that concerns the common mission according to the charism. This leads to acquire attitudes that enhance fraternal communion amidst diverse personalities, gifts and abilities.[23] Thus in broadmindedness one can transcend with an attitude for the wellbeing and transformation of self and the community.

Fraternal Life and the MSMHC

As mentioned earlier, community that is not mystical has no soul, but community that is not ascetic has no body. Synergy between the gift of God and personal commitment is required for building an incarnated communion, for giving, in other words, flesh and concrete existence to grace and to the gift of fraternal communion.Fraternal life for the MSMHC is a reflection of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.[24] The first century Christian community is their model, striving to live in one heart and soul (Acts 2:42-47). Community life being a gift of the Divine, it necessitates a response from the part of the sisters. The MSMHC in response to the invitation comes and do not choose the members in the sharing of the common life. They receive each member of the community from the Father, who gives them to love fraternally, whatever be the differences of origin, culture, age, personality and skills. They are called by the Father to live the same life and to accomplish the same mission in the Church.[25] Bishop Ferrando reassures this when he said, "There is no differences among us, one first, and the other second and so on, but we are one in Christ who is our Head-Superior."[26] The hallmark of fraternity is in treating one another with great respect, patiently bearing the imperfections of the other

23 Cf. Fraternal Life in Community, 39.

24 Cf. MSMHC Constitutions, 2013, C 45.

25 Cf. N. J. Kenny, *A Way of Perfection*, 1980, 113.

26 E. Pakumala, ed., *From the Heart of a father who loves you*, MSMHC Publication, Guwahati, 15.

and helping one another in spiritual trials[27] accepting sisterly corrections, practicing sincere compassion in kindness and humility, in gentleness and forgiveness. The missionary sisters are called to give good example to each other through meaningful living of the spirit of the congregation. Bishop Ferrando writing to the novices warns that they need to be watchful of the spirit of the devil which are: discord, envy, anger, jealousy, stubbornness, and grumbling.[28] Fraternal love among the sisters is the golden thread which holds them united in the midst of their diversity. It is the exceptional responsibility of every member in the community to center on the Divine love which is the source of their fraternal life.

Bishop Ferrando often speaks to Sisters on family spirit. Fraternal love is to form "one family, one heart and soul to love God totally."[29] He recommended saying, "Preserve always the spirit of family, of joy, joy which makes even the walls of the convents smile, your convents must be houses of "charity" where all the sisters live united one body and one soul.[30] The sisters build up family spirit in a spirit of sharing all that God has endowed each one with and bringing to the community as members in the love of God. They uphold the reputation of the community and the members, avoiding any word or act that may lessen the character of the authority of the congregation. The sisters deal with each other politely, gently and prudently.[31] Fraternal life is realized when every individual respects each other on the basis of the foundation of life; the love of the Father, and the Son who came to reveal the Father's love and his children reciprocates to their love by loving the other with whom she lives.

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27 Cf. E. Pakumala, ed., *From the Heart of a father who loves you,* 12; MSMHC Constitutions, 2013, 46.

28 Cf. E. Pakumala, ed., From the Heart of a father who loves you, 15.

29 E. Pakumala, ed., *From the Heart of a father who loves you*, 12.

30 Cf. E. Pakumala, ed., *From the Heart of a father who loves you*, 123.

31 Cf. MSMHC Constitutions, 2013, 52.

Conclusion

The love of the Triune God is the source of love relationship in the community. The features of divine love invites and opens the door for participation in communion with the Divine love. A religious community is to replicate and share the communion relationship of God. Every member carries the image and likeness of God in faith and love to participate in the fraternal union with God through Jesus, the Son. This participation enables them to be responsible to create and actualize the fraternal life of God in the community. The challenge is the discovery of the treasure that every member brings in along with her. Coming from diverse cultures the members particularly the leaders' role is to recognize and to be instruments to unfurl these treasures and gather them so as to bring out new creation as co-creators in the mission according to the charism and the specific mission in the particular place. To realize this end, building up good relationship of unity among the members, being respectful and appreciative, and encourage to share the resources would bring forth new innovations to the life of the community. These requires a large heart in order to embrace the individuals with her unique characters and talents in a multicultural community. Knowledge, acceptance and appreciation will take a long way, to be able to bring out the best in the community and in the apostolic field. Thus each one will be able to transcend beyond self in the community and to the world outside with dignity, joy and enthusiasm and able to share their resources. When everyone lives in this spirit of Divine love, the community without fail would outgrow. The creative tensions in life and the mission becomes resolvable. Life delicately lived in love and acceptance, in humility and trust, in co-operation and unity bears much fruit. Thus everyone finds meaning in fraternal life and the accomplishment of the mission in the Divine love.

Personal Freedom and Building Fraternity

Sr. *Sisily Cherian msmhc*

Introduction

The world currently is on a declining scale as it struggles with the corona virus pandemic spreading its ghastly tentacles everywhere, most awfully in our motherland, India. What stands out most at this time is the human suffering and the camaraderie expressed by various nations to reach out to those most affected. Such acts of reaching out in compassion and solidarity are the path to the future of our universe in the days ahead. Such episodes give guidelines and directives as to how to promote human fraternity as a path to build the future as valuable traditions.

The values and counter-values which ferment within an epoch or a cultural setting, and the social structures which manifest them impinge on everyone including the Church and its religious communities. Religious communities constitute an evangelical leaven within the society and announce the Good News, the here and now proclamation of the heavenly Jerusalem, or else they succumb by decline quickly or slowly, simply because they have conformed to the world. For this reason, a reflection on "fraternal life in common" and the role of human fraternity as the path to the future are indeed relevant.

Human Fraternity according to the Scriptures

Ours is the time for edification and constant building up. It is always possible to improve and to walk together towards a community that is able to live in love and forgiveness. Communities

cannot avoid all conflicts. The unity which we must build is a unity established at the price of reconciliation. In the Bible we see from the Book of Genesis to Revelation the many instances of how our patriarchs and others reached out to those in need and manifested pure love, fraternity and compassion. Some instances are narrated here below: Abram said to Lot, let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for are brothers (Gen13:8). But you shall open your hand wide to him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need (Deut 15:7). Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore. (Ps. 133:1-3) Have we not all one father? Have not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? (Mal. 2:10) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me (Mt.25:40). A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another (Jn. 13:34).

In the Epistles we see, every day, communities take up again their journey, sustained by the teaching of the Apostles: Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor (Rom.12:10); "Live in harmony with one another" (Rom. 12:16); welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you (Rom. 15:7); "I myself am satisfied... that you are... able to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14); wait for one another (1Cor. 11:33); through love, be servants of one another (Gal. 5:13); encourage one another (1Thes. 5:11); forbearing one another in love (Eph. 4:2); be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving

one another (Eph. 4:32); be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21); pray for one another (Jm. 5:16); clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another (1Pt 5:5); And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge (2Pt 1:7); we have fellowship with one another (1Jn. 1:7); let us not grow weary in well-doing..., especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:9-10). These give us insight into what was one of the central themes of the early Christian tradition which continues to this day and it will continue to give color to the lives of the followers of Jesus Christ in the days ahead.

Personal freedom and building fraternity

In the entire dynamic of community life, Christ, in his paschal mystery, remains the model of how to construct unity and build up Fraternity. Indeed, our Lord is the source, the model and the measure of the command of mutual love: we must love one another as he loved us. And He loved us to the point of giving up His life on the Cross for us. St. Paul says "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Our life is a sharing in the charity of Christ, in his love for the Father and for his brothers and sisters, a love forgetful of self. The path that leads from the old man who tends to close in on himself, to the 'new man' who gives himself to others, is a long and difficult one. When Jesus spoke of the new wine in new wine skins He must have wanted us to have a new mind set which helps us reach out in love and compassion to the everyone in need.

Christ gives us two basic certainties: the certainty of *being infinitely loved* and the certainty of being capable of *loving without limits.* Nothing except the Cross of Christ can give in a full and definitive way these two certainties and the freedom they bring. Through sharing in the Cross of Jesus we become His true spouses who willingly and with much commitment consecrate themselves and

gradually become totally free.[1] They become liberated from the need to be at the centre of everything and to possess the other, and from the fear of giving themselves to their brothers and sisters in need. They learn rather to love as Christ loved them, with that love which was *poured in to our hearts* by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) which now is poured forth in their hearts, making them capable of forgetting themselves and giving themselves as the Lord Jesus did. By the power of this love the global community is brought to life as a gathering of people who are free, liberated by the Cross of Christ.

Human Fraternity according to *Fratelli tutti*

Fratelli tutti,[2] the recent encyclical of Pope Francis on fraternity and social friendship, presents fraternity as a necessary, a Christocentric ingredient of and a precondition for the betterment and advancement of society.[3] *It* constructively reframes and reassesses the language of fraternity as necessarily Christological. Human society and human love most especially Christian love have their origin and perfect model in the Trinity, a society of three divine Persons in whose image human beings are made. Love is the indispensable ingredient of fraternity which is also a key ingredient of a good and virtuous society. We find in *Fratelli tutti* two quotations*:* As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. Human Fraternity is the indispensable ingredient that perfects the recipe for human flourishing, after reason has brought us to some

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1 E. Dale, "Human Fraternity," http://Edale. tripod.com/ Fr.htm. accessed on May, 18, 2021.

2 Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter on Human Fraternity *Fratelli tutti*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020, (Hereafter referred as *Fratelli tutt*i).

3 Cf. H. Dominic, "Human Fraternity," http://hdominic. tripod.com/ Fr.htm. accessed on May, 12, 2021.

semblance of social stability.[4] It is to be continuously and consciously cultivated. Those capable only of being associates create closed worlds. Within that framework, what place is there for those who are not part of one's group of associates, yet long for a better life for themselves and their families.

Reaching out in Fraternity to the Creation

Fraternity leads us to open ourselves to the Father of all and to see in the other as a brother or sister, to share our lives or to support, to love, and to know each other, even to the universe as whole. The Church acknowledges God's action in other religions, without forgetting that for us Christians, the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity, is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother or sister is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes (1Jn 2:9-11). However, the teachings of *Fratelli tutti* have clearly and obviously stated Christological and Trinitarian groundings for the harmonious living. An entire chapter of the encyclical focuses on Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus stares us in the face through the action of the Samaritan in this parable. He is there metaphorically, even apart from the fact that the surface level meaning of the parable is an example of His moral teaching. Do like hims is an invitation extended to each and every one of us in our present context.

Human fraternity and the Ministry of Missionary Sisters

As a Congregation the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, are gathered and united in the love of Christ as a great number of disciples became one, through the power of the Holy

[4] *Fratelli tutti* Document on Human Fraternity, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/fratelli-tutti, Pope Francis, 3rd October 2020.

Spirit on Pentecost day. So that, we may be able to respond to the love of the Father, loving him "with all our hearts, with all our soul, with all our might" (cf. Deut. 6:5) and loving our neighbours as ourselves" (cf. Mt. 22:39). This is the foundation of fraternity for each missionary sister and the expression of it varies according to the context of each one as per their ministry. We are born not of the will of the flesh nor from personal attraction, nor from human motives, but from God (cf. Jn. 1:13), from a divine vocation and a divine attraction, religious communities are a living sign of the primacy of the love of God who works wonders, and of the love for God and for one's brothers and sisters as manifested and practiced by Jesus Christ. Mary as the Immaculate queen continues to inspire our interior life and as the Help of Christians she is our model in our efforts to reach human fraternity, and to everyone in need in our global society. Keeping in mind our missionary mandate "*Go proclaim to the whole creation*" (Mk.16:15) we go out to promote human Fraternity in every vista where one can bring comfort and compassion, which our world longs for at this time of history. The Constitutions and traditions lived by the sisters as members of effervescent congregation paves the way as much can be achieved by each of them in their personal life and ministry.

Some practical tips to Cultivate Human Fraternity

The best way to inculcate religious tolerance and cultural diversity is through school education. Apart from this, the government must initiate dialogues with different groups to promote human fraternity.[5] More than ever, there is a need to recognize the contribution of people from different religions, cultures and ethnicity. People should also be made aware of different cultures and religions to promote cultural diversity and tolerance.[6] Today, global peace is marred by violence due to multiple

[5] *Fratelli tutti* Document on Human Fraternity, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/fratelli-tutti, Pope Francis, 3rd October 2020.

[6] Fraternal life in Community: "Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor," 15 January 1994, Pope John Paul II.

conflicts based on religion, ethnicity or region in different parts of the world. A time like this, when the world is facing an unprecedented challenge posed by corona virus crisis, many nations in the world display lack of tolerance and respect for diversity leading to conflicts. Amid all the political and health challenges faced by humans, the need of the hour is to strengthen the spirit of tolerance and respect for diversity. And this move requires a global response based on unity, solidarity and renewed multilateral cooperation. More than ever, there is a need to recognize the contribution of people from different religions, cultures and ethnicity. To initiate dialogue between different groups to improve relationships and to understand the common values they share is appreciated today. People should also be made aware of different cultures and religions to promote cultural diversity and promote tolerance for other groups. And this can be better introduced through school education that could help in a meaningful way to promote tolerance and remove any sort of discriminatory feelings based on belief or culture. Feeling of fraternity**,** we should keep in mind that tolerance, pluralistic tradition, mutual respect and the diversity of beliefs and culture promote a feeling of fraternity among people.[7] The governments all over the world must encourage activities that promote inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues to strengthen peace, harmony, stability and mutual respect among different groups.

In the Christian world view, politics, economics, culture and society must be built and exist for the common good. They are man-made structures designed to serve this purpose. In pursuing the common good, we aim to create a society in which mankind can flourish as a result of respect for every person's inherent dignity. As St. Thomas Aquinas stated, "Love wills the good of the other."[8] We echo this

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7 *Fratelli tutti* Document on Human Fraternity, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/fratelli-tutti, Pope Francis, 3rd October 2020.

8 Discerning Redeeming Communities: Rita Nakashima Brock and Elizabeth A. Johnson in Dialogue; https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234047733.pdf accessed on 24th May 2021.

truth and remind ourselves that willing this good is comprehensive: we must care about one another's spiritual well-being as well as physical and social well-being. When man's fundamental needs are met, when he is cherished, nurtured, respected, fed, and rested, he is better able to "fill the lives of others with what is beautiful, sublime and edifying."[9] We will be able to reach out and better experience the beauty and richness of fraternity and rest in the divine.

Solidarity is a response to ethical appeal, to be engaged in recognition of the claim of the other or the unjust situation has upon one. Solidarity is more than submitting one's will to a moral duty. It is action of awakened engagement, increased and deepened relational awareness. By eliciting empathy and expanding awareness, narrative can spur or deepen solidarity.[10] The symbol of love and compassion functions on personal and structural levels, it embraces persons as well as communities working for the good and for well-being in any context. The Living God is present where life is lived bravely, eagerly, responsibly, even without any explicit reference to any religion. The symbol embraces the past, in the lives of those who have gone before, and the present living. For those who claim this word and this experience, despite the harmful ways in which the Christian language of salvation has and often continues to function in different regions offer resources for tracing this mystery which exceeds the grasp of any one with theological voice. Since redemption occurs in the particularities of lives, rumors of glory and grace are never at an end, never exhausted by one perspective. Each voice which lifts up a trace of divine presence and blesses all.

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9 **KATE Fowler:** https://www.catholicapostolatecenter.org/blog/fratelli-tutti-on-fraternity-accessed on 24th May 2021.

10 RITA Nakashima Brock : "Communities of the Cross: Christa and the Communal Nature of Redemption." Feminist Theology 14th September 2005: 231.

Conclusion

Today I believe that many of us have forgotten to dream. We are mired down with anxiety, isolation, pandemic fatigue, stress, financial and political uncertainty, or disillusionment. APJ Abdul Kalam our former president of happy memories, often spoke of dreaming when we are awake. He frequently addressed the students who used to be his audience and inspired them greatly to be proactive and make hings happen in their own realms, what each could do. Pope Francis reminds us to dream and to hope. There is room for each person at God's table. Each person brings their own gifts, talents, knowledge, expertise, experiences, and self to the world. Rather than reject our differences, it is important to acknowledge and even celebrate the richness in our human diversity. We are many parts, but one body. Let us celebrate our humanity and practice dreaming once again of unity, of peace, of justice, of truth, of love. *He continues to say, "Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."*[11]

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought disorder in the way we live, times of hardship also remind us of what is really important. Often, we re-focus on our own priorities because we are reminded not to take them for granted. Many turn to faith, family, and community and are more likely to help those who are less fortunate. Practicing gratitude is an essential component of not only surviving but thriving in times of hardship. Such tragedies as COVID-19 pandemic can bring humanity together in a common bond of fraternity. Let us turn outward during this time and use our

[11] **KATE Fowler:** https://www.catholicapostolatecenter.org/blog/fratelli-tutti-on-fraternity, accessed on 24th May 2021.

talents and resources to bring joy, love, and hope to others.

The energizing, life-giving quality of hope that we need to hold dear and inculcate in one another is well expressed in a song entitled "Dream like Mine," which captures the intensity and passion for the present which can be conferred by hope for a future: fraternity as a path to achieve its climax:

> When you've got a dream like mine
> Nobody can take you down.
> When you've got a dream like mine
> Nobody can push you around . . .
> When you know, even for a moment
> That it's your time,
> Then you can walk with the power
> Of a thousand generations.[12]

May we all be aware of the co-responsibility as an important theme for creating and promoting human fraternity in the life and ministry of each and every MSMHC that has been given to us by our Venerable Founder Stephen Ferrando and may we give greater attention to Fraternity as a path to the Future in our Church and in the society which begins today.

[12] BRUCE Cockburn, "A Dream like Mine," Nothing but a Burning Light, Golden Mountain Music Corp., 1991.

The Christian Call to Fraternity: A thematic reading of *Fratelli Tutti*

Sr. Genevieve Hazel Sitkhaiò

Being human is a given, a condition, a call and a challenge. No one chooses to be born human but a person finds oneself called and challenged to be human and constantly becomes fully human. No one can ignore that call. One can live up to it or fail in it, but cannot be indifferent to it nor take it for granted. Being human, again, is not an option, it is a given, a condition. Being human can be distinguished by the capacity to recognise the qualities that one is endowed with as human beings, the qualities of virtues and values, possibilities of choosing for or against them. Every human person therefore, regardless of culture or religion, has the responsibility of being human and becoming human and to live the human values of love, respect, care, understanding, appreciation, friendship, unity, peace and solidarity.

For a Christian or a follower of Christ and his values of the Reign, the call to be 'human' becomes all the more demanding and definitive, a task, a lifelong duty, a responsibility that can never be shirked, in order to justify his or her belonging to Christ. In other words, to belong to Christ or to follow Christ means to walk in the footsteps of Christ, to possess his mind and his heart and to live like Christ. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph 4:32). In doing this, a Christian is not alone, he or she is called to live this task in a community.

"No one can face life in isolation…We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead…."[1] writes Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. The Pope invites the world to understand the truth that, we belong to a single human family, that we are fellow travellers sharing the same flesh and children of the same earth which is our common home; this belongingness calls for a recognition that we are brothers and sisters all.[2] Hence, every human person, especially a person who claims to be a Christian and the whole Christian community, has received the responsibility to build each other's lives and to dream together towards making the earth a better home, a better world.

In presenting the existing problems of today like the manipulation and distortion of concepts such as democracy, freedom and justice, the loss of significance of a society or a community, the mishandling of history, the glorification of selfishness and indifference, the loss of a sense of common good, the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and exploitation, the use and throw culture, the issue of unemployment, the evil of racism, the misery of poverty; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, trafficking, subjugation of women and the objectification of human person through practices such as human trafficking, organ trafficking and other similar inhumanities[3] the Pope refers to these as "dark clouds over a closed world."[4] He refers to the tragedy of the pandemic Covid-19 that unexpectedly erupted as the encyclical was being written, affecting individuals, communities, societies and countries

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1 Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* Encyclical on Fraternity and Social Friendship, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vaticano, 2020, 8, (Hereafter referred as *Fratelli Tutti*).

2 Cf. *Fratelli Tutti* 8.

3 Cf. Isabella Piro, *"Fratelli tutti": short summary of Pope Francis's Social Encyclical* in https:// www. vaticannews. va/en/pope/news/2020-10/fratelli-tutti-pope-fraternity-social-friendship-short-summary.html (browsed on April 8, 2021).

4 See, the title of chapter one, 9.

worldwide and says that the experience of the pandemic revives the sense that "we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all."[5] The experience of the pandemic has emphasised more than ever, the need to be good Samaritans to one another, putting aside all differences, crossing all cultural and historical barriers. And to be a neighbour, one needs to open his or her heart to encounter, to communicate, to relate and to love, for, it is in the sincere, loving and generous gift of self to others that one can find fullness and fulfilment in life.[6]

The conviction that human beings are not strangers but are called to be brothers and sisters (neighbours/companions/friends) to one another on the pilgrim journey, can no longer remain an abstract idea but has to evoke a response of concrete action to universal problems and social issues especially "to those who are fleeing grave humanitarian crises."[7] Concrete suggestions such as facilitating and simplifying the granting of visas to helpless and forced migrants; opening humanitarian corridors that would offer a dignified living situation to the displaced humanity, assuring safe lodging, basic security and essential services; offering opportunities for employment and training; enabling family reunification; protecting minors; guaranteeing religious freedom to all are the key concerns that the encyclical wishes to address. A global governance, an international collaboration for migration which implements long-term planning on behalf of the supportive development of all peoples is an urgent need.[8] These amount to what the document terms development of a global community of fraternity, basing on the practice of social friendship between peoples and nations. One of the key themes and the most fundamental call

5 *Fratelli tutti,* 32.
6 Cf. *Fratelli tutti, 87, 95.*
7 *Fratelli tutti,* 130.
8 *Fratelli tutti,* 132.

that is given by the Magisterium, is the call to fraternity. This article intends to identify and delineate the call to fraternity that is posed to every member of the Christian community and to the human community as a whole. It does that through outlining the following four lines of thought, namely the Christian call to fraternity, as the integrity of every Christian, as the identity of a Christian community, as the responsibility of the people of God and as the guarantee of salvation of humankind.

Call to fraternity: the integrity of a Christian

Fratelli tutti envisions the call to fraternity as a basic 'Christian identity' and appeals to every Christian to ensure the freedom and dignity of all in certain contexts, as much as they fight and demand for themselves in other contexts around the globe. In fact, the fraternity that is believed in and expressed by a Christian becomes his or her source of integrity; it manifests their commitment to doing to others, what they wish done unto themselves. The call reminds us of the wish of the Lord and Master- 'that they may all be one.' It is in becoming neighbour to the poor, the needy and the exploited, that a person grows to be a Christian.

An integral Christian is one who knows, recognises and promotes the taste of fraternity, overcoming the challenges of forgetting it, losing it or rejecting it on account of other elements which put them into their comfort zones, unable to reach out or relate. Such a life can never be called truly a Christian life – it lacks its integrity. A follower of Christ has to present himself as open to fraternity, and not just open, but proactively longing, practising and promoting it, in the day to day experiences.

The so-called taste of fraternity consists in every human person being considered with dignity and respect, it cannot be just an over-all feeling of goodness among a rough majority.[9] Hence a

[9] *Fratelli tutti*, 106, 107.

Christian who loves every other person as his or her neighbour, reaches out in true love and builds up a community where every person is respected, affirmed and appreciated, promotes fraternity. The integrity of the life of a Christian is made manifest in the way the person lives his or her call to love the other: by this they shall know that you are my disciples, by the love that you have for one another, said Jesus (Jn 13:35), expressing the call to fraternity as the touchstone for the integrity of a Christian.

This is the ***personal dimension*** of the call to fraternity that can be identified in the encyclical, which underlines the call of every baptised person in and through their personal living of their faith, becomes a disciple of Christ and an apostle of God's love. Responding to this call, makes every believer in Christ committed to the entire humanity, within a concrete and practical situation.

2. Call to fraternity: the identity of a Christian community

The call to fraternity as Christian identity, does not stop with a personal call but essentially and naturally extends itself as an interpersonal call, appealing to the believing community to live their part, in making fraternity a reality. Decrying any form of fanaticism, especially those which become a counter witness of Christian community the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, draws attention to the role of the religions being at the service of fraternity in our world. It appeals to the believers to have and promote an openness that alone can offer the hope of a peaceful coexistence of persons and human communities.[10] The document also reminds that the fundamental human right of religious freedom for all believers must not be forgotten in the journey of fraternity and peace. That freedom and right can enable persons and communities to choose not to harm but to "build harmony and understanding between different cultures and religions.[11]

[10] Cf. *Fratelli tutti*, 271-272.

[11] *Fratelli tutti*, 279.

The insistence here is naturally on relationality, a self-giving that marks a meaningful existence of a human person and a self-giving that creates a community. A community cannot be created by a mere imaginative or an abstract concept of being together and living together. It has to be created by a concrete commitment and self-giving that results in the cultivation of fraternity. Hence the call to fraternity is the very identity of a Christian community which can be traced from the very origins of the Christian community, which was known to be a community of persons who lived with one heart and one mind, where no one was in need and every one cared for each other. This fraternity is the first call of the Christian community, and it is on this that the relationship with God was built.

This is the ***interpersonal dimension*** of the call to fraternity, which moves from a call to mere fraternity to a call to – the former interpersonal and the latter communitarian. Unless the interpersonal dimension leads to a communitarian dimension, it can become a subjective and selective relationality among individuals in a society. But when it transforms itself into a communitarian relationship, that is solidarity, it builds up the entire humanity and strengthens all bonds that makes human existence meaningful and profound.

Call to fraternity: the responsibility of the people of God

Fraternity and Solidarity, as essential characteristics of the people of God, become the crux of the mission that the people of God have on behalf of the world and the humanity. From a personal and interpersonal dimension, this level of the call signifies the ***social dimension*** of fraternity. That is, the Christian call to fraternity, lived in the Christian community, does not end within the community but it is expressed in terms of the commitment of the community for the entire humanity, as a God-given task. The Community of the faithful are called and commissioned for the sake of the world and humanity and this mission for the world, *Fratelli Tutti* says,

can be lived by three concrete commitments in the present context: by promotion of dialogue, by building up of universal fraternity and by commitment on behalf of the migrants.

Dialogue, is an inevitable way of nurturing fraternity. It is the process of authentic encounter, that builds relationships, clarifies responsibilities, and ensures reciprocity and mutual enrichment. Addressing the faith community and the issue of fraternity, a special place has to be given to the dialogue between religions. In the present context, it is an important means to establish friendship and to build peace. Since religions share a lot of good things in common, "it is possible to find a means of serene, ordered and peaceful coexistence, accepting our differences and rejoicing that, as children of the one God, we are all brothers and sisters". The Holy Father speaks particularly of violence and terrorism which is due to incorrect interpretations of religious texts and policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression and pride, calling these, 'international crimes' that must be condemned and stopped. He appeals for peace, justice and fraternity in the world and quotes the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, which he signed on 4 February, 2019, in Abu Dhabi, along with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, calling everyone to adopt a culture of dialogue as the path, mutual cooperation as the code of conduct and reciprocal understanding as the method and standard towards a peaceful coexistence of the whole universe, recognising and accepting one another as brothers and sisters.

As a call to Fraternity, *Fratelli Tutti* proposes dialogue and friendship in society as means to help the world live much better than we imagine or much agreeable than we see it to be. A constructive dialogue is indeed an antidote to violence and selfish indifference among people. Authentic social dialogue enables people to respect each other's views, discover what is true and beautiful in the other cultures, learn and welcome the contribution made by the others

for the benefits of the society at large. The Pope exhorts each one to bear in mind that differences are creative, although they may create tension. It is in the resolution of these tensions that real progress of humanity lies. Emphasising the need for peace and harmony in the world, the exhortation calls upon men and women to work boldly and creatively towards paths of renewed encounter by initiating the process of peace and healing, wherever they and within themselves to begin with.

Building up universal fraternity, necessarily comes from the acknowledgement of the worth of every individual and in the celebration of differences. This requires that every person is cared for, not even one is left out in the so-called process of development and progress and there is a system of politics in place which cares for all. Politics has a great role to play in the "development of a global community of fraternity."[12] The task of politics is to find a solution to all that militates against fundamental human rights, such as social exclusion; the trafficking of organs, tissues, weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave and bonded labour; terrorism and varied forms of organised crime, the evils which discriminate and emarginate. Politics should concern itself with elimination of hunger as its imperative goal, as hunger is criminal and food is an inalienable right of every living being, articulates the Pope.

Another concrete commitment in terms of universal fraternity, particularly in the current scenario, is the disposition of the world-society towards the migrants. Migration is caused due to many reasons, most of which are unfortunate ones, making those who are involved vulnerable and weak. The Christian community which is called to an identity of fraternity, is commissioned by the commandment to love one's neighbours and this commandment has to raise a pertinent question: who is my neighbour? The migrants are our neighbours and the encyclical proposes four verbs as

12 *Fratelli tutti,* 154.

necessary disposition towards these 'needy' neighbours: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. The social dimension of the call to fraternity outlines the missionary nature of the Church, and envisions the Church that goes forth according to the mind of Pope Francis. This is an essential self-image of the Church, because Church does not exist for itself. The Church exists to evangelise, that is, to take the good news of salvation to whole of the universe. In this respect, the Church can be a sacrament of salvation.

Call to fraternity: the guarantee of Salvation

The call to fraternity which is at one and the same time an intra-ecclesial mandate and a commitment of the Church towards the world, makes the Church the mediator of God's salvific act on behalf of the humanity. Responding to the call to fraternity becomes thus, a guarantee of salvation for individual persons and believing communities. Looking around today, when we see the surge of the pandemic, when people are groaning with pain and the fear of death, when the whole world awaits with sighs and hopes to see the end of this pandemic, as brothers and sisters of the suffering humanity, the sons and daughters of God are invited to go the peripheries of existence. When God seeks to regenerate, God goes to the margins, to the places of sin and misery, of exclusion and suffering, and there renews everything.[13] The believers are called to live the life of saints next door, who during such pandemics sought to reach out, placing their lives at risk, refusing to be conquered by the virus of indifference, their very lives becoming powerful antibodies against the virus of apathy.[14]

The current situation calls us not merely for an openness to reality but a criterion that guides us: knowing we are loved by God, called

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13 Cf. Francis and Austin Ivereigh, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020, 9.

14 Cf. Francis and Austin Ivereigh, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, 10.

to be a people in service and solidarity. Solidarity acknowledges that we are interconnected, creatures in relationship, have duties towards one another and are called to participate in society.[15] We are all one people, this is a thought, category, a particular story that makes a universal truth tangible and visible. People are formed into one by a shared struggle and a shared wisdom and sometimes when things are going well, they risk becoming oblivious to this reality, they lose the unifying principle and the centre lives at the expense of the margins, those on the margins can burn with resentment at injustice. Calamities can throw us of balance and paradoxically help us to recover our memory of the original blessing of unity. In the light of our shared vulnerability, we return to the essence of what we are and who we are.[16] That is a concrete experience of salvation, indeed.

The fraternity that we are called to is not a closed fanatic sense of belonging to a small group, but a feeling of being 'open to all', recognising the innate call that human being feels towards a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood with the rest of humanity. In promoting such a fraternity, we ensure the survival of humanity vis-à-vis the divisive forces that threaten to destroy and ruin. Fraternity and social friendship is all about forgiveness and acceptance, healing and genuine love for each other. This is the salvific experience that the faith community is called to bring to humanity, by promoting and celebrating fraternity.

This is the ***theological dimension*** of the call to fraternity, that brings in the sense of the Reign of God within this call. For the humanity, so burdened due to the pandemic, the Holy Father dreams, at the end of the pandemic, "societies that are more caring,

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15 Cf. Francis and Austin Ivereigh, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, 36-37.

16 Cf. Francis and Austin Ivereigh, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, 68-69.

more focused on helping those in need and fundamentally less attached to the principles of market capitalism."[17] He envisions a world where people we will think no longer in terms of "them" and "those", but only "us", where people will acknowledge their need for one another, where the whole human family experiences a rebirth with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices, beyond the walls that they have erected for themselves.

Whether one likes it or not, whether he or she wants to belong or not, whether the person recognises it or not, each of us and all of us, belong to one human family and what knits us together in this big human family is the image of God imprinted in our beings. If only we become aware of this great reality, the world will be a different place to live in, a heaven where all evil, indifference, lies, hatred, violence, killing, injustice, corruption, and oppression would cease to exist, giving way to goodness, peace, love, understanding, dialogue, freedom, unity and hope. 'Human fraternity' will no longer be merely a topic of discussion but an experiential reality where all of us can recognise in the other, the innate gift of God in us, the gift of calling God 'Our Father'/ 'Our Mother,' and consequently, the gift of being brothers and sisters to one another. This becomes a reality and a turning point in our lives, when we heed our call to reflect with commitment on 'Human Fraternity' and towards building the Reign of God on earth, which is the absolute pathway to the future of a better world, a better common home.

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17 Joshua J. McElwee, *Pope's post-Covid encyclical envisions a less populist, less capitalist world* in https:// www.ncronline.org/news/theology/popes-post-covid-encyclical-envisions-less-populist-less-capitalist-world, accessed on April 17, 2021.

Otherness: A Key Element in the Vocational Journey

Sr. Smitha George MSMHC

Introduction

Pope Francis inspired by the life example of St. Francis of Assisi, devoted his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* to fraternity and social relationship. Holy Father offers this social encyclical as a modest contribution to continued reflection in the hope that in the face of present day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship.[1] We are invited to respond to his exhortation as followers of Christ. The innate tendency in human being is to be in relation with one another. Hence, from the very beginning of his/her life, he/she makes attempt to relate with his/her fellow beings and this relationship is reciprocal. This article is an attempt to look at the development of interpersonal relationship in human beings and some of the factors that influence this development.

Human need for Relatedness

Human beings are relational beings. The need for relationship is part of human life. Relationship with the other is essential to each one's development and growth. Human need for the other begins right from birth. Infant's survival depends on other people. From first day onward infants are predisposed to look at faces and are

[1] Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter on Human Fraternity *Fratelli tutti*, St.Pauls Publications, Bandra, 2020, 6, (Hereafter referred as *Fratelli tutt*i).

equipped with the ability to build emotional bonds with parents and caregivers. There is an innate tendency to relate with others. The interpersonal relationship is an important aspect of human life. Interpersonal processes can be understood as the interplay of affective, cognitive, motivational and behavioral activities in the social interaction. The key aspects of interpersonal processes includes person's perception, behavior, relations, self-presentation and reciprocity.[2] Human beings are constantly in relation with self, others and God. The present situation of pandemic often does not permit people to be close to each other physically. Many are quarantined, unable to be close to dear ones. The current situation forces to look for creative means to reach out to others. Today we see people reaching out to others despite all quarantine and lockdown, need not to be physically rather to be close to the other emotionally and spiritually. There are spirit filled and dynamic persons with the capacity to make the other feel loved, cared and understood even from far. For example, persons who reach out to Covid - 19 patients through food packets with a small note of assurance of prayer and closeness. Human beings have the capacity to express relatedness and closeness to others through various gestures according to the need of the time.

Otherness from a Christian Perspective

Bible presents to us a God who earnestly long to have intimacy with human beings. He takes the initiative to build that intimacy. He is constantly in relation with the humanity. This is concretized in the person of Christ. Through His life and teachings Jesus presented the image of filial relationship with the Father and fraternity, thus highlighting the importance of relatedness. The

[2] Cf. SNYDER, and M., STUKAS, Interpersonal Processes: The Interplay of Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioral Activities in Social Interaction, in K. FIEDLER (ed.), *Social communication*, Frontiers of Social Psychology Series, Psychology Press, New York, 1999, 273-303.

Christian perspective of interpersonal relation and community living is depicted in the scripture. 'All who believed were together and had all things in common, they would sell their possession and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, and having the good will of all people' (Acts: 2: 46-47). This is the image of the first Christian community in the Bible. This is motivated by the experience of Divine love through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Human beings have an innate inclination to live in communion with one another. Otherness has been referred to when it was treated as one of the fundamental parameters of human mystery. The human person is not in full possession of himself but can find himself always and only in another and finally, in an Other.[3] Jesus Christ draws man's awareness of himself towards an unexpected depth; man called to enter into a relationship with God, not merely as creature to creator nor only a general communion, but actually in filial relationship. More precisely in that same relationship of love that the Son Jesus Christ has with the Father through the Holy Spirit.[4] The encounter with the other enables the person to become fully human. By relating with others and in living in communion with others, Christians become the witnesses of God's love.

Parameter of otherness for human development and growth

Human person is not so much seen as an individual subject, as if separate from any context, but as a relational being who can only

[3] Cf. F. IMODA, Human *Development: Psychology and Mystery*, Leuven: Peeters, 1998, 189.

[4] Cf. F. SCANZIANI, "The Parameter of Otherness and the Importance for Dogmatic Theology," in A. MANENTI, S. GUARINELLI, and H. ZOLLNER (eds.), *Formation and the person: Essays on Theory and practice*, Leuven: Peeters, 2007, 134

be described in terms of his relatedness to other persons.[5] Every person grow and acquire maturity as human and especially as Christian in and through others. At this juncture it is appropriate to look at human development from the perspective of Imoda. He explained human development in terms of parameters. He defined parameter[6] as constant within which there is variability. In the human mystery, components of immutability and mutability coexist. Human development, a place of mystery, characterized by certain constants, parameters, within which a large measure of variability is found.[7] Imoda speaks of three parameters, parameters of otherness, temporality and stages. Otherness has been referred to when it is treated as one of fundamental parameter of human mystery.[8] In this article we try to see the parameter of otherness.

Otherness[9] can never be eliminated from human experience without its very reality. The core of the question posed by the parameter

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5 Cf. A. TAPKEN, "Relationship – Inter subjectivity – Otherness: A change of paradigm in recent psychoanalysis and its impact on Christian anthropology" in MANENTI, A., GUARINELLI, S. & ZOLLNER, H., (eds.), *Formation and the Person*, Leuven: Peeters, 2007, 63-87, 77.

6 Here, parameter means a constant within which there is variability. More clearly the parameters propose to mediate, via three constants, between the mystery of man considered in its anthropological reality (basically universal, omnipresent and at the same time, irreducible to any specific datum) and the variety of patterns concretely existing as chronicled in the observation of developmental psychology. (Imoda 1998, 374).

7 Cf. IMODA, F., *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery*, Leuven: Peeters. 71.

8 Cf. IMODA, F., *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery*, Leuven: Peeters, 189.

9 Alterity/otherness: based on the mystery-reality of the person, the subject is inescapably confronted with an 'obeject', with some form of being which is not self and in which at the same time the self is called to find and realize itself. At the highest point of development will not disappear but will be bridged precisely when it will be more asserted as such. (IMODA 1998, 370).

of otherness is understood in terms of *how* this otherness is faced.[10] It is essential to note that in all modes of coping with other, which span the whole spectrum of human living, both the other and self and the relation between the two may take on radically different shapes but fundamental fact of otherness remains. In human development the category of otherness recurs constantly and irreducibly.[11] Human being can become truly human only in encounter with another. Human person is considered as mystery. When we look at the human development from the perspective of parameter of otherness, it is otherness that helps to throw light into the shadow side of one's life thus declining the hidden aspects of one's life.

Factors influencing interpersonal relations

In the day today life situations it's a reality that people struggle especially in interpersonal relationship. There are different factors which influence the development and growth of interpersonal relations.

Attachment patterns

The infants use caretakers as a secure base for exploration both at home and in the strange situation. There are distinct attachment patterns each of which was associated with a correspondingly different patterns of mother-infant interaction.[12] They are:

The first type is *secure attachment*, securely attached infants freely explore in the caretaker's presence, check on her periodically and restrict their activities in her absence. The infants exhibit varying degrees of stress during caretaker's absence but quickly revert to exploration following her return.[13] Secure babies appear to have

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10 Cf. IMODA, F., *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery*, 72.

11 Cf. IMODA, F., *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery*, 73.

12 Cf. WALLIN, J. D., *Attachment in Psychotherapy*, New York: The Guilford Press, 2007, 15-18.

13 Cf. GREEN, M. Piel, J. A., *Theories of Human Development: A comparative approach* (2nd edn). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2010, 161.

equal access to their impulses to explore when they feel safe and to seek solace in connection when they do not. The flexibility and resilience seemed to be the legacy of interactions with a sensitive mother who is responsive to her baby's signals and communications.[14]

The second type is *insecure-ambivalent pattern* where the infants tries to stay close to their mothers but explore very little when she is present. They become very distressed when the mothers depart. But when they returns infants are hesitant. Infants seem to be angry at them for having left them and are likely to resist physical contact initiated by the mothers. Resistant infants are quite wary of strangers even when their mothers are present.[15]

The third is *avoidant attachment* which displays insecure attachment. Babies often show little distress when separated from the mother and will generally turn away from and may continue to ignore their mothers even when the mothers try to gain their attention. Avoidant infants are often rather sociable with strangers but sometimes avoid or ignore them in the same way that they avoid or ignore their mothers.[16] They adopt an indifferent, self-contained posture to protect themselves. Having suffered rejections in the past, they attempt to block out their need for their mothers to avoid further disappointment. According to the speculation of Bowlby this defensive behavior can become a fixed and pervasive part of personality. Such children become overtly self-reliant and detached, persons who can never let down their guard and trust others sufficiently to form close relationships.[17]

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14 Cf. WALLIN, J. D., *Attachment in Psychotherapy*, The Guilford Press, New York, 2007, 19.

15 Cf. SHAFFER, R. D., *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence*, (8th edn) Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010, 456.

16 Cf. SHAFFER, R. D. & KIPP K., *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence*, 456.

17 Cf. W. CRAIN, *Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications*, (6th ed.), Upper Saddle River (NJ): Prentice Hall, 2010, 61-62.

The fourth is disorganized or disoriented attachment which is a combination of the resistant and avoidant patterns that reflects confusion about whether to approach or avoid caregiver. When reunited by their mothers, these infants may act dazed and freeze or they may move closer but then abruptly move away as the mother draws near or they will show both patterns in different reunion episodes.[18] Ainsworth concluded that it was infants' responses to reunion, rather than separation that revealed most about attachment security or insecurity.[19]

Relationship with primary attachment figure

Attachment patterns plays an important role in the growth and development of a person. Attachment can be defined as the emotional ties between infants and their caregivers and is evidenced by an infant's seeking and clinging to the caregiver, usually the mother.[20] Every person is born into this world with an inborn capacity to relate with others. Mother or the primary caregiver is the first person with whom the baby comes in contact. Every new born baby is a bundle of emotions. The emotional attachment grows between baby and the mother or the primary caregiver is the first relationship of the infant. This first experience is one of the important factors that determine the interpersonal relationship in the later years of a person's life. The basic interactions with parents is embedded in the child's foundational self and object representations that will affect his/her later relationships including the relationship with God.[21] The role of primary attachment figure

18 Cf. R. D. SHAFFER & KIPP K. (2010). *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence,* 456.

19 Cf. J. D. WALLIN, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*, 19.

20 Cf. J. M. SADOCK, and RUIZ, *Synopsis of Psychiatry Behavioral Sciences/ Clinical Psychiatry*. New York: Wolters Kluer. 2015, 97.

21 Cf. A. M. RIZZUTO, "Development: from Conception to Death. Reflection of a contemporary psychoanalyst," in A. MANENTI, S. GUARINELLI, & H. ZOLLNER (eds.). *Formation and the person: Essays on Theory and practice,* Leuven: Peeters. 2007, 36.

in human development and growth is decisive. To a great extent it determines the capacity to relate with others in adult life.

Children classified as secure in infancy have been said to be more competent, better adjusted and more mature in subsequent years in a range of psychological functions than insecure children. Securely attached infants tend to become more socially competent than insecurely attached infants, as seen in areas such as peer popularity, friendship, empathy, and anger management. As far as cognitive functions such as intelligence and language abilities are concerned, there are few indications that early attachment play a decisive role. The same conclusion applies even more markedly to the emergence of broad personality attributes such as self-esteem.[22] Attachment between infants and their primary caregivers is responsible especially for shaping the success or failure of future intimate relationships, the ability to maintain emotional balance, the ability to enjoy being ourselves and to find satisfaction in being with others, the ability to rebound from disappointment, discouragement, and misfortune.[23]

A child who had a secure attachment pattern in the childhood is better disposed to enter a larger family of religious community to live a selfless life together with others who follow the same path. In a way, it is an inward journey of discovering the self. But individuals who experience confusing, frightening, or broken emotional communications during their infancy often tends to grow into adults who have difficulty in understanding their own emotions and the feelings of others. This limits their ability to build or maintain

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22 Cf. H. R. SCHAFFER, *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2006, 166.

23 Cf. J. SEGAL and J. JAFFE, "Attachment and Adult Relationships: How the Attachment Bond Shapes Adult Relationships," 2, accessed on 22.6.2021, www.helpguide.org.htm

healthy relationships,[24] which is an obstacle for community living and apostolate.

Attachment and parameter of otherness

The theory of attachment is mostly about human life in relation with others and the development of relationship with others. Ethologists John Bowlby and Inge Bretherton believe that as infants interact with primary caregivers, they develop internal working models, that is, cognitive representations of themselves and other people that are used to interpret events and to form expectations about the character of human relationships. Sensitive and responsive caregiving may lead the child to conclude that people are dependable that is positive working model of others, whereas insensitive, neglectful, or abusive caregiving may lead to insecurity and a lack of trust that is negative working model of others. This is similar to Erik Erikson's earlier ideas about the importance of trust, but ethologists proceed one step further, arguing that infants also develop a working model of the self-based largely on their ability to elicit attention and comfort when they need it. Therefore, an infant whose caregivers respond promptly and appropriately to his or her attempts for attention is apt to believe that "I'm lovable" which is positive working model of self, whereas one whose signals are ignored or misinterpreted may conclude that "I'm unworthy or loathsome" which is negative working model of self. Presumably, these two models combine to influence the quality of the child's primary attachments and the expectations he or she has about future relationships.[25]

The development in the psychology of 'object relations' have highlighted the fundamental role of parental relationships in

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24 Cf. J. SEGAL and J. JAFFE, Attachment and Adult Relationships: How the Attachment Bond Shapes Adult Relationships, 2.

25 Cf. R. D. SHAFFER and K. KIPP, *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence,* 466.

establishing the structural bases of the individual self: a self which arises in the matrix of relatedness.[26] Here comes the relevance of attachment theory which indicate the significance of primary attachment to mother/caregiver which to some extend determine the way of relating with others in the later years of development. Attachment theory enumerate different attachment patterns/styles that infants develop according to their experience with the primary attachment figure, which influence their later years of life. Some other aspects taken into account regarding otherness are the influence of primary attachment pattern on identity formation and intimacy. These greatly influence one's capacity to relate with others as explained in the previous section. At the same time it is important to be aware that attachment patterns are not necessarily always secure but people are given the potential to develop on the process of growth and finds security in relating with the Ultimate Other.

Attitudes

Attitude has a deeper impact on every aspect of human life especially in relating with others. An attitude is a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects and ideas. People's attitudes can be underpinned by implicit and automatic judgments of which they are unaware.[27] Attitude includes a cognitive, affective and conative component and may have four functions: utilitarian, ego-defensive, cognitive and value expressive functions.[28] Every emotion facilitates the experience and expression of that same emotion, so that an emotional attitude results, that is, a habitual emotional disposition. So a person with a need for affection has an emotional attraction towards such relationships, even though this may have a paralyzing

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26 Cf. F. IMODA, *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery*, 76.

27 Cf. M. A. HOGG and G. M. Vaughan, *Social Psychology*, 6th (ed)., Pearson Education Limited: Edinburgh, 2011, 154.

28 Cf. L. M. RULLA, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, *Vol. 1*, Gregorian Univesity press, Rome, 1986, 475.

effect on the development of the personality as a whole.[29] The quality of relationship highly depends on the attitude function of the person. In the interpersonal relationship if the attitude is value expressive, the relationship will be healthy and mature, helping the person to grow in vocational maturity. The utilitarian or ego defensive attitude in relationship leads to unhealthy and immature relationship.

Affective memory

Another important factor influencing interpersonal relationship is affective memory. Every person has his/her own heritage of memories linked to past relations with parents, teachers and friends and others. Each of these memories has characteristics affective charge which may depend on the past. It can also happen that unconsciously one feels attraction or repulsion towards a person who reminds one of a significant figure of one's past, a figure which has left a deep and unconscious imprint on the affective memory.[30]

Needs and unconscious inconsistencies

There is the continuous and spontaneous tendency of the person to relate with fellow beings, on the other side, there are forces of ambiguity opposing this innate tendency with the influences that easily arise from the human needs,[31] values, attitudes and the unconscious. Dissonant needs are hindrance to enter into healthy relationship. For example a person who has unconscious affective dependency enter into relationship to gratify this need and the person may not be aware of the underlying need. In the conscious

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29 Cf. L. M. RULLA, Anthropology of the Christian Vocation, Vol. 1, 129.

30 Cf. L. M. RULLA, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation, Vol. 1*, 86.

31 Need: action tendency resulting from a deficit in the organism or from the natural inherent potentialities which seek exercise or actuality. Different classifications of fundamental needs of man exist, cf. RULLA, 2004, 480.

mind the person maybe desiring to help the needy which will promote the value of love of neighbor. When the need is not gratified according to one's expectation, it brings unconscious inconsistency and related emotions in the person. The person experiences dialectics within, the values of love of God and love of neighbor and the unconscious needs.

Towards growing in fraternity

The purpose of consecrated life is following of Christ and union with God. Consecrated persons are called to be witnesses of fraternal union by living their call to imitate the life of Christ. In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis is reminding that in today's world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia.[32] Though man/woman is a relational being, in the modern world he/she tends to be individualistic. It's a challenge for him/her to overcome his/her individualistic nature which is more of self-seeking to be other-centered and to reach out to others and to grow as one family. This calls for a loving self-transcendence directed towards another human being. The act of loving self-transcendence directed towards another human being leads beyond one's own boundaries insofar as its meaning includes a Totally Other explicitly or implicitly. This is possible only when the person has an experience of God.[33] Pope Benedict explains in his encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, that love between human beings is 'a journey, an ongoing exodus from a closed inward looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.[34]

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32 Cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 30.

33 Cf. A. TAPKEN, "Relationship – Intersubjectivity – Otherness. A change of paradigm in recent psychoanalysis and its impact on Christian anthropology" in A. MANENTI, S. GUARINELLI and H. ZOLLNER, (eds.), *Formation and the Person*, Leuven: Peeters, 2007, 79.

34 *Cf. Deus Caritas est.* 6.

Self-awareness is an important factor in growing in healthy interpersonal relationship. Becoming aware of the one's own attachment patterns, how one related with parents/primary caregiver from infancy, relationship with siblings and peers etc. and processing those experiences will help one to develop healthy relationship with others. Another important factor is becoming aware of one's needs and values, and the attitude in living these values and needs. This will help the person to overcome the unconscious inconsistencies in the interpersonal relationships. Every person is a child of God, created in His own image likeness, to love Him, serve Him and to be happy with Him forever. No one is saved alone.[35] We attain this ultimate goal in and through others.

[35] Cf. *Fratelli Tutti,* 54.



An Unassuming Missionary

Prophet Isaiah said, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation" (Is 52, 7). The message (Good News) and the messenger (missionary) holds an equally important place in the proclamation of the Word of God. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans applauded the messengers and said, "Beautiful are the Feet of Those Who Bring Good News" (Rm 10: 14-15).

In 1996, after my first religious profession, I was sent to a mission land in the hilly slopes of Champhai, Mizoram. Though hailing from the same state, it was my first visit to Champhai. Indeed, a memorable place of my first missionary journey. As a fresh junior and a budding missionary, I was inexperienced and felt inadequate for the task of touring the villages. But the burning zeal for souls and the need to have concrete experience in the village urged me to face any challenge. I recall with gratitude, Sr. Lawrencia Suting who guided my steps in the initial days. We were able to reach out to almost all the villages of the parish within a short span of a month. We walked miles and miles with zeal and enthusiasm saying ejaculatory prayers and rosaries for various intentions specially for the people we were to evangelize. At times, we had light moments of laughter and jokes all the way to the villages.

A particular incident that I encountered in my mission field was the coming over of 45 members to the Catholic Church. One day, a group of men and women came to the parish from a nearby village called Leithum, 30 km from Champhai. They were seeking for the true faith and the Church. They expressed their ardent desire to know about our holy Catholic Church and our faith as they were all protestants and alien to the Catholic teachings. Their village remained a protestant dominant village for the past 100 years with no other denominations. At this juncture, preparation to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of Christianity in their village was underway. These families who came to the parish wanted to change their denomination for which the rest of the villagers were very angry. But nothing could stop them from taking a bold step to change over to Catholic church. This was a rare case in Mizoram as Catholics were often considered as idol worshippers, and worshippers of Mary, etc. Therefore, I was convinced that there was some divine intervention behind their curiosity about our faith and teachings. Together with Fr. Victor Crasta (L), the then parish priest of Champhai, we took immediate action to pursue the golden opportunity to teach and catechise them. We then organised three days' seminar in the parish. During these days, we taught them the Catholic doctrines and traditions. We cleared their doubts about the doctrines, about our Blessed Mother, the Eucharist and the sacraments. They began to understand the depths of our faith and teachings of the church. At the end of the seminars, they expressed their willingness to embrace the Catholic faith. Consequently, we decided to visit them every Sunday after the mass. Together with the parish priest, the catechists, some parishioners, we continued teaching them the basic Catholic faith. They were receptive and curious, and quick in learning. We had frequent discussions about the Catholic doctrines and beliefs which were not clear to them. We taught them how to pray the Rosary, to honour her and seek her intercessions. We

made clear to them that we do not worship her but honour her. Our constant prayers, regular visits and stay in their homes brought them closer to us and to our faith. After a few months of prayers, catechetical instructions, and personal contacts, they were convinced and were ready to accept the Catholic faith. By the end of the year, 45 members were added to the Catholic faith. It was indeed a day of great rejoicing and blessings for the parish of Champhai and the Universal Church at large.

Another mission experience I had was in 2002 when I was sent to a faraway mission land in Rossiglione, Italy, the native land of our beloved Father and Founder Venerable Stephen Ferrando. The call to be a missionary to overseas mission came like a bolt from the blue. Yet, it was a pleasant surprise and felt greatly honoured to have been asked to opt for the mission. It was the Spirit of God who emboldened my heart to respond with a firm yes, in spite of my inadequacies. Hence, I landed in Rossiglione on 11 January 2002. Working in a foreign land, knowing no single word of their language was challenging at first, but Hope was never spent in my heart. I prayed that the Word of God to be my guide and the Eucharist to be my strength.

The people of Rossiglione are people with good hearts beyond measure, affable and welcoming. They love the MSMHCs like their own sisters. They love their village and would do anything to defend their culture and traditions. They have strong piety and community spirit. It is wonderful to be in their midst.

While working together with Sr. Leoni Kandulna for a year in the parishes of Rossiglione in 2003, and then with Sr. Lincy Thomas from 2004 to 2009 and alone till 2014, we visited all the houses several times. Family visits were never done in the past. Here, many aged remain in their homes alone as it is their custom to live separately after the marriage of their children. Consequently, many suffer from solitude and even from depression. Even though they

have their roots in the Catholic faith, many of them are lapse Catholics. They do not frequent the Church even on days of obligation.

We then felt responsible to bring some renewal and change in individuals and families. We made regular house visits and met them personally. We prayed with them and read the Bible passage and explained it to them. We were always welcomed and we could feel their joy at our visits and they enjoyed to be in our good company. Listening to them with our undivided hearts was a healing therapy for them. This brought us much closer to them and they always looked forward to our next visit. We took the Holy Communion to those who could not attend the Holy mass due to sickness and old age. In this way, we were able to renew their faith in God and inspired them to live-in hope. One of the parishioners by name Caterina Sciutto, exclaimed, "These are angels on earth to visit us and to keep us in good company". Marisa Pizzorni said, "We now have someone to listen to us and to care for our spiritual needs". These gave us a great satisfaction in our pastoral apostolate.

Bishop Ferrando exhorts us, "The children must realize that you love them, that you are their sister, their mother" (From the Heart of a Father Who Loves You, Talk - 2, p.179). Keeping this in mind, we the MSMHCs in Italy take a keen interest in the welfare of children as they are the future of the church and society. In Italy, many young couples are not deeply rooted in faith. They consider religious practices as secondary and participating in the Holy Mass is optional. They train their children to all kinds of activities and spiritual care is the last on their list. Consequently, children do not give importance to their faith formation and growth. This calls for efficient and tactful ways to renew their baptismal promises and to confirm them in faith. Many parents do not speak about God nor transmit the need for God to their children. Some

even prevent them to speak about it at home. But the good news is that they make them frequent the catechism classes as it is necessary to receive the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation. They come knowing nothing about faith and we have to begin right from the sign of the cross. We try to make the best use of the opportunity to implant the seed of faith in their hearts. Oratory is one of the most effective grounds to educate them in faith. We conduct a weekly oratory on Saturday which ended with the pre-festive mass in the evening. In the oratory, children learn to pray, practice Christian values, and build a community spirit, as they must feel a sense of belonging to the Church. We conduct games that are connected with Christian values. Children enjoy them but we always conclude them with a moral. The month-long summer camp in July is a perfect time to help the children and youth in their all-around development. It disconnects them from gadgets and the internet and compels them to learn and adjust to a new environment. This was done through a constructive and wide range of activities such as learning to pray, Bible quiz, Bible skit, camping, hiking, music, dance, literature, language learning, programming, and a lot more. Children and youth come in big groups and this calls for great sacrifice and expertise to keep them disciplined and to meet the demands of the programme. We treat each of them as our siblings and help them explore their potentials and realize their dreams. We teach them to cultivate a sense of belonging to the church and society and guide them to value teamwork for better achievements. They also build self-confidence and learn to work efficiently through various activities. They also learn to socialize with others and develop better communication skills. In all these endeavours, our main aim is to implant the seed of faith in Jesus Christ and adhere to his principles and values. Our beloved Founder continues to inspire and motivates us thus, "When you look at these children you must say, I must teach these children to love Jesus. Every one of these children is for me is another Christ. And

what the Blessed Virgin did for Jesus I must do for these children" (Everyday with Founder, 11).

The missionary experiences give me joy and contentment as a missionary. Being exposed to cultural diversity in a new place, new language and new people, I learn to broaden my outlook and embrace every situation with enthusiasm and optimism. With all my successes and failures in my missionary endeavours, I have experienced the grace of God and goodness of the people. I feel highly blessed to be MSMHC with its main charism as evangelization which is never outdated. As long as there is a single soul to hear the message of the Good News, the MSMHCs have a valid identity and significant role in the church's mission. We have to be prepared and willing to reach out to all the corners of the earth in season and out of season as the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

Sr. Juliet Zothenpari


Book Review