

Br Kevin Wee: Missionary Discipleship - What does it mean for us and why is it important for CFM Members?

God calls ordinary families to do extraordinary things. Go forth from your comfort zones and witness the Joy of the Gospel.

Missionary discipleship begins in the family.

- A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, learns from Him, and loves Him. A missionary is someone who is sent forth, sent to witness and to proclaim the good news. Thus, a missionary disciple has encountered Christ and is now sent out to bring the Good News into homes, schools, workplaces, communities, etc.
- The first place where missionary discipleship can begin is the home. It is the family.
- Family begins with the sacrament of Marriage, as seen in Genesis.
- In the Book of Proverbs, we are told that family is the first school of religious education (Pr 23:22-25, 22:6). Also in Deut 6:7, Dt 4:9, 11:19, Eph 6:4.
- The CCC states: "Marriage and family are ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children."
- Eph 6 - Parents take responsibility for the moral and intellectual formation of children.
- Church ministries cannot be substitutes for religious education.

What are the challenges that families face today?

1. Financial and work-related challenges

- Stress at work, anxiety, burnout, and expenses related to housing and child care.
- Packed weekend schedules with sports, enrichment classes.

2. Material Comfort

- Prevalence of Nuclear, self-sufficient families.
- Material comfort may lead to a form of idolatry, valuing created things over the Creator, which leads to unrealistic approaches in marriage and in families.

3. The use of social media and technology

- Has led to increased anxiety and depression.
- They are reshaping modern culture, and secular ideologies contradict Christian values in the realm of chastity, marriage, and children.
- This can sometimes promote a Sexual revolution and undermine the chastity of the sexual union within marriage.

4. Raising self-centred families.

- Children witness practical examples of spending at home are reflected only amongst family members and with a mindset of utility or need/want. For example, on tuition, extracurriculars, etc.
- Monetary wealth is not being shared for the upliftment of society.
- Fathers prioritize financial provision over spiritual leadership. If there is a lack of spiritual leadership at home, children do not view faith as a personal relationship with God. Instead, it is viewed as a Sunday checkbox.

- Honoring the Christian identity - We often judge the value of a person based on their usefulness, instead of seeing them as unique, unrepeatable individuals, created in the image and likeness of God. Help them discover their true identity, not in the value of what they do but who they become.
- Parents and children spend time focused on a results-oriented conversation and less time on a spiritual bonding.

5. *Secular value in parishes.*

- Young families feel alienated in church because of the lack of a community, no help for caretaking or nobody to support or scaffold them in faith-based parenting.
- Participating in church only to advance personal needs.

What does a missionary family look like?

- As Mt 5:14 says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Christian Families are called to witness to the secular world in the light of the gospel, and then the secular world can never ignore the gospel values that are exemplified through the Christian family.
- St. John Chrysostom wrote that the Christian family must resemble a little church.
- Being the “light of the world” means that the Christian family must reflect God’s character of love, truth, goodness, beauty, and mercy. We are not meant to be hidden.
- In an imperfect world, we are called to draw people to Christ through our actions and visible gospel witnessing.
- Recognise the Reality of Sin - Sin ages the soul, but grace renews and transforms it. Sin is real, but grace is more real. It is sin, not years, that makes the difference in souls. Care must be taken to protect the soul from moral corruption.

How do we make our Christian families a visible model of Christ?

As missionary families, we have a vocation to engage with the world and, when necessary, to challenge secular values so that God’s love is visible to all. This is a constant practice of the following 3:

- **Formation** - Starts with the individual; the parents themselves will have to be intentional about personal transformations - it is a lifelong development of their own faith, character, and virtues. Build your personal relationship with God. Let your children see you do this.
- Parents must first become disciples of Christ, model the values, and then children will automatically imbibe these values. 1 Tim 1-2, St. Paul gives instructions on how to treat older and younger believers, widows(3-16), and elders (17-25).
- **Outreach** - Create a home environment that helps children witness self-giving love. Love without sacrifices is superficial. Ensuring shared responsibility among all members is a practical way of witnessing self-giving love.
- The church does not ask us to leave our ordinary daily routines to be missionary families. Our daily routine itself should be a demonstration of God’s love and compassion.
- **Community** - Active participation in parish life - engaging in the community by seeking practical opportunities to help in the parish.
- Hospitality - express faith through concrete acts of love and care towards friends, neighbours. Hospitality tangibly manifests love, and love is a language understood by all.

Reflection :

1. Why are we outsourcing the religious education of our children to the Church?
2. How are we shaping our parental engagement in our children’s lives? How are we creating avenues and modelling ways for children to encounter Jesus? How can we consciously move our conversations at home from just excellence in academic and technical pursuits to intentional discipleship?

3. What is the impact of material comfort on our daily living; are we valuing created things over the Creator? How are we judging children, families, and friends? Are the frameworks based on the individual's usefulness or on the principle of honoring the Christian identity?
4. Is marriage a constraint or is it freedom?
5. Are children a need or a want?
6. How are we sharing our material wealth? How are we using our God-given resources for the people around us? Do our children witness it? Do our conversations and examples at home show gratitude and shared responsibility for the people around us?
7. What are the ways that we reflect gospel values of truth, freedom, goodness, and beauty? What are the different approaches we take to stand up to these values in a secular world?
8. How can families be witnesses of the self-sacrifices of love?
9. How can joy, mercy, and authenticity become our "mission tools" in a secular world?
10. How can we help one another sustain missionary zeal when faced with fatigue or discouragement?

Evangelii Gaudium Connections:

EG 24 - An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people 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. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time.

EG 120- In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".

EG 50 - It is the approach of a missionary disciple, an approach "nourished by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit.

EG 51 - We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the kingdom from what runs counter to God's plan. This involves not only recognizing and discerning spirits, but also – and this is decisive – choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil.

Scripture Connections:

Mt 28 19-20 - Go forth and make disciples of all nations.

Jn 15:16 - You did not choose me, but I chose you to bear fruit.

Lk 10: 1 - Jesus sent out 72 in pairs.