

Among Ourselves

Laying The Foundations For A Civilisation Of Love Through The Family

Where do we begin? This question can only be answered, if we are ready to ask ourselves, Where are we today? This is with regard to our perspectives and understanding of the forces that is moulding and shaping the family today. Few people today would dare to attribute the gradual disintegration of the family, as the fundamental cell of society, to the process of globalisation that has already so radically altered every aspect of life today. The process of modernisation and its accompanying secularisation has eroded the fundamentals of society and will continue to move in this pre-determined direction. We may not fully understand the diverse and complex reality to the world today and thus look for easy solutions to remedy the deep-rooted problems confronting us today.

When our fundamentals are disturbed and chaos and confusion is all around us, it is inevitable that in desperation, we look for immediate and instant solutions to our problems. The insidious influences have permeated into our consciousness and our consciences. We are thus unable to stake our future on long-term commitment based on our convictions and beliefs. The matters of the “here and now” take precedence over the permanent and the perennial. We get caught up in a vicious cycle, trying to put some order into the family that is subject to a barrage of influences. We are thus unable to formulate models for the future based on basic beliefs. The challenge of the day-to-day realities and coping with the present is our main pre-occupation. We need eye-opening experiences that will draw us away from complacency and indifference. We need courageous ventures that offer new signs of hope.

It is in this context that the Church today, is being called to a deeper awareness of the three-fold foundational innovations. A return to the Spirituality of Inner Self, seeks to understand the Jesus Event and thus the reassertion of the vocation of each members of the Church as a call to holiness and wholeness. The Gospel Formation – the agenda of Jesus the Priest, who offered His life, the King who became Servant and the Prophet who preached in Word and Deeds, becomes that model for each member of the Family and every member of the People of God. This seems to be the only path ahead for a People of God in the context of A New Way of Being Church.

It is this setting right of our baptismal commitment (not just our nominal membership in the Church by Inheritance) that will lead to a new Spirituality of Communion, making it truly “a sign and instrument of God’s Salvation”. It is this embodiment of Church Communion that will become

CONTENTS

Peace and Family	2
Family In Asia - Challenges And Prospects	5
The Family For The Third Millennium	6
Don't Let Stress Rule Your Family.....	9
The 21st –Century Families – Issues And Remedies.....	10
God-inspired Family Values	11
The Kind Of Support Families Say They Need	12
A Family Memo: Four Tips To Better Communication	14

con't on page 12 >

Peace And The Family

Michael Amaladoss, SJ

Peace and violence are qualities of people and their interrelationships. They are not just characteristics of situations. It is people who are peaceful or violent. They engage in peaceful or violent actions. They set up peaceful or violent structures. They provoke or incite others to peaceful or violent behaviour.

Why are people peaceful or violent? Two people are faced with the same or similar situations. One person reacts with patience and understanding and seeks: to promote peace. Another reacts with anger, indulges in violence and also provokes others to violent behaviour, either aggressively or in self-defense.

Roots to Childhood

While we have to promote reconciliation and build peace in contemporary conflictual situations, we also have to look at the cause of such violence and conflict. They may be rooted in long-standing structures that many need progressive reform. But there will always be some persons behind these conflicts. Some of these persons may be criminals who promote conflict and violence for power or profit. They may be cold and calculating. There will be others who indulge in violent behaviour for no apparent reasons. They may be part of a violent mob. They may regret their behaviour later when they look at it in the light of cold reasons. Some may take it for granted: violence for them is a way of life. They have grown up in it. They have suffered it and inflicted it on others. The violence of such people may have its root in their families.

Basic inclinations and attitudes of people seem to be formed very early in life. Researchers do not often ask why people are peaceful. That is almost taken for granted. But they do try to find out why some people are prone to violence. Such proneness is often traced back to childhood. People who suffer deprivation, lack an atmosphere of love and concern, grow up alone, alienated, and marginalized, suffer violence and humiliation in the hands of their parents or other elders – such people grow up with bottled up anger, become anti-social and take out their dissatisfaction in life on others. They may do this in hidden, subtle ways by harassing others if they are weak. They may indulge in aggressive violence if they are in a position of power. They find satisfaction – we cannot call it joy – in seeing others suffer. They hated ‘other(s)’ of their childhood is projected on to the weak, other(s) of today. Their revengeful reactions

are triggered, not by the present behaviour of the other(s), but by their suppressed memory of past pain and humiliation. This link may be, and often is, unconscious. This makes the situation dramatic, but meaningless. But the violence and suffering are real. Researchers have discovered, for instance, the unhappy childhood of people like Hitler.

One of the causes of violent behaviour in people, then, is the family atmosphere in which they grow up. It is in the nuclear or wider family that an individual grows up to discover his/her own worth, to relate to others in love and friendship, to become a responsible member of a community, ready to give as well as to receive. The family is the nursery of peaceful as well as violent humans. One can say dramatically that there can be no peace in the world, if there is no peace in families.

Peace and the Family

If we look around the world of today one need not be very keenly observant to note the amount of ‘violence’ in the families. Families are breaking up at a greater rate than before. In the families that do stay together many suffer from submerged conflict and violence. It is difficult to quote a percentage without a survey. But just a simple look around the families one knows is not very encouraging. I am not interested here in graphically describing the manifestations of such violence. Some families may have reached a *modus vivendi*. There may not be open conflict. But there is no great love and fellowship. In the West – but not only there – marriage is becoming more and more a contract between two independent individuals. It fulfills the need for a certain companionship and security and mutual satisfaction. Children are not a priority. Even when they are born, they are starved of real love and concern, though all their material needs may be looked after. They are treated as objects, rather than subjects. The growing individualism and consumerism of the modern world are only making matters worse. Both the parents are forced to work. Each one seeks his/her personal fulfillment. The family as a unit is becoming dysfunctional. If, by some luck, the nuclear family is peaceful, tension may characterize relations in the wider family, with the in-laws. One can imagine the impact that this atmosphere has on the growing child, who may, in

addition, become the object of the multiple projections of love and hate form all around him/her.

And yet, the family is an institution that is meant to provide a situation and context which the children can grow in love, communion and peace. Children are born in the (loving) union of a father and a mother. The animals may feed their young till they can search for food on their own. After that stage they are guided by their instincts. But in the case of the humans, instincts alone are not enough to survive. The children are socialized progressively into a community, by acquiring a language and a culture, which are symbolic ways of being at the community and in the world. They grow up to become conscious of their own individuality: a relationship to a community by relating to their family – the father, mother and their siblings. They learn to love as well as to hate. They become selfish and altruistic. They grow up both to be independent and to relate to the others. These are not natural, in-born qualities but characteristics learnt, by practice more than by precept, in the family. The natural family may occasionally be substituted by another family-like or group environment. But it cannot be done away in the growth of the person. Before a person can take responsibility for his/her own growth and behaviour, the family in which s/he is born and grown up shapes him/her profoundly. This inheritance can be a rich resource or a burden. It depends precisely on the family. It happens before the child becomes fully conscious of its own individuality. This is why the family has an important role in determining whether a person is peaceful or violent.

God Created Them Male and Female

The Bible gives us a couple of indications that helps us to reflect on and confirm this vision of the family. The book of Genesis, in its story of creation, says: “God created humankind in his image, in the

image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’” (Gen 1:28). God created the humans in his image, male and female (Gen 1:27). We often limit our reflection on the human as the image of God to the individual. Humans are said to have a special dignity and enjoy various rights like freedom because they are in God’s image. This is true. But what I would like to stress here is that being male and female is also being in God’s image. It is in this matter that they are in the image of God, the creator. They participate in God’s creative action. Being male and female is not merely for mutual love, satisfaction and support, though this is very necessary. But the male and female join together in co-creating with God new human beings, not only in giving them birth, but also in shaping them up as humans. In the process they also become the first stage and manifestation of human fellowship and community. This is indicated by God’s command: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” The phrase “subdue it” indicates that the role of the humans in the universe is not merely to live and survive as the animals do but to manage it for the purposes that God has created it. People have to humanize the world and use it to build community. This is done through culture. The male and the female humans have not only to give physical, but also human, birth to the other humans. In this way, they become co-creators, with God, of human community. Animals live and act together as herds by instinct. But humans have to build up community by creating relationships of love, self-gift, and service. It is thus that they cease to be animals and become humans. Human community is built up, not through violence and the principle of the survival of the fittest, but by promoting loving and peaceful relationships among people.

The family is the first and basic unit, which humanizes the individual humans and integrates them into the community – of the family, to start with, and then of the wider world. Not only at birth, but also in the process of humanization, the male and the female are playing complementary roles. But I do not wish to elaborate on this here, as I am focusing on the family as a unit.

Models

In the New Testament, we are given a model for the family in the Holy Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Luke paints the picture of this ideal family twice, precisely with reference to the growth of the child Jesus. “Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and

in divine and human favour” (Lk 2:52. See also Lk 2:38). The family at Nazareth certainly shaped the person of Jesus whom we see in the Gospels and his vocation to proclaim the good news of God’s peace (cf. Lk 4:18-19) was nurtured here. In his own teaching, Jesus focuses on the unity of the family and condemns practices like adultery and easy divorce. (Mt 5:27-32; Mk 10:1-12).

Once the disciples ask Jesus: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus calls a child in their midst and tells them: “Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3-4). He then takes this occasion to add: “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Mt 18:6). This is serious warning to all families. Children are naturally humble and trusting and open. They can be humanized properly and helped to grow like Jesus in Nazareth. But if the family does not provide such an atmosphere and socializes them rather into egoism and pride, and search for pleasure, power and violence then that family deserves only destruction for being a scandal or stumbling block for the children.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians exhorts husbands and wives to be subject to one another and to love each other in mutual self-gift. He evokes the model of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:21-33). Peace will certainly be the food and manifestation of such a community. Paul adds a curious phrase: “Father, do not provoke your children to anger” (Eph 6:4). I think that we can translate this injunction in positive terms and say: “Fathers, educate your children for peace.” This is done by bringing “them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Paul is here elaborating the exigencies of the new like in Christ. “Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2). It is significant that Paul talks here of people as children of God and then concretizes this image to spell out the relationship between parents and children. Paul does not speak of peace here, but is laying down its necessary conditions in the context of life in the family and the responsibilities of parents.

Conclusion

Broken families are the storehouses both of inner conflict and violent behaviour in persons. To bring

peace to the world, therefore, we will do well if we promote peace in families. Individualism, egoism and consumerisms are the reasons why families are breaking up. Husbands and wives think more of themselves than of their role in the human community and their responsibility to their children. In some affluent countries this selfishness is manifested in the fact that couples do not bring forth children any more. Where they do bring forth children they fail to create an atmosphere in the family and in the world in which the children are humanized in the community as the bearers of peace shown in love and self-gift. One of the problems of the modern world is the inability of the elders to communicate their value system to the young people. Having built up families and communities that are functional rather than value-based values are left to the inspiring presence and example of some exceptional individuals, who do reach out to a few, but leave the majority in a value-free world. Such a world is also free of peace. Competition and contest characterize it. The families cannot shift the blame to society, because they constitute society and make it in their image.

The parents are failing in their vocations, given them by God, when God created them in his image, male and female, and asked them to be fruitful and multiply and till the earth. They may still continue to multiply. But are they doing it in a human way ‘in the image of God’? Till them do so there will be no peace neither in families nor in the world.

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con’t from page 5 >

workers, etc This should be a major concern for bishops’ conferences. Commissions for Justice and Peace, commissions for Labour and other related commissions need to join forces with others for the rights of families, workers and children.. Every action plan as part of ministry to families, must have justice and rights of families as a prime concern. This would require a systematic approach.

Gaudium et Spes (nos: 47-52) and Familiaris Consortio and Letter to Families of John Paul II and the reflections of the local Churches of Asia- FABC and National Commissions for Families will be a rich resource but the perspectives should bear on the future of the family as the future of humanity in Asia and the World. . The Asian Cultural and Religious Resources will help the reflection of the bishops at the plenary.

Family in Asia – Challenges and Prospects

Fr. Soosai Arokiasamy, SJ

FABC will start with not only a social cultural analysis but also a value analysis of the reality of marriage and family in its complex variety in differing situations of the countries of Asia. This should be done in witness and service because of its commitment of mission of being Church in Asia. The challenges need to be interpreted in the sense of reading the signs of the times—to listen to what the Spirit is telling the Church in Asia in and through the contextual realities of the peoples of Asia concerning the reality of family.

In our listening, the lived experiences of married people both Christians and others to be considered a resource for a new hermeneutic of marriage and family. This listening is an ecclesial act of faith essential for new way of being Church in Asia. The Church needs a renewed pastoral praxis in service of family that responds to the challenges to the primary human community and the home Church that family is. .

Family and Mission of the Church

Mission and ministry to families: to families needs to be understood as a basic dimension of the mission of the Church centred on building God's Kingdom of justice, grace, holiness, love, compassion, peace and solidarity. This ministry must be seen in relation to the mission of the whole Church in service of the Kingdom and a new humanity. We need to envision families as subjects, not objects, of evangelisation in the local Churches of Asia.

In the mission and ministry to families, therefore, the role of laity becomes indispensable in all initiatives of the local Churches in a systematic way. This will call for new models of lay movements for families rooted in the daily experiences and struggles of families. It also means that the pastors are close to the families, especially the poor.

Family and the Priority of the Church

Ministry to families needs to become a priority of pastoral action plan in the local Churches of Asia and in the particular Church of dioceses. This would require structures of participation in the preparation of such action plan. Of late the diocesan synods have been a great help because of the participation of the laity, especially the married in the process of the synods. In this connection, one cannot over-emphasise the importance of small Christian communities which can serve the family pastoral in many ways..

A holistic theology of marriage and family

generated and nourished by the Word of God, liberatively inculturated and developed by the resources of the local Churches in the light of the teachings of the Church. Developments in theology of marriage set in motion by the Council to which the experiences of committed families have contributed is necessary for the family pastoral, catechesis and faith formation. With this goes the need for new models and pedagogies of catechesis responsive to the aspirations of families and the challenges that face them. The covenantal and sacramental theology of marriage and family and the vocation unto "one flesh" as the foundation for a civilisation of love is essential for the ministry to families.. The need for a spirituality of marriage and family is also part of this ministry.

Family as the primary community of bonds of love, caring and sharing is the foundation of humanity of all and human community. As the first school of humanity family is also the nursery of social and civilisational virtues of respect for human dignity of man and woman, justice, courtesy, respect and for the weak and vulnerable, hospitality, compassion, solidarity and love. Thus family becomes the foundation of a civilisation of love.

Formation of Pastoral Agents for Ministry to Families

Because of the tremendous diversity of situation of families in Asia, formation programmes suited to situation must be planned with greater commitment and attention at the national and regional levels though some initiatives of research at the level of Asia is needed for broader and larger questions of families. For seminarians, at the level of theological formation and in the ongoing formation of priests, ministry to families must be a constant theme with all the necessary inputs and programmes. This an area that will need attention on the part of bishops' conferences.

Justice and Human Rights of Families(Cf. Charter of Families)

In developing countries of Asia, poverty is still a major hurdle for a healthy family life. In a globalising world, this problem gets compounded for families, by joblessness, lack of security in jobs, vulnerability of the poor in the job market, and exploitation of migrant

con't on page 4 >

The Family for the Third Millennium

by John A. Hardon, S.J.

We are not speaking of the family in the third millennium. That would be prophetic because only God knows the future. We are speaking of the family *for* the third millennium.

What do we mean? We mean that family life in the closing decade of the second millennium must be stronger, more solid, and more secure than ever before since the dawn of Christianity. Why? Because family life in the Western world is faced with challenges which threaten its very survival.

Our plan here is to prayerfully reflect on three areas of a subject that is as broad and deep as the ocean. We shall ask ourselves:

- What are the challenges facing the family in our day?
- Why does the Catholic Church offer the only solution to these challenges?
- How are we to respond to these challenges?

Challenges to the Family in the Modern World

Every pope in the twentieth century has written and spoken extensively on the crisis facing family life in our day. The reasons are obvious. In one so-called developed country after another families are not only on trial. Not a few are facing extinction.

Thus in the United States the divorce rate is now three hundred percent of what it was early in this century. The birth rate in the United States is now sixteen children born each year for every thousand Americans. In contrast, the birth rate in Eastern Africa is forty-eight births per one thousand population. These statistics merely illustrate a fact of contemporary history. By every calculation, the family in our country is disappearing.

The impact of this breakdown is beyond human reckoning. What no one dares deny is that the family in once Christian nations is becoming a past memory.

The enemies of the family have coined the term “demographic explosion” to describe what they call “overpopulation.”

Is there a problem with our population? Not really. No doubt the poorer countries have a higher rate of population growth. This is difficult to sustain in the context of low economic and social development. My eight days in Haiti were the most sobering experiences of my life. I baptized scores of dying children, all below the age of one. They were dying for lack of food and medical care.

The more economically developed countries are

the ones who talk about overpopulation. They are also the ones who are either responsible for the poverty of other countries or are unwilling to cooperate in helping these nations to cope with their high birth rate.

What are the solutions proposed for dealing with the pseudo-problem of overpopulation? The solutions are contraception, sterilization and abortion. As the Holy Father explains, rather than “face and solve these serious problems with respect for the dignity of individuals and families and for every person’s inviolable right to life, they prefer to promote and impose by whatever means a massive program of birth control. Even the economic help which they would be ready to give is unjustly conditioned on the acceptance of an anti-birth policy.” This has become the inhuman policy of the United Nations in one international congress after another.

How then are we to describe our century? It is a century in which the culture of death is being promoted by the political and financial powers of this world. It is not only the lives of individuals that are being attacked; it is the lives of families that are being murdered by forces of evil released in the twentieth century.

The Catholic Hope for the Family

Underlying the massive breakdown of family life in our day is the intrusion of values of human society that are totally alien to Christianity. If we are to understand what is happening to the modern family, we have to go back to the beginnings of Christianity. The Roman Empire into which Christ entered was a culture that did not believe in the family. The Latin world *familia* meant a household. The head of this household was a man who had wives and concubines. He decided whether a newborn child should stay alive. Every bed in which a child was born had to have a pail of water next to the bed to drown the newborn infant, depending on the father’s decision. Contraception and abortion were universally legalized in the Roman Empire. Divorce and remarriage were commonplace. Polygamy was assumed, even among the believing Jews.

In three centuries, Christianity made such an impact on this pagan culture that Emperor Constantine had no choice but to give Christians the legal freedom to practice their religion.

If there is one term that characterized Christians in the age of martyrs, it was “the family.” Two sentences from a second century document tell us what we need to hear:

Like others, Christians also marry and have children but they do not expose these children. They do not kill the children. Christians share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they live on a level, which is above all human law (*Letter to Diognetus*).

The family, as we now understand it, came into existence with Christianity. Twenty centuries of history teach us that family life is only as stable and as sound as the Christian faith of a culture. As this faith goes, so goes the family.

We asked the question: Why does the Catholic Church offer the only solution to the challenges of the family in our day? Because only the Catholic Church possesses the fullness of God’s revealed truth about the family.

In the two thousand years since Calvary, there have been many departures from Catholic unity. There have been countless churches, called Christian, which have separated themselves from the one true Church of Jesus Christ. Without exception, they broke with the Church of Rome because they refused to accept the Catholic teaching on the family.

In a culture like our own, Catholics are surrounded, or shall I say engulfed, by people who do not share our Catholic heritage. Concretely they do not share the unchangeable doctrine revealed by the Son of God.

In 1535, two English Catholics were martyred for the faith: St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More. John Fisher was the only bishop in England who stood firm with the Pope in denying that Henry VIII had a right to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, and marry his mistress Anne Boleyn. St. Thomas More was chancellor of England. He, too, remained faithful to Christ’s teaching on the indissolubility of consummated, sacramental marriage. Both Fisher and More paid for their loyalty with their blood.

Our Responsibility

All we have said so far was a prelude to what I really want to share with you. No words of mine can describe the breakdown of the family in so-called developed countries like the United States.

Our country has witnessed a massive secularization of its culture. God and the rights of God; virtue as conformity to the divine will; sin as the choice of what I want contrary to what God wants; eternal life in the beatific vision as the destiny of our existence – all of these have become either pious fancies or the dream

world of religious weirdos. Sigmund Freud defined psychosis as the mental state of people who believe their behavior on earth determines their happiness after bodily death.

I am speaking to believing Catholics. If the contemporaries of Christ called Him a fanatic, we should not expect the world to have a better estimate of ourselves.

The focus in this article is on our responsibility to meet the global breakdown of the family as understood by Christianity.

At this point, we could speak for hours about the implications of our duty to preserve family life for the third millennium. At root, however, our duty is to proclaim the teachings of Christ on the family as taught by the Church which He founded.

Among these teachings of Christ, none is more important for the preservation and promotion of sound family life than the Catholic doctrine on Church and State. I know of no single statement of a Bishop of Rome that is clearer on this subject than the one sentence of Pope Pius XI. “The family,” he declares “is more sacred than the State. Human beings are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for heaven and eternity” (*Casti Connubii*, Dec. 31, 1930).

In the light of this pronouncement of the Vicar of Christ, our most serious responsibility for the third millennium is to defend the rights of the Church in her teachings on the family. Our corresponding responsibility is to resist the usurped claims of the State, which is literally possessed by the evil spirit in some countries to destroy the family.

By implication, therefore, we must first know the Church’s teachings on the sacredness of the family as belonging to God and destined for union with the Divine Family of the Holy Trinity.

Our faith teaches us that each human person was individually created, in his human soul, at the moment of conception in his mother’s womb. There is no such thing as a “fetus.” There is no such thing as mere “tissue.” There is a human being from the moment that the ovum is fertilized and immediately God creates an immortal soul out of nothing; He infuses that soul into what thus becomes a human body animated by a human spirit.

Our faith further teaches us that to destroy this just conceived human being is murder.

Our faith teaches us that God instituted marriage to provide for the increase of the human race by the loving cooperation of husband and wife in procreating the human race.

Our faith teaches us that marriage is a life-long commitment of one man and one woman in a covenant of love. Husband and wife are to love each other even as Christ loves the Church and wants us to love Him in return.

Our faith teaches us that mother and father are to

provide not only for the bodily well-being of their children. They are to teach them and train them and prepare them for an everlasting life in the heavenly kingdom which Christ died on the Cross to obtain for us.

All of this is part of the heritage of our Catholic faith. However, it is not enough to merely believe what the Church teaches about marriage and the family. We must also understand this teaching.

I never tire repeating to the audiences to which I speak how important it is to understand what we believe: here the revealed truth taught by Jesus Christ about the family. At the core of this truth is a mystery of selfless love. What are we saying? We are saying that the family as a union of father and mother and children is the union of a love, which is the only reconciliation of authority and liberty.

Except for God's becoming man in the person of Christ, this family love would be impossible. This is proved in every culture which departs from the foundations of Christianity. Without Christ there cannot be selfless love. Without selfless love there cannot be a stable, fruitful family life. This is the verdict of twenty centuries of Christian history.

Defending the Family

We are still addressing ourselves to our responsibility for family life into the third millennium. But now we shift our attention to the widespread threats which the family faces in our day.

No one has written more forcefully about these threats than our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. He tells us that these threats are not merely verbal or highly organized. They are now being legally justified, and even forcibly legalized.

In one nation after another, the State is given the right to determine the conditions for marriage. For example, in more than one country of South America, Catholic marriages are invalid in the eyes of the government. The State is given the right to determine how many children may be conceived and brought to birth. The State is given the right to determine who is to live and who should die. One result is that those in the medical profession are given legal jurisdiction to decide on the morality of the people's choice to murder an unborn child or kill an unwanted adult.

Dare we ask whether the civil law can require of its citizens to live according to the moral standards determined by the State? The Vicar of Christ tells us, absolutely not. The State has no right to determine moral standards that are contrary to the divine law.

In order to justify the most devastating anti-family legislation, its promoters are appealing to democracy. The Church tells us that a democratic culture is prone to base its legal system on what the majority in a given society considers moral and actually practices. A

democratic society further believes that the will of the majority should determine the moral norms of a society.

What is the result? The result is what we call ethical relativism. This means that the laws are determined by the people of a country. It acknowledges no objective principles of right or wrong, but claims that morality depends on the choices of the majority of people in the democratic state.

What happens to the human conscience? The civil law takes the place of our conscience. In 1973 when the Supreme Court legalized abortion, the reaction of the people was that of a nation hypnotized by an alien mind. I do not hesitate to say that this alien mind is the mind of the devil.

I believe I know the writings of the popes very well. Twenty five years of teaching theology to my Jesuits; thirty years in working for the Holy See have taught me a great deal. I know of no pope in the last five centuries who has written more openly, I would say more brazenly, about the State encroaching on the laws of God than Pope John Paul II.

He asks whether the civil law can take the place of a human conscience. He answers, absolutely not. He states without ambiguity that the purpose of civil law is to guarantee an orderly social coexistence in true justice. He quotes St. Paul to the effect that the civil law is to provide people with the means to "lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (1Tim 2). This presumes that the civil law is not in contradiction with the divine law.

The Holy Father further asks whether the legalization of crimes against human life and the human family can be morally justified. Again he declares, no. Such legalization opens the door to every kind of crime in the name of conscience and under the pretext of freedom.

What happens when the State refuses to recognize the human rights of a family? When this happens, it is not only failing in its duty but its laws lose their binding force.

I was fourteen years old when I began reading Karl Marx. Certainly much too soon. But one thing I have learned. Karl Marx was a sworn enemy of the family, which he claimed was the invention of a patriarchal philosophy.

These principles have penetrated the culture of our nation far beyond anything that we can imagine.

Conclusion

We began by addressing ourselves to "The Family for the Third Millennium." We saw something of Christ's teaching on what the family should be. We also saw, however briefly, that demonic forces are at work in the world to destroy the family. These forces literally control the political and financial powers of many nations, including our own.

There is no human power that can cope with these

evil powers of the modern world. When Christ told us that the prince of this world is the evil spirit He was not indulging in platitudes. He was speaking the unqualified truth and foretelling what His followers should expect until the end of time.

Only a deep faith in the Divine Exorcist and trustful confidence in His power can make the humanly impossible divinely possible with the help of His grace. Selfishness, as the saints tell us, is cunning. It pushes and insinuates itself into everything or makes us believe it is not there at all. This is the root cause of the breakdown of family life in so many materially prosperous countries in our day. Only the God who became a Child and lived on earth as a member of a Family could have inspired the selfless love that

brought the Christian family into being. This same Jesus, we are confident, will reform the Christian family where it has weakened and even bring it back, if it has been destroyed.

After all, has that not been the story ever since Good Friday and Easter Sunday? The Church, we may say, has died many times and risen again — for the best of reasons. Her Founder is God who was crucified and rose from the dead. The Christian family of the third millennium is most promising, but only for those who really believe that Christianity is the religion of civilization.

Father John Hardon is the Executive Editor of *The Catholic Faith Magazine*.

Don't Let Stress Rule Your Family

By David M. Thomas

One of our sons is a mechanical engineer working on rockets with a big company. He knows that overly stressed physical objects, especially when asked to perform in challenging circumstances often split apart or disintegrate. Rockets need good engineers to manage their stress levels.

Families today are much like space rockets in flight. Families move quickly through often-difficult conditions. On any given day, something may happen that tests the family's resiliency.

Besides stresses that come like thieves in the night, there are more constant stresses. One often mentioned in the past was economic pressure. That's still there although it has assumed new forms. There is hardly any guarantee that good times will continue; job security is almost a relic of another era. There is lots of worry about family's financial future and worry is a first cousin to stress.

Another fairly new form of family stress concerns children's achievement. The stress towards achievement seems part of every young child's life today. Whether in the classroom, on the stage or athletic field, for boys and girls the pressure is on to do well.

Divorce causes its own stress, but even fear of parental divorce, said to be common in young children, can cause profound stress for them.

High stress is neither physically, psychologically nor spiritually healthy. Under stress our lives are

narrowed. We focus too much on survival and tend to become self-centred. Therefore, trying to lessen stress is part of a disciplined family spirituality.

I have found that the single most effective way to lessen stress is to separate what I can control from what I cannot. I quickly learn that many things I am stressed about are matters over which I have very little or no control. So I gladly hand over the things I cannot control to the care of a loving God. Believe it or not, if one is honest about this the stress melts like butter in a hot frying pan.

For the rest, take one day at a time and as the old song went, "accentuate the positive". In the midst of it all, find some time and space in life simply to rest. Why not carve out an hour or so each day when you try to block out all your worries and troubles?

- Sit quietly and allow yourself to enjoy the simple fact you are alive.
- Count your blessings, which often are forgotten amid high stress.
- Consume something you really enjoy. For me, it's a small bowl of good ice cream.

Remember this old but always good thought: A diamond is nothing other than a piece of coal that did well under pressure.

Source: *News & Views*, No. 125, March – April 2001

The 21st –Century Families – Issues And Remedies

By Sheila Garcia

Dealing with difficult issues, either by resolving them or learning to live with them, is a normal part of family life.

In fact, family life has never been easy. Scripture gives ample witness to its difficulties, from the infidelity of David and Bathsheba to a constant stream of errant children, sibling jealousies and scheming relatives.

Today's families face similar issues, plus others unique to our day. Sometimes, however, an issue can be especially troublesome and persistent. A family may feel caught in a maze, unable to find a way out. At such times a pastoral counselor can guide family members to healing and wholeness by providing psychologically sound therapy that includes the religious and spiritual dimension.

Several years ago a married couple I know was experiencing serious difficulties. The husband had left a secure job and was drifting through a series of low-paying, unsatisfying positions. As his self-esteem plummeted the bills mounted along with marital tensions.

Seeing their desperate situation and knowing that religion was important to the couple, a friend suggested that they visit a pastoral counselor. The counselor understood their spiritual values as well as their desire to save the marriage if at all possible. She was able to provide the information and guidance they needed to begin the healing process.

Families seek pastoral counseling for many reasons. Major ones include divorce and related issues such as single-parenting; unemployment, addictions and terminal-illness. Some issues, such as grief and loss, are age-old, but others have emerged more recently. The world of work has created both opportunities and problems for today's families. My father spent almost all his career with one company. When he retired after more than 30 years of service, he received a modest but secure pension. In contrast, today's workers can expect not only numerous job changes but entire career changes as well. Many employees must learn new skills; some even return to school to earn specialised degrees.

In a rapidly changing economy jobs can be unstable. Some employees have been victims of downsizing, losing incomes along with health insurance and other benefits.

Again, family members often work long hours, cutting into time at home. They operate on such tight schedules that a single unexpected event can cause chaos. A teacher at a day-care centre observes parents who routinely rush in five minutes before closing time. Parents speak of their exhaustion and frustration from trying to meet both job and family responsibilities.

Increasingly, families are concerned about retirement. The pension that my father received is becoming a rarity as companies scrap guaranteed pensions in favour of contributions to the employee's retirement plan. The burden of managing their retirement assets now falls more heavily on families.

In addition to job and economic concerns, many families face the challenge of caring for older family members as more people live into their 70s, 80s and beyond. For several years, Marie's mother lived with Marie and her husband. As her mother's health deteriorated, Marie, who is in her mid-60s, could no longer provide the constant care that her mother needs. With great reluctance Marie moved her mother into a nursing home. Marie has cut back on her working hours so that she can visit her mother, drive her to doctor's appointments and monitor her care.

At the other end of the age spectrum, families are finding that the empty nest is refilling. More young adults are returning home to live. Almost half of single young adults in their 20s live with their parents. This can be a difficult phase in life, as the young adult struggles to complete an education, find employment and establish meaningful relationships. Parents have their own challenges as they learn to relate to their children as adults with the right to make their own decisions.

Not surprisingly, technology has had a major impact on the family. One pastoral counselor notes a "generation gap from the high tech world", as younger people seem to speak a different language. Older people feel left out. One 77 year-old woman complains that she cannot even understand the TV commercials that promote e-commerce.

Computer technology can bring family members together as well as drive them apart. When my friend Sue's grandson was born, family and friends received e-mail pictures within hours after his birth. Unfortunately, some people become Internet-addicted, abandoning normal family interaction in order to spend long hours in front of a computer screen. Ready access to pornography sites and chat rooms that encourage on-line romances can devastate families.

These are some of the issues that pastoral counseling addresses. Pastoral counselors can help family members to see a new perspective, learn communication skills, deal with old hurts and recognise and accept both limitations and strengths. They can help families seek God's healing by acknowledging their brokenness and pain.

While pastoral workers cannot eliminate the difficulties of family life, they can help families deal with them in constructive and life-giving ways.

Source: **Sunday Examiner**, June 2000

(Sheila Garcia is the assistant director of the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth)

Many Catholics living in the secular world today are quite confused by worldly values which often contradict Christian values inspired by God.

The Catholic Religion is a family-centred religion where God's only-begotten Son Jesus taught that God is a loving Father Who created humankind with a free-will to journey towards our eternally happy home, Heaven. On the other hand, Satan, the fallen angel of light, rebelled against God's plan and upset Christian family values. God said that sex is for marriage and procreation only but Satan has lured mankind into practising sex outside marriage in illicit sex of every description. When sex is for recreation, the consequences are disastrous to family values.

Thus God's plan for sex and procreation in marriage was thwarted and mankind is using free sex, contraception, abortion, euthanasia and genetic-engineering as 'the' means of achieving sexual happiness in a worldly heaven in place of God's eternal Heaven. When this cunning lie got locked onto the living pattern of humankind, the world media in all their forms are hastening their full implementation in the minds of the young who undoubtedly will believe it to be good, unless God's Catholic Church play its part in an effective way. If not, God will be replaced by money, power, free sex, fame and luck, and every means of attaining such vices will be lauded with praise and glory. While self-control, humility and obedience take a back seat, cunning, arrogance and dissent are put forward as creativity. Bishop Fulton Sheen said: "People who do not behave the way they believe will soon believe the way they behave" which tells why America was not shocked by Bill Clinton's scandalous behaviour, because it was consistent with the culture. The president merely attached the Oval Office to the rest of the country and brought it down to the level of all the less revered institutions where the majority of the people are thinking and talking about sex all the time – to the extent that sex outside marriage is no more bad but commonplace. Thus family values can be thrown to the winds.

In such a hedonistic society, the true meaning of family as a basic unit comprising father, mother and naturally procreated or adopted children is seen

as politically incorrect, and the family is redefined from a loving couple with children to such as a homosexual liaison with adopted children, or a lesbian liaison with adopted children or children from a surrogate birth, or children from any genetically engineered process.

When God judged homosexual acts as intrinsically wrong but gives mankind chance after chance to repent, mankind today go overboard with their homosexual marriages and proclaiming their lifestyle to be an alternative choice, in defiance of God's sanctified Sacrament of Matrimony.

At one time, all of mankind praised God for the gift of children as their crowning glory, but today, worldly values get them to see children as an impediment to mankind's quest for personal glory and material advancement. In their selfish quest, pregnancy is seen as a disease to be got rid of, where doctors, who originally were trained to cure a disease and so save life, are now also trained to skillfully kill the helpless babies in their mother's womb, and this is perpetrated in the guise of maternal health-care.

In a pro-life society, God's plan for life has the young eventually supporting the old where harmony reigns supreme, but when a nation systematically kills off most of its unborn and thus upsets the replacement continuity, the few young people left will find it too burdensome to support the massive lot of old folks. The killing will then take a turn for the worse, i.e. euthanasia will be justified to help the helpless old to die with "dignity". Just how dignified can a legalised murder be for the old who once contributed to the welfare of their nation? This will be mankind's chastisement for dissenting against God's plan for the family!

The Catholic Church teaches that God the Trinity is a loving family and the Sacrament of Matrimony is a reflection of God's love for mankind where God the Father continues to call His wayward children to repent and come back into His family fold of Heaven. The Catholic pro-life economy cares for human beings from conception to old age and natural death where human suffering has strong spiritual values for the whole family.

Some other religions teach that God is a slave-

master and mankind are his slaves. This is in direct contradiction to God as a Father Who loves His children in one big happy family. Another religion never mentions the existence of God and it philosophises that life is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth. It sees existence as suffering and it teaches that we must find a way out of being reborn to attain bliss. This negation of God sees life as only a philosophy, and this contradicts our Catholic doctrine of eternal life with God our Father.

Jesus founded his Church in the world to evangelise and as the Church uses inculturation in its proper context for evangelisation, billions join God's happy family. But today, Satan fans the embers of dissent to twist inculturation to mean accepting other religions as equal to God's Catholic Religion. Those who got misled by this life are "sincerely" tearing God's Catholic Church apart and forming some local churches which claim to be Catholic but work diametrically opposite the Pope in Faith and Morals. God's family values are thrown to the win and they are replaced with worldly values of arrogant power, change for the sake of change, money, fame, self-fulfillment at the expense of spouse, children and the natural family, freedom to make one's own

god and worship it as in the United Nations universal prayer chapel of one world religion, and nothing is permanent since every value is relative, where God's eternal truths are not only not taught and practised, but are replaced by a series of psychological myths and fancies that emanate from pseudo-science and the occult.

God is truly patient with us sinners and He sends His Mother Mary to plead with us to turn back to Him. What did we do with her pleas? Instead of repenting, we sin the more by justifying our sins. The time is coming when God's divine Justice will descend to earth and there will be "wailing and gnashing of teeth". The sign of the times is now upon the world; and the faithful remnants must pray extra hard and hold on firmly to the will of God Who alone can give Justice and bring good even out of evil. The Bible says: "Many are called but few are chosen." Let us continue to pray and do our best for God's family values and not give in to Satan's ploy. If we cannot win them neither must we join them, because we stand for the Gospel of life and not the culture of death.

Source: **News and Views**, No. 114, May – June 1999

con't from page 1 >

the foundation for a new evangelisation. What is required is a Spirituality of Social Transformation, a Missionary Spirituality for the on-going emergence of the Reign of God today. It is this spirituality that addresses the innate aspirations of the whole human family and the fervent cry of those longing for a new civilisation of love.

Our accompanying articles offer some insights into the Family for the New Millennium. It is clear that we need an integral approach that move from identifying symptoms to the root causes of the malice today. We may have long forgotten, the prophetic call of the Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World that articulated quite clearly that promotion of justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel. We have to pay the price today for the silence and complacency about social justice and structural sin, over the past thirty years, especially at the level of the Local Church and the Conference of Bishops. The gradual erosion of basic human rights, especially of the rights of the family, has drawn us into deep and turbulent waters that we are unable to get out of now.

What has the Church done to prevent the deluge today? Our intra-ecclesial concerns have made us indifferent to the larger social issues that confront society today. We may have been quite satisfied with our array of educational institutions, health and social services. The greatest challenge for the Church today, in the context of a globalisation that marginalises is a process of globalising solidarity. The greatest test is our ability to permeate every strata of humanity with the values of the Gospel. We are being challenged today to come-up with radical pastoral orientations and strategies.

It is in the above context that the Church in Asia is being called to look for a new contextual methodology that stresses the importance of not just leaving the family to solve the problems that it is burdened with today, but for the Church as the People of God to offer some concrete steps for the future. The accompanying articles will hopefully, serve to draw some insights that will allow us to look to the civilisation of love with enthusiasm and confidence.

Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC
Executive Secretary

The Kind Of Support Families Say They Need

By Dan Luby

Most families are neither totally healthy nor totally unhealthy. Families like their individual members, are a mixture of health and dysfunction, strength and weakness.

So there are few families who can't use help in maximizing strengths and managing weaknesses. Based on my experience as a fascinated listener to family stories from friends and colleagues and strangers, as well as on my personal experience of family life. I've heard enough common themes repeated to identify some areas where families need insight and support.

Time is one pressing need of many families today. Raising workloads, a growing array of leisure pursuits, intrusive electronic communications (phones, television, video-games, e-mail, etc.) and other aspects of modern life have eroded the time families have together for things that matter: shared meals, meaningful conversation, thinking through and thoughtfully discussing their issues and dilemmas.

A related need is to clarify family priorities. Some families discover upon reflection that part of their time crunch stems from saying yes to too many worthwhile options. Families need assistance in figuring out where to invest their time and energy and money, and how to name their most treasured values.

Families also need help in developing strategies to counteract consumerism's pervasive influence. Parishes, schools and other institutions can help families by providing opportunities to reflect together on the deeper human needs which over-consumption masks, as well as by reinforcing the value of simplicity.

Families need to be supported in the efforts they make to judiciously "unplug" themselves from the constant drone of messages urging them to make

consumption of everything from toothpaste to lifestyles the priority of their days.

Many families could use help in developing the skills necessary for conversation that moves beyond polite small talk to the level of feelings and needs and dreams. Especially when issues are weighed with feelings like anger or disappointment or sadness, lots of families could profit from the experience of a counselor or family therapist to teach them how to talk about these important realities.

Dealing with the transition that are part of family life is another crucial concern. When children leave home, when parents age, when family members marry or divorce or move away or die, families are deeply affected. Many times they need additional wisdom and insight to help in dealing with the impact of such changes.

Families who worship together deepen their unity. When families pray at meal times and discuss religious belief and values, or join in service to the poor, they develop a spiritual reservoir upon which to draw, especially in difficult times.

Families make mistakes, just as individuals do. Like individuals, families need to be supported in acknowledging that they may need from outside themselves. They need to be encouraged to be forgiving of the mistakes they make and to seek help for the needs they have.

(Dan Luby is director of the Division of Christian Formation for the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.)

A Family Memo: Four Tips to Better Communication

Communication problems afflict all families. But those that recognize that families are meant to be “schools of love” try to maintain a healthy dialog about each family member’s hopes, dreams and needs. These families tend to understand that life is about more than what’s on the schedule for today. They recognize that every interaction between family members is another opportunity to help each other grow in love, confidence, security and inner peace.

“We don’t ever talk anymore. All we do is exchange information.” I hear this complaint more and more in family counseling sessions. Communication is confined to schedule planning. Busy schedules prohibit family members from finding opportunities to share their hopes, dreams, and needs. Conversations with children tend to more closely resemble performance evaluations at a corporate meeting rather than “heart-to-hearts.” And when it comes to husbands and wives having time to talk, as one client of mine put it, “I think I have a husband, I’m just not sure where I put him — or what he looks like.”

This problem afflicts all families. But those that recognize that families are meant to be “schools of love” try to maintain a healthy dialog about each family member’s hopes, dreams and needs. These families tend to understand that life is about more than what’s on the schedule for today. They recognize that every interaction between family members is another opportunity to help each other grow in love, confidence, security and inner peace.

If your family is struggling to find ways to interact on a deeper level; to achieve greater rapport and more meaningful, loving communication, the following tips might offer you a good place to start.

Develop a Family Mission Statement

Developing a “family mission statement” (i.e. the values, ideals, and goals for which your family stands and toward which your family is working) can be a huge help to generating meaningful discussion. For example, once your family explicitly states that you want to be “a household of love,” or that you are seeking to pursue unity, wisdom and understanding, then you have some weighty issues to discuss. What choices does that compel you to make? If you were

going to be more loving toward one another, what would you have to do? How do each of you find meaning in the everyday events of your lives?

Getting the kids involved in this discussion is an essential and eye-opening process. To get things started, ask them what they like about other families they know and how your family might incorporate some of these benefits. You might also wish to use this opportunity to talk about such virtues as charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity, and what living these out more fully in your family would mean. Share your struggles to live out your mission statement over dinner or during a regularly scheduled family time. Take turns asking each other “What could I do to be a better example of the ideals our family stands for?” The intimate conversations which result from such questions will help your family become what it is, an instrument for perfecting each other.

Besides clarifying your family mission statement, there are three other simple ways to make communication more meaningful in your home-life.

Ask Specific, Open-Ended Questions

You need to stay away from yes or no questions. “Did you have a good time at school today?” is a polite enough query, but you’ll be lucky to get more than a grunt in response as your child makes his or her way to the fridge. Instead, try to ask open-ended questions, i.e., questions that can’t be answered with a simple yes or no. The rule of thumb is the more specific an open-ended question, the better.

The following are examples of common open-ended questions that are just too vague to elicit any good information.

Parent: “What did you learn in school today?”

Child: “Nothing.”

Wife: “How was work today?”

Husband: “Fine.”

Compare the above to the more specific, open-ended questions which follow.

Parent to child: “So you’ve been studying the Civil

War in your History class. What battles have you guys covered?"

One spouse to another: "Tell me about that (thing) you've been working on."

Asking questions in this sends the message that you are paying attention and that you care. It is not uncommon for me to talk to an adolescent who says, "My parents don't care about what I do." When I share this with the parents, they typically say, "How can Joey think that? We ask him every day about what's going on in his life. He usually says, 'nothing.' How am I supposed to respond to that?"

These parents do mean well, and to be fair, they have a point — children need to try a bit too. But an important part of adolescence is playing "hard to get." On the one hand, this protects the adolescent's boundaries as he seeks an identity separate from his family's. On the other hand, he is also saying to his parent, "If you really cared, you would ask more than the obligatory, polite questions."

Children, especially adolescents, despise hypocrisy. Rightly or wrongly, they often experience polite questions about their day as the parent's way of appearing to care while not investing the energy it would take to really care. The child's attitude is, "I'll give you the insincere response your insincere question invites." But when parents take the time to ask specific, open-ended questions, the child cannot mistake the parent's sincerity and often responds in kind.

Really Listen

Alex was frustrated about his son's school performance. I suggested he talk to his son about the situation and let me know what happened in the following session. The following week, Alex told me, "I talked to him. I told him that if he didn't pull it together, he was going to have to repeat the year at school, and if that happened he could do it at the public school because I wasn't about to pay for a second year in eighth grade at Catholic school." When I asked what the child had to say about all this, Alex responded, "He just shrugged. But he looked really upset with himself. I think I got through this time."

Of course, Alex had no way of knowing whether or not he had gotten through to his son. He didn't know if his "intervention" was effective because he never took the time to listen. Too often, we assume that our children need us to light a fire under them when what they really need is for us to kindle the fire of love in them — by listening.

When I sent Alex home to try again, he had this to say: "I told Coy that even though I meant the things I said, I was sorry for not listening to him. I asked him to tell me what was going on. He said that the other kids were giving him a hard time and it was difficult to pay attention in class. At first I thought he was just making excuses, but when I talked to his teacher about it, she agreed. There's a new boy in his class who's making a point of tormenting Coy and he doesn't know how to respond."

Alex was able to work with both his son and his son's teacher to address the problem, but this would never have happened had Alex not given his son a chance to talk, and then taken the trouble to check out the story.

There is a lesson here for all of us. There's nothing wrong with an occasional lecture, but make sure that you have taken the trouble to listen first.

Work Together

Most real communication goes on while families are working side-by-side on various projects. Make a point of doing household chores and service projects together. For example, you might decide that the whole family will work together to clean the house and do various chores on one particular day every week. Not only does this teach important living skills to your children, but it also provides ample opportunities to pass the time by talking about your lives, asking for advice from one another, and offering support to one another.

Likewise, if you feel that it is important to give back to your community, think about what your family could do as a team. Instead of Dad working at the parish food bank, mom serving in the women's club, Johnny going to Boy Scouts, and Jenny working as a candy-striper, why don't all of you pick one project to work on together? Individual service projects and activities are wonderful, but not if they hinder family cohesion and intimacy. Building love and rapport in your family is your first and most important work. Everything else is gravy.

The family is like a "privileged community." Begin exercising the privileges of membership in your family by spending time talking to, and not at, each other.

Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC

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