



CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT

INDIA

INQUIRY BOOK 2019



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Acknowledgement

The Inquiry Papers presented in this book are adaptations of old Inquiry papers prepared by Chaplains and CFMers over the years. These Inquiries have been revised in collaboration with Mr. & Mrs. Lukose and Anita Vallatharai, Mr. Cyril D'Souza, Mr. Gilroy D'Silva, Mr. & Mrs. Richard and Judith D'Souza, Mrs. Evelyn Coutto, Mrs. Norma Lobo, Fr. Xavier Sanjivi, CSsR, Fr. Arul Raj Gali, CSC, Fr. Hervé Morissette, CSC, Fr. James Kumar, CSSR.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Message from CFM National President Couple	4
Message from National Chaplain	5
Introduction.....	6

FAITH AND RELIGION

1. Faith for the Family – Doers of the Word.....	8
2. From Fear to Faith.....	11

FAMILY

3. Marriage Annulment	16
4. Celebrating Forgiveness.....	22
5. Fidelity.....	26
6. Men as Husbands and Fathers.....	30
7. The “Successful” Family.....	36
8. Time Management & Quality Time in the Family.....	40
9. Understanding Rebelliousness in our Children.....	45
10. Role of the Elderly.....	49
11. Conflicts.....	53

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

12. Liberation Theology.....	59
13. The Power of Positive Thinking.....	63
14. Getting Rid of Prejudices.....	68

Prayer for the Family.....	72
Prayer for the Christian Family Movement.....	73
CFM Anthem.....	74
ICCFM Anthem.....	75

MESSAGE FROM CFM NATIONAL PRESIDENT COUPLE

Dear CFM Family,

We take this opportunity to write to you and wish you and your families a Very Happy 2019.

The Resolutions passed at the CFM Asia Continental Conference cover the Spiritual Growth of members, Evangelisation and Growth/Expansion of CFM.

The themes chosen, *Amoris Laetitia* (Joy of Love in The Family) & *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad) cover matters that are currently challenging Christian Families and rightfully need to be examined, discussed and actions arrived at to support, rebuild & save Families.

Amoris Laetitia (Joy of Love in the Family) is a call to compassionate accompaniment in helping ALL to experience Christ's love and mercy.

Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad) Pope Francis' third apostolic exhortation is the call to holiness in today's world. He indicates that what counts, what is the essence of Christian life – to use the terminology of St. Ignatius of Loyola – is to “Seek and Find GOD in all things”.

We have used these themes and the feedback received from our members to compile a set of Inquiry Papers for discussion at the monthly CFM group meetings. Some topics are “Old Topics” that you may have done as long as 20 years ago – BUT in this “Changing World” and in these “Challenging Times” we felt the need to REWORK these topics so they can be REVISITED from a NEW perspective and help Families to adapt to “The Times”.

This year we have not printed books. We request you not to see this as a lack of initiative and a step backwards because in reality it is a practical approach with cost effectiveness and safeguarding of CFM funds as the primary objective. We were fortunate to have “The Holy Cross Family Ministries” supporting us and sharing costs for many years. They are no longer in a position to invest in our Inquiry Books and CFM alone cannot justify the huge cost of printing; neither is it fitting to thrust the cost on the members. It was, therefore, decided to adopt a new approach.

1 – Go with the times - circulate an e-Copy of the Inquiry books. This can be stored on Computers and Smart Phones and the more tech savvy can use it at the CFM meetings.

2 – Cater to the needs of the Elderly – A4 size printouts will be taken and formed into a booklet with Spiral Binding to be used at CFM meetings.

We cannot conclude without thanking our CFM “Inquiry Papers Editorial Team” for their dedication, commitment and contributions to having these Inquiry Papers ready for you to use. A special word of thanks to “The Holy Cross Family Ministries” and Fr. Arul Raj Gali & Fr. Herve Morissette, in particular, for providing the use of their premises for meetings and more importantly their contribution to editing the papers.

We hope these papers stimulate discussions that motivate you to work with greater dedication towards resolving the challenges threatening & destroying our families. We pray they help in building God's kingdom of Love, Peace & Harmony. May they also help you in your Spiritual Journey in building a closer relationship with our Creator.

Lots of love and a BIG God bless you all,

Judith & Richard DSouza
National President Couple
CFM India

MESSAGE FROM NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

Changing ourselves to change the world

The recently concluded World Youth Day 2019 was held from 22nd to 27th January in the Republic of Panama in Central America. It was attended by over 500,000 young people from all over the world. This highly significant event for young people was presided over by our Holy Father Pope Francis. It is understood that the Holy Father had chosen Panama as the venue to show his closeness to Christians and to young people who live in Central America.

The young participants were asked many relevant questions, to which equally relevant answers were put forth. But the one question and the one answer from a youngster that stood out for its depth and compelling significance was this: "If you could change the world, what would you do?" "I would start by changing myself; one must begin with oneself in order for necessary changes to happen in the world and in the church. Together, we can help the world belong to everyone."

This answer resonates with the wisdom of the famous Russian author Leo Tolstoy who said, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." It also echoes with the answer of Alexandra Wilmore, a young girl of 16 years from Sao Paulo. She was asked informally by the organisers what she would say to the Holy Father had she got a chance to have a one-on-one meeting with him and she replied, "Holy Father, I thank you for telling us not to be afraid to go against the current. This will help us change the world."

Often, many among us long for a change, either in the world or in the church or in our own families. Yet, such a change will not happen just because of wishful thinking. It will, however, happen if each of us is ready to change our own way of thinking and acting, and not be afraid of going against the current of this world, which is a world that gives importance to materialism, to pleasure, to unbridled freedom and to be directed by personal fears and prejudices.

It is against this background that we, in the CFM, are called to promote Christian and human values in our families. In the statutes of CFM India, it is written "The CFM helps families to discover Christ as the binding force in family life. It provides the family with a forum where the new trends can be discussed, evaluated and acted upon, so that the human aspect of development is properly understood."

This new inquiry booklet prepared by a group of lay people and a couple of priests touches upon many topics that are relevant for us in our families: matters concerning faith formation in the family, the role of husbands and fathers at home, how to handle rebellious children and how we can wrestle out of the doubts and prejudices in our lives. These are some of the topics we will have to grapple with in our monthly CFM meetings. If we are able to talk about these issues openly and be prepared to listen to the opinions of others, that itself will be a help for us to handle tricky situations we may face in our families.

I congratulate everyone who has contributed to working out the various inquiry themes in this booklet. And it is my earnest hope that we all will draw much strength and inspiration from the discussions. Let us not be afraid to go against the current, especially in standing up for Christian and human values in our life. In this way our families will progressively become witnesses to Christ the Redeemer in a wounded world.

Xavier Sanjivi, C.Ss.R.
National Chaplain, CFM India

INTRODUCTION

Wishing you and your family the peace, joy and blessings of the Holy Family.

In every age the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, it should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. (The Church in the Modern World #4)

The National Board of CFM India in collaboration with Holy Cross Family Ministries (Holy Cross Fathers) and the authors of the inquiries have completed the compilation of the inquiry book for use at the group meetings on completion of the last published book – “Strengthening CFM Families”. Inquiry books were being compiled by CFM India between the 1970’s and 1980’s. Then for some time the inquiries were written by the groups, chaplains and some individuals till the year 2013 when the National Board once again started compiling the books for the group meetings.

This compilation is a collection of themes shared in group meetings in the years gone by, but adapted to the present situations and times. The themes have been shortlisted by the Regions giving due thought to the needs of the groups and prevailing life situations.

We are aware that our movement is an ecclesial movement born of the Holy Spirit. It has its roots in the mission of the Church. It aims at the Christian renewal of Family life and the promotion of Christian and human values in the family. The CFM seeks to help families discover Christ as the binding force in family life. It provides the family with a forum where these new trends can be discussed, evaluated and acted upon, so that the human aspect of development is properly understood. (Preamble Statutes – CFM India) This is the charism of our movement.

This charism is fostered and practiced with a missionary zeal and fervour in the group meetings. The group meetings are structured and follow the Cardijn method of Observe (See) – Judge (Discern) – Act. The CFM has adapted this method to their charism as – “In the light of Christ’s teachings – Observe, Judge, Act.” We as members of the movement have to constantly be aware that Christ’s teachings, i.e., Scripture or the Word of God, are the primary references for all that is shared in the meetings and should be the primary influence to the outcomes of the meetings.

The approach to the methodology can be in three ways – The Bible Inquiry, The Social Inquiry and the Review of Life. The authors have used these approaches while writing/ adapting the themes of the inquiries. These approaches have been described in detail in the introduction to the previous two books, and so they have not been detailed here. It is suggested to refer to the earlier books to refresh the approach to the methodologies; so also for the outline of a CFM meeting.

The effectiveness and benefits of a program are best seen and felt from the outcomes of the program. The outcome of any program depends to a large extent on the preparation and application of the program. This is squarely applicable to the CFM group meeting where we share on the inquiry theme. Due preparation, dynamism and application will definitely have enriching and effective outcomes.

A few suggestions are provided to help the groups and members towards this goal.

- As far as possible keep the meeting on a fixed day of the month so that the members and the Chaplain can plan their schedule and maximum attendance is achieved.
- Read through the introduction and the Scripture passage at least one week prior to the meeting day. Reflect a little and try to find out more about the context of the Scripture and personal life experiences on the theme of the inquiry. In so doing one will be in a better position to share and add value to the interaction. Keep in mind that at the meeting we share. We do not impose, monopolise or prove others wrong with our views and experiences.
- If the hymns are not known, try to learn them or suggest alternate hymns prior to the meeting. This will help everyone to be prepared and have the lyrics to participate. Singing brings a lot of joy and uplifts the mind. So, do ensure that the meeting starts with a hymn and ends with a hymn.
- Prayer is an integral part of the meeting. We start with a prayer to acknowledge God's blessings, His presence among us and the fact that we are in His presence. Similarly we end with a prayer in thanksgiving and seeking the grace and courage to keep His Word and to live His Word. Pray with reverence and wholeheartedly. We need to pray for the movement and its growth. Prayer is more effective when we all stand and participate.
- In the days subsequent to the meeting, revisit the inquiry, either individually, as spouses or with the children. This will be an opportunity to update the children with the sharing that took place at the meeting and the insights that can help foster better family life. Avoid comparison and adverse comments.
- If you feel you and the family want to better understand the scripture passage or any question on the faith and spirituality, get in touch with your chaplain. Invite him over or make an appointment. Your chaplain is your spiritual guide, not just a guest at the meetings.
- Decide on implementing/adopting as an individual, spouses/children or family, something from the meeting that will help the renewal of your Family life and the promotion of Christian and human values in your family.
- Report the above outcome, however small, in the next meeting. This will help others in the group and motivate you and them.

It would be apt to quote the well-known saying – “The proof of a pudding lies in the eating”. At every meeting the ingredients are all available, they are mixed and ready to cook. Sadly often just left at that stage, because after the meeting time goes by and we just get into the next meeting. The CFM guideline “what happens between the meetings is more important than what happens at the meetings” tells it all.

More importantly drawing from Scripture we need to be “doers of the Word not only sayers” (Jam 1:22). In preparing for the meetings and using this inquiry book may we be prudent and wise. Like Mary may we choose the better part.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family we pray that this inquiry book be a tool and means well used with fruitful outcomes.

FAITH FOR THE FAMILY

Doers of the Word

OPENING HYMN

1. Just like a child, who trusts his father dear
And who delights, to feel his presence near
Just like a child, whose mind has not a doubt
And whose heart is never proud.

Here I come, O Lord,
Here I come just like a child.
Here I come, O Lord
Here I come just like a child.

2. Just like a child, so weak he cannot stand
But who holds firm and tight his mother's hand
Just like a child, who sings in bright daylight
Fearing not the long dark night.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father we praise and thank you for bringing us together today. Let our discussion be fruitful. Help us to experience Christ in a deeper way and see how we can share Jesus and His mission to our families and others more effectively through the power of the Holy Spirit. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Bishop Agnelo, in his keynote address at the ICCFM in Goa, began his reflection on the theme quoting a sentence from St John Paul II's Encyclical on the Family, *Familiaris Consortio* (F.C.) no. 86: "The future of humanity passes by way of the family."

He spoke about the stages of faith beginning with the implantation when the infant is baptized into the faith through the family. This seed once planted has to be nurtured. The questions asked of the parents at the time of baptism are significant. The priest says, "You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking? Only after the parents have said "Yes", does the Baptism continue.

In days gone by, perhaps it was sufficient for our parents to baptize us and send us to a Catholic school. Times have changed. Many schools have substituted catechism with value education. Parents today opt for non-Catholic schools. Society and media, whether we like it or not, does strongly impact our children. Parents, now more than ever, need to understand and fulfil the promise they made to God when they baptized their child.

SEE

“Train a child in the way he /she should go and when he /she is old he/she will not depart from it.” (*Prov. 22: 6*)

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.” (*Matthew 6: 33*)

- What is the difference between Kingdom values and universal values?
- What does "Allwill be given to you" mean?
- In the light of the above how do you see your family living your baptismal promises?

JUDGE

- “The family that prays together stays together.” How much time do you spend reading and understanding the Bible, the Word of God, together as a family and also as individuals?
- Do your children see this time as a time of blessing, provision and protection as you build a relationship with the Lord? If not, how can you make it so?
- Life on this earth is just a blink when compared to eternal life. Is the attention you pay to the career and material success of your children in proportion to the attention to training your children for eternal life? If not what do you need to do? List some of the changes you need to make.
- If example speaks louder than words is there need for both parents to know and live their faith?
- What is the message your children have learnt from your lifestyle so far? Is there God in your home?

ACT

- Suggest some ways of learning more about our faith and living it in our homes.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you and reveal areas in which you are still conceding victories to Satan (e.g. habitual weaknesses in your life which you have not overcome) to help you plan action steps towards growing into the image of Christ.

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Abba Father we offer ourselves once again as a living sacrifice to you. Help us to make time to hear your voice and obey it. We truly want to see our families filled with love, joy and peace, families that truly represent you in this world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

There is no problem too big
God cannot solve it.
There is no mountain too tall
God cannot move it.
There is no storm too dark
God cannot calm it.
There is no sorrow too deep
He cannot soothe it.
And if He carried the weight of the world
upon His shoulders
I know my brother/sister
that He will carry you
He said "Come unto me all who are weary
and I will give you rest".

FROM FEAR TO FAITH

OPENING HYMN

I just keep trusting my Lord as I walk along,
I just keep trusting my Lord and He gives me a song;
Tho' the storm clouds darken the sky o'er the heav'nly trail,
I just keep trusting my Lord—He will never fail!
He's a faithful friend, such a faithful friend
I can count on Him, to the very end.
Tho' the storm clouds darken the sky o'er the heav'nly trail,
I just keep trusting my Lord—He will never fail!

I just keep trusting my Lord on the narrow way,
I just keep trusting my Lord as He leads me each day;
Tho' the road is weary at times and I'm sad and blue,
I just keep trusting my Lord— He will see me through!
He's a faithful guide, such a faithful guide,
He is always there, walking by my side;
Tho' the road is weary at times and I'm sad and blue,
I just keep trusting my Lord— He will see me through!

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Abba Father, we are here to grow in faith and knowledge of You. Help us to walk in Your light and holiness. We want to know You more. Take us deeper in our prayer life and in intimacy with You. Holy Spirit, we pray that You will be with us and make Your presence known in and through our discussion. Help us to cultivate Your presence in our lives, our families and community. Transform our lukewarm hearts, increase our faith and set us on fire for Jesus. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Adapted from *'From Fear to Faith'* – Merlin Carothers. It's highly important to wrestle with our unhealthy and unhelpful fears.

What we believe and what we feel are very unreliable and sometimes the complete opposite of what is the reality. If we believed that a thief was banging on our front door our response would be very different from if the intruder turned out to be a close friend facing an emergency.

Faith controls feelings, not vice versa. The paradox is that as long as we deny fear, fight it, attempt to control it, it remains our tormentor and we are in its power. When we admit our fears to God in humility, thank God for our circumstances and our own helplessness, the power of fear is broken and it is defeated. When we meet fear with gratitude to God, it becomes our ally!

We cannot manufacture faith; the only way to receive it is from God and from those who live in faith. However when we are controlled by fear in some area of our lives, WE turn away from God and focus instead on the object of our fear and on our lack of control. When we are gripped with fear and most need God, we are unable to pray.

The body reacts to what we believe. Fear drains energy. Therefore spiritual mountain climbers, just like physical mountain climbers, cannot afford to entertain fear. Unhelpful fear (doubt) is not from the Holy Spirit.

Famous Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno once said: "Those who believe that they believe in God, but without passion in their hearts, without anguish in mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe in the God idea, not God himself."

In his book '*Know Doubt: The Importance of Embracing Uncertainty in Your Faith*', John Ortberg says that there is "a mystery to faith, as there is to life, that I don't fully understand", and argues that faith and doubt can – and do – exist alongside one another.

"When we take seriously the reality of faith and doubt, the most important word in the phrase is the one in the middle," he writes. "Because most people I know are a mix of the two." In fact, Ortberg argues, "When people of faith are not willing to sit quietly sometimes and let doubt make its case, bad things can happen."

SEE

- Name some of your fears. Can you identify the root/s of these fears?
- Name an area in which you need to be in control and feel very stressed when matters go beyond your control?
- Are we ever really in control or is this an illusion?
- Is God in control? If so, is my life pre-destined?
- Is fear good or bad? Why?
- What are some things/people, other than God, that I place my faith in daily? Truthfully examine whether I trust these more than I trust God? If yes, why?
- Does having faith in God mean inaction on one's own part?
- How would you explain the dynamics of faith and action?

JUDGE

The Bible tells us 366 times not to entertain 'needless fear and anxiety'. Being content with doubt, suspicion, and weak faith is, as Luther says, the highest form of contempt we can muster against God.

There is no way in which we can show greater contempt for a man than to regard him as false and wicked and to be suspicious of him, as we do when we do not trust him. What greater rebellion against God, what greater wickedness, what greater contempt of God is there than not believing His promise? For what is this but to make God a liar or to doubt that He is truthful — that is, to ascribe truthfulness to one's self but lying and vanity to God?

It is tragic to return distrust and suspicion to the God of steadfast love and truth. We slander Him when we refuse to trust Him. The Father of truth is not the father of lies. The God of love is not the God of cruelty. The Son who hung on a cross for sinners is not to be regarded as a deceiver.

The condemned in the deepest pits of hell will not have any just complaint against Him. Ask the martyrs in heaven and none will think of anything but praise for Him. Who can accuse Him of wrong? His disciples couldn't. His enemies couldn't. Satan can't. His Father didn't. But after all of heaven stands silent, should the groans and complaints of professing Christians stand ready to accuse him?

In the light of God's Word, it's vital to remember that God is faithful, even when we're not sure of Him. Absolute faith in God and doubt, just like light and darkness, cannot co-exist. I am called to aspire to have the faith OF God. God cannot doubt Himself.

The goal is to come to a maturity of faith like Abraham, my father in faith; an unshakeable faith to believe that "God WILL provide". (God's WILL is provision).

Now faith is the assurance (title deed) of things hoped for and the evidence (guarantee) of things not seen [faith comprehends as REALITY what cannot be experienced by the physical senses]. (Heb.11:1 amplified)

Yet without faith it is impossible to please God. (Ref. Heb. 11:6a)

- What is the difference between faith, hope, presumption and knowledge?
- When does one receive a "title deed"? What does this entitle the holder to?
- God has given me the Bible as a "title deed". What is the only way I will know what I am entitled to?

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a New Testament, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the First Testament. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the testator. (Heb.9:15-16)

- What does it mean that Christ died as a ransom to set me free from my sins?
- What is my promised eternal inheritance?
- Does this mean I can continue to sin?
- What is the role of good work in the life of a Christian?

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His Will, He hears us. (1Jn.5:14)

Your Kingdom come, Your Will be DONE, ON EARTH as it is IN HEAVEN. (Mt 6:10)

- How can I pray according to the Will of God?
- Does God need my prayers and praises?
- Does God want me to pray and praise Him? Why?
- When I approach God, do I place my confidence in prayers, novenas, rosaries, or in God and His promises given to me in His Word?
- If my faith is in God and His Word, what is the role of devotions?

Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Ref. Col.2:15)

- Who are the 'rulers and authorities' that Christ has publicly disgraced and triumphed over?
- Is Satan real? What is his purpose? How can I have victory over him?
- Does suffering come from God? What is the purpose of trials in my life?

His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Ref. Eph.1:19-21)

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (Ref. Eph.2:6)

- I am the temple of the Holy Spirit. God has given me the same MIGHTY Spirit by which He raised Jesus from the dead when the sins of all people of all time were upon Him. How am I accessing and using this power?
- When I read the title-deed and understand my position in Christ and my inheritance as a child of GOD how will the way I approach God in prayer change?
- Why and how should I move from fear to faith and victory in Christ?

ACT

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to consciously surrender to the Lord one area at a time in which you presently 'need' to be in control.
- When things go horribly wrong, refuse to be shaken. Be still and know that He is God. Focus on Him. Tell your problem how big your God is.
- Trust Him for His Grace. When doubt comes — and come it will — whispering that God isn't true, the Bible isn't reliable, Jesus' blood isn't enough, do not have faith in such lies which come from the devil. Do not embrace them. Do not confess them. Do not hand over your authority to him. Don't let him steal your peace. Focus on WHO GOD IS. Confess your faith, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!"

NEXT MEETING:

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

We keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that we may know Him better. We pray that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which He has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in His holy people. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

Give thanks with a grateful heart
Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong"
Let the poor say, "I am rich"
Because of what the Lord has done for us"
Give thanks, O give thanks. O give thanks.

MARRIAGE ANNULMENT

OPENING HYMN

Wherever you go, I will go,
Wherever you dwell, there shall I dwell;
Your people will be my people,
And your God will be my God too.
Wherever you die, I will die,
And there shall I be buried beside you,
We will be together forever,
And our love will be the gift of our life.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, we acknowledge Your greatness and our need for Your grace in our marriage. We thank You now for the gift You have given us in each other, this opportunity to love and be loved completely. We accept this beautiful challenge and ask You to bless us. May our love encourage us to grow to be holier individuals, bringing out the best in each other. Following Your example, Jesus, may we be quick to forgive, ready with a healing word or touch. Teach us to speak to each other with charity and honesty. Help us avoid the temptation to take each other for granted. Instead, remind us, day by day, to see each other as You see us. May we be as patient with each other as You are with us. May our love be generous, reaching out beyond ourselves to all we meet. We pray that they may meet You in us. Let our life together be a light of hope to those who fear that a total commitment is not possible today. Faith gives us courage, for we believe that the love that comes from You is freeing and life-giving. Lord, be a partner with us in our marriage; with Your help it will be strong and enduring. We rejoice that You have brought us together. May we always be one in You. Amen.

Lauri Przybysz

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Annulment is a legal procedure within secular and religious legal systems for declaring a marriage null and void. Unlike divorce, it is usually retroactive, meaning that an annulled marriage is considered to be invalid from the beginning almost as if it had never taken place.

CAN (Catholic News Agency)

Our generation seem to have certain tags we can't escape from. Entitled and selfie-obsessed on the one hand; tech-savvy, high achievers on the other. We can't seem to catch a break. Millennials are less likely to be married in their 20s than previous generations, while Gallup found a whopping 64% of 18-29 year olds were single in 2014, having risen from 52% in 2004. The 30-39 age group also saw a rise of singledom, growing from 15% to 19% over the same period. So what is going on? Why are we struggling to commit?

“Millennials are continually bombarded with information that screams ‘there are endless options, why settle when you can simply move from one option to the next?’” Hailee believes. “Take shows like *the Bachelor*, where potential love interests line up to compete for love. Each week one of the many options is easily dismissed, it’s no wonder the younger generation are rendered motionless when committing to just one option.”

With a shift in personal goals, values, and roles that differ greatly from previous generations, more and more millennials — those born from 1981 to 1996 — are tapping the brakes on marriage. Led by their desire to focus on their careers, personal needs and goals, forming a substantial financial foundation upon which to create a family, and even questioning the meaning of marriage itself, this current generation of young couples is redefining marriage.

A shift in women’s role in society is also contributing to putting off marriage for a while, as women pursue college, careers, and other options that weren’t available or accessible for previous generations of women. Millennials, compared to *The Silent Generation*, are overall better educated, and especially women: they are now more likely than men to attain a bachelor’s degree, and are much more likely to be working than their Silent Generation counterparts.

Marriage is hard sometimes and you have to have the character to stay with it when it gets tough. We know that couples that stayed married when they felt like getting divorced, were often happier than those that chose the painful path of divorce. That goes back to the old saying, “Love is a choice”. It really is as simple as that.

Relationship Counsellor Hailee Walker

SEE (Your experience)

- What is your spontaneous reaction to the present increase of marriage annulments among Catholics?
- What is your understanding of the difference between Annulment and Divorce?

JUDGE

In the light of God’s Word

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6)

- What is the meaning of “What God has joined together”?
- What conditions must be fulfilled before one can say that “God has joined them together”?

In the light of the Church's teaching: Grounds for Marriage Annulment in the Catholic Church

There are very well defined canonical grounds for Marriage Annulment. Once these have been established Annulment can proceed. It is important to understand the grounds for Marriage Annulment before making any application, and if in doubt you should consult your local priest.

Insufficient use of reason (Canon 1095, 1*). You or your spouse did not know what was happening during the marriage ceremony because of insanity, mental illness, or a lack of consciousness.

Grave lack of discretionary judgment concerning essential matrimonial rights and duties (Canon 1095, 20). You or your spouse were affected by some serious circumstances or factors that made you unable to judge or evaluate either the decision to marry or the ability to create a true marital relationship.

Psychic-natured incapacity to assume marital obligations (Canon 1095, 3*). You or your spouse, at the time of consent, were unable to fulfil the obligations of marriage because of a serious psychological disorder or other condition.

Ignorance about the nature of marriage (Canon 1096, sec. 1). You or your spouse did not know that marriage is a permanent relationship between a man and a woman ordered toward the procreation of offspring by means of some sexual cooperation.

Error of person (Canon 1097, sec. 1). You or your spouse intended to marry a specific individual who was not the individual with whom marriage was celebrated. (For example, mail order brides; otherwise, this rarely occurs in the United States.)

Error about a quality of a person (Canon 1097, sec. 2) You or your spouse intended to marry someone who either possessed or did not possess a certain quality, e.g., social status, marital status, education, religious conviction, freedom from disease, or arrest record. That quality must have been directly and principally intended.

Fraud (Canon 1098). You or your spouse were intentionally deceived about the presence or absence of a quality in the other. The reason for this deception was to obtain consent to marriage.

Total wilful exclusion of marriage (Canon 1101, sec. 2). You or your spouse did not intend to contract marriage as the law of the Catholic Church understands marriage. Rather, the ceremony was observed solely as a means of obtaining something other than marriage itself, e.g., to obtain legal status in the country or to legitimize a child.

Wilful exclusion of children (Canon 1101, sec. 2). You or your spouse married intending, either explicitly or implicitly, to deny the other's right to sexual acts open to procreation.

Wilful exclusion of marital fidelity (Canon 1101, 12). You or your spouse married intending, either explicitly or implicitly, not to remain faithful.

Wilful exclusion of marital permanence (Canon 1101, sec. 2). You or your spouse married intending, either explicitly or implicitly, not to create a permanent relationship, retaining an option to divorce.

Future condition (Canon 1102, sec. 2). You or your spouse attached a future condition to your decision to marry, e.g., you will complete your education, your income will be at a certain level, you will remain in this area.

Past condition (Canon 1102, sec. 2). You or your spouse attached a past condition to your decision to marry and that condition did not exist; e.g., I will marry you provided that you have never been married before, I will marry you provided that you have graduated from college.

Present condition (Canon 1102, sec. 2). You or your spouse attached a present condition to your decision to marry and that condition did not exist, e.g., I will marry you provided you don't have any debt.

Force (Canon 1103). You or your spouse married because of an external physical or moral force that you could not resist.

Fear (Canon 1103). You or your spouse chose to marry because of fear that was grave and inescapable and was caused by an outside source.

Error regarding marital unity that determined the will (Canon 1099). You or your spouse married believing that marriage was not necessarily an exclusive relationship.

Error regarding marital indissolubility that determined the will (Canon 1099). You or your spouse married believing that civil law had the power to dissolve marriage and that remarriage was acceptable after civil divorce.

Error regarding marital sacramental dignity that determined the will (Canon 1099). You and your spouse married believing that marriage is not a religious or sacred relationship but merely a civil contract or arrangement.

Lack of new consent during convalidation (Canons 1157,1160). After your civil marriage, you and your spouse participated in a Catholic ceremony and you or your spouse believed that (1) you were already married, (2) the Catholic ceremony was merely a blessing, and (3) the consent given during the Catholic ceremony had no real effect.

- Do you know the full impact and meaning of the above quoted Canons?
- Does the practice of Annulment fall short of the Gospel ideal of Marriage?
- Does Canon 1095, para 10, signal a departure from the traditional Church doctrine on Marriage? Explain
- How should couples, about to be married, be helped to recognise in time such personality disorders and defects?

ACT

- Win the confidence of your children and share their choices before marriage.
- Be their support in the case of a threatening Annulment - BEFORE and AFTER

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

Father, your greatest command was to love You and love each other. You've given marriage as a holy relationship that reflects our relationship with You. Show us how to follow your example and set aside our selfishness and pride and humbly serve each other. Help us to be of one spirit and of one mind and value each other above ourselves, looking out for each other's interests in the midst of our busy lives, help us take time to love each other deeply from the heart, as you have loved us. May the love we have for each other be an example to the world of how You love them and gave Your life for them. Amen

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN: I'll Never Find another You

There's a new world somewhere
They call the Promised Land.
And I'll be there someday
If you will hold my hand.
I still need you there beside me
No matter what I do
For I know I'll never find another you.

There is always someone
For each of us, they say.
And you'll be my someone
Forever and a day.
I could search the whole world over
Until my life is through
But I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey
So stay by my side.
When I walk through the storm
You'll be my guide, be my guide.
If they gave me a fortune
My pleasure would be small.
I could lose it all tomorrow
And never mind at all,
But if I should lose your love dear
I don't know what I'd do,
For I know I'll never find another you,
Another you.

CELEBRATING FORGIVENESS

OPENING HYMN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OiMUyIU4D8>

My soul is longing for your peace, near to you my God.

1. Lord, you know that my heart is not proud
and my eyes are not lifted from the earth. (My soul ...)
2. Lofty thoughts have never filled my mind
far beyond my sights all ambitious deeds. (My soul ...)
3. In your peace I have maintained my soul
I have kept my heart in your quiet peace. (My soul...)
4. As a child rests on his mother's knee
so I place my soul in your loving care. (My soul...)

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

O God our loving Father, forgive us for having been unkind to one another in the family and for having spoken words and done things that we ought not. Make us aware that we are forgiven by You only as far as we are willing to forgive others. Lead us to be sorry for what we have done and make us more like Jesus. May we never come to the end of the day harbouring hatred towards anybody. We wish to be kind and forgiving so that we may be easy to live with. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Some people find it hard to forgive those who have hurt them, especially those from whom they expected love. Sometimes a word, an action or an omission triggers off the memory of a deep hurt in one's past which was not healed. So, one overreacts to it. The person who hurts another cannot understand the overreaction to some trivial things. Moreover, many cannot forgive themselves for their failings.

Lent is a time of reconciliation, renewal and rejoicing in God's wonderful love for sinners. As we hear Jesus praying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," let us ask for the grace to be set free and experience a renewal of heart and a new spirit.

SEE

A young man had committed a crime. Living in the same house as his father-in-law, he had been exasperated by his constant remarks. One day, in a fit of temper, he strangled him. He was soon arrested and taken to court. Because of palliating circumstances, he was sentenced to spend ten years in jail. Having displayed exemplary behaviour, he

was released from jail after seven years. When he returned home, he bore the burden of his crime with shame, even though his wife and children welcomed him back as if he had just returned from a long journey. After some time, he went back to work with the hope that he would forget his past. But the neighbours had not forgotten. The man had committed a murder, and he was not to be forgiven. No one came to speak with him. One day, when he was working in the fields, some of his neighbours came to insult him and hit him in the face. The poor chap had to sell his land and migrate to another state. If, instead of meeting neighbours who were full of hatred, he had met Christians ready to forgive, we could have witnessed a miracle.

- How do I usually react or respond to an act of rejection, disappointment, frustration?
- Do I pray sometimes for a desire to forgive?
- How can I respond to someone who has hurt me instead of reacting to him/her?
- How does my experience of being forgiven help me to forgive others?
- What is the difference between guilt and shame?
- Is there something that I need to forgive myself for? Should I forgive myself? Why/why not?

JUDGE

Peter was very impulsive by character. Yet he was ready to do anything to please his Master. One day, he probably had a fight with someone and he came to Jesus to ask: "Lord, how often must I forgive my brother, if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?" He thought that he was very generous in his proposal. But Jesus smiled at this naïve suggestion and he said: "Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times." Then Peter gave up his mathematics! He would never be able to come off, if he kept on counting. He would have to forgive always. And to make his disciples understand the demands of this command, Jesus told them the parable of the unforgiving debtor:

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; ²⁵and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.'

²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; ³³and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord delivered

him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (Mt 18: 23-35)

In another instance, Jesus said to his disciples: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt 6: 14-15)

- What is the main reason why Jesus wants his disciples to forgive those who have offended them?
- Is teaching someone “a good lesson” effective in the long run? Why?
- How far am I willing to forgive and seek forgiveness?

ACT

- What am I going to do to seek forgiveness from those whom I might have offended or to forgive those who have offended me?
- Is there anything I can do to help some of my family members to reconcile, if they have not yet done it?

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, give us light and strength to know Your will, to make it our own, and to forgive those who have offended us. You desire justice for all: enable us to uphold the rights of others; do not allow us to be misled by ignorance or corrupted by fear or favour. Guide us by Your wisdom, support us by Your power, for You are God, sharing the glory of the Father and the Spirit. Help us to be good stewards of the treasures of Your creation: living persons, animals, and plants, the lands and the seas. As we gather in Your name, may we temper justice with love and forgiveness, so that all our decisions may be pleasing to You, and earn the reward promised to good and faithful servants. You live and reign with the Father and the Son, one God, forever and ever. Amen

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Saint Francis of Assisi

FIDELITY

WHAT MAKES COMMITMENT TO MARRIAGE POSSIBLE

OPENING HYMN: Bind us together, Lord

Bind us together, Lord
Bind us together
With cords that cannot be broken
Bind us together, Lord
Bind us together
Bind us together in Love.

There is only one God
There is only one King
There is only one Body
That is why we sing.

Bind us together

Fit for the glory of God
Purchased by His precious Son
Born with the right to be free
For Jesus the victory has won.

Bind us together|

We are the family of God
We are the promise divine
We are God's chosen desire
We are the glorious new wine.

Bind us together ...

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your faithfulness that teaches us and shows us how to be faithful. Thank You for the gift of marriage You have blessed us with. We pray right now that we would always be faithful in our marriage and help us fulfil the roles that You have given to us, as well as being faithful to our vows and the commitment that we have made. We pray that You will be with us when any distractions or temptations may come to damage our relationship. Please protect both of us from the things of this world that could take us out of fellowship with each other. We pray for other husbands and wives to also remain faithful in marriage. We pray for any of them who were even contemplating the idea of divorce or infidelity. Capture our hearts and give us eyes only for the one we are united to in Jesus' name. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

“Fidelity - it is a decision we make, an action to be taken, something that we choose to do until we quit or die. Like Christ’s command to “love one another” (John 13:34-35), it depends not on sentiment but on will.

We expect married people to be faithful to each other, in the end, because we still have the sense that the nature of marriage requires it. It is possibly the last treasure we’ve saved out of the wrack of sexual sanity; amazingly, we still believe it’s possible to say “no” to temptation when morality dictates that we should.

Against the drive of forces that would rid us of all sexual shame, we retain a sin of which we rightfully believe people should be ashamed. In a time when piety is mocked and blasphemy is *de rigueur*, there’s still something of matrimony that we revere and uphold to be holy.”

Anthony S. Layne (Catholic Stand – a Vatican Media Publication)

If we agree to say that fidelity in married life is a decision, let us see what fidelity demands of married couples in the light of the Word of God and the teachings of the Church.

SEE (The Word of God)

³ But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. ...

²¹ Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. ²⁴ As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church.

Ephesians 5: 3 & 21 – 29

- Referring to what Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians, what does the word “fidelity” mean?
- What does the call addressed to wives to ‘submit themselves to their husbands’ mean in the context of today’s gender equality?
- Is it possible for a husband to love his wife and care for her as if she were his own body?

The Teachings of the Church

“Faithfulness to promises is a true masterpiece of humanity. If we look at its bold beauty, we are frightened, but if we disregard its courageous tenacity, we are lost. No relationship of love — no friendship, no form of loving, no happiness in the common good — reaches the height of our desire and of our hope, if this miracle does not come to dwell in the soul. I say “miracle” because the power and persuasion of fidelity, in spite of everything, do not end up enchanting us or astonishing us. Honouring the word given, fidelity to the promise, cannot be bought and sold. They cannot be compelled by force or shielded without sacrifice.

No other school can teach the truth of love, if the family does not do it. No law can impose the beauty and legacy of this treasure of human dignity, if the personal bond between love and procreation is not inscribed in our flesh.

It is no accident that this principle of fidelity to the promise of love and of life is written in God’s creation as a perennial blessing, to which the world is entrusted...

Indeed, fidelity is a way of being, a style of life. One works with loyalty, one speaks with sincerity, one remains faithful to the truth in one’s thoughts, in one’s actions. A life woven of fidelity is expressed in all dimensions and leads to being faithful and reliable men and women in every circumstance.

However, to achieve such a beautiful life, our human nature is not enough. God’s fidelity needs to enter our being, to infect us. This Sixth Word calls us to turn our gaze to Christ whose fidelity can remove from us an adulterous heart and give us a faithful heart. In him and only in him, is there love without reservations and second thoughts, absolute and unmitigated giving, and the tenacity of full acceptance.

From his death and resurrection comes our fidelity, from his unconditional love comes steadfastness in relationships. From communion with him, with the Father and with the Holy Spirit comes communion among us and the ability to live our bonds in fidelity.

Pope Francis (General Audience - Saint Peter's Square, October 24, 2018)

- Is fidelity in marriage a duty, a commitment, or an act of love?
- Do you agree with Pope Francis that “faithfulness to promises is a true masterpiece of humanity”? If so, how?

JUDGE (How is that teaching related to our own experience?)

- What are the benefits a family gains from a marriage built on fidelity? We share if possible our own experiences.
- What can a husband or wife do to stay faithful in a marriage?
- If a partner slips up and is unfaithful, what is the way forward?
- How helpful are organisations like the Christian Family Movement in helping couples keep the bonds of marriage?

ACT

- Everyone has faced challenges in their married life. Pray for and if possible share how you dealt with your difficulties with a couple who is facing struggles.
- If there are issues at present prevailing in your married life, pray and ask the Lord to help you find solutions to these problems.
- Is there any other action that you would feel would be helpful?

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Dear Lord, let me put on Your armour and Your shield against the temptations to cheat on my spouse. Even just one such alliance, however innocuous or justified it may seem, is like a dagger thrust straight into the heart of my marriage and family. Let me be conscious not only of its grave sin as a violation of Your law of love, but also of the guilt and shame it entails as well. Let me not risk destroying my spouse's trust in me, ripping apart my family, and possibly losing You forever from mortal sin. Give me strength and wisdom to turn away from evil inclinations against marital fidelity immediately when temptation strikes. Let me have the good sense not to put myself in harm's way through occasions of sin. Blessed Mother Mary, I ask for your help and grace in these matters as well, in the name of Your Beloved Son, Christ our Lord. Amen.

(www.ourcatholicprayers.com)

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9FFnNlovNo>

Chorus

All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you.

All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you.

Deep the joy of being together in one heart
and for me that's just where it is. **Chorus**

As we make our way through all the joys and pain,
can we sense our younger, truer selves? **Chorus**

Someone will be calling you to be there for a while.
Can you hear the cry from deep within? **Chorus**

MEN AS HUSBANDS & FATHERS

OPENING HYMN: Jesus Sweetest Name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=De4u8rkdEU0>

Jesus You're the sweetest name of all
Jesus You always hear me when I call
Oh Jesus, You pick me up each time I fall
You're the sweetest, sweetest name of all.

Jesus how I love to praise your name
Jesus You're still the first the last, the same
Oh Jesus you died and took away my shame
You're the sweetest, sweetest name of all

Jesus You're the son and coming king
Jesus, we need the love that you can bring
Oh Jesus, we lift our voices up and sing
You're the sweetest, sweetest name of all.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

O God the Father of mankind, who has given us these our children, and committed to our charge to bring them up for You and to prepare them for eternal life, help us with Thy heavenly grace, that we may be able to fulfill this most sacred duty and stewardship. Teach us both what to give and what to withhold, when to reprove and when to forbear. Make us to be gentle, yet firm, considerate and watchful, and deliver us equally from the weakness of indulgence, and the excess of severity. Grant that both by word and example, we may be careful to lead them in the ways of wisdom and true piety, so that at last we may with them be admitted to the unspeakable joys of our true home heaven, in the company of the blessed angels and saints, Amen.

(Holy Ghost Church Hymnal)

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

God has created a certain order for the family, an order of authority and obedience. It is His purpose that this order be maintained. This is for the welfare of every member of the Christian family, the blessing of the Lord, and the glory of His name.

God has given to many men the privilege and responsibility of being both husbands and fathers. Every man began life as a son to his parents. Some remain in that position, alone for their whole lives. That is a special gift given by God to be received with deliberate faith (1 Cor. 7:1, 7-8, 32, 37). But most men will choose a wife who will enter into a life-long relationship with his own family.

Just as it is true that “things” in our homes are put there for a reason, so God has placed us men in our families because He has a purpose for us. A chair with a broken leg is useless in the home. It takes up valuable space, but it cannot be sat upon. Everyone has to be careful of it rather than its offering itself to serve others.

It is not only foolhardy when men seek to overthrow that order but it is rebellion and great wickedness against the Lord. Doing this will only create confusion in the family, which will in turn bring forth disharmony, unhappiness and division in the family.

If you really want to be what God wants you to be as a Christian husband and father, take heart! Your Heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask, and He will give you all the abilities that you need (Mt. 7:11). Together with God, you can become the father and husband God wants you to be, and yours can become the family God wants you to have. Now, see what God is telling us through the sacred authors.

SEE

“That you and your children and your children’s children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long.” (*Deut 6: 2*)

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and live in love, as Christ loved us^[a] and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (*Eph 5:1-2*)

“Fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints.” (*Eph 5:3*)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord,^[a] for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise: ³“so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” ⁴And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (*Eph. 6: 1-4*)

“Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (*Eph 6:14-17*)

In the light of these Scripture passages reflect on the following questions:

- What according to God’s plan is the mission of men as Christian husbands and fathers?
- When we read these Scripture passages, can we see what the growth and renewal of the mission of husbands and fathers imply?
- These passages bring out some values essential for a good family life, ethical relationships – both as spouses and parents – and daily conduct. In your family life what do you feel should be the order of priority of these values?

JUDGE

The group members are invited to read the conclusions of the following surveys as well as the short synopsis before coming to the meeting.

Recent studies/ surveys reveal that:

1. Children need more than ever the presence and guidance of fathers in family life. According to a recent collection of essays, a significant body of scientific research clearly documents the vital role a father plays in the formative years of a child's life.

The book is titled *Why Fathers Count: The Importance of Fathers and Their Involvement with Children* (Men's Studies Press). Sean E. Brotherson and Joseph M. White, the editors and authors of the first chapter, set the tone for the book with an overview of arguments regarding the importance of fathers for children. The presence of a father has a positive impact in many ways, they note, as children with fathers have fewer behavioural problems, obtain better academic results, and are economically better off.

RELATED ARTICLES

The editors also stressed that they do not in any way wish to minimize the contribution made by mothers to family life. In fact, they stated, both parents count: fathers and mothers. Nevertheless, as statistics amply confirm, there has been a marked increase in fatherless families in recent decades; hence, the book's concentration on fathers.

There is a category in social science called 'father absence.' The absence of a father is known to researchers to be a significant factor in the success or failure of children.

2. The fact is, fathers make a huge and irreplaceable difference in the lives of their children in terms of education, income, abuse, mental and physical health, drug use, sexual activity, pregnancy and almost every other social indicator.
3. Research into the family continues to confirm the importance of two parents as the best basis for bringing up children. One common problem in the last few decades is the absence of fathers, and the corresponding rise of families headed by single mothers.
4. An active fatherhood role not only reduced the frequency of behavioural problems in boys and psychological problems in young women, but it also had a positive effect on cognitive development, along with decreasing delinquency and economic disadvantage in low-income families.
5. Some of the studies distinguished between biological fathers and father figures who cohabit with the children, but the authors commented that more study is needed on the role of a biological bond between the father figure and the child. Some results indicate that non-biological father figures can play an important role for children in their households. There is evidence, as well, that biological fathers may be salient in a specific way, they noted.

- The circumstances in these times have resulted in a paradigm change of the role of a husband and father – in your view is this true? What are the changes?
- Can the Gospel values be aligned totally, conveniently or not at all in today's scenario?
- Share your views and opinion on the facts revealed by the studies/surveys mentioned above – from the Christian point.

The following is a short synopsis of the role of the husband and father in the family.

To Lead - A Christian man is to bring leadership to his home and family (Eph. 5:23). As Jesus Christ leads the Church, so men are to lead their families. Jesus' leadership was not self-centred. It involved great strength on his part to sacrifice himself in the service of those he deeply loved. God held Adam accountable for sin in the Garden of Eden, even though it was Eve who first took the forbidden fruit. Leadership involves accepting responsibility for the whole family unit.

To Love - A Christian man is to nurture love for his wife and family (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33). As Jesus Christ continually loves his Church, so men are to always love their families. It does not matter what any family member does, no matter how bad, love is able to hold on to that member while working on the problem. God has given us some examples of loving attitudes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. We cannot control how others behave, but we can, and must, control ourselves. Christian love is much more than sex, although sex should be a deep expression of love. Sharing in marriage is more than sharing bed and body.

To be Loyal - Loyalty means having and showing lifelong commitment to your partner. By marrying your bride and by opening yourself up to her, you close yourself off from every other woman! A Christian husband and a Christian wife are exclusive to each other. Adam received Eve as a gift from God. Christianity prohibits polygamy, adultery and pre-marital sex. Standards of society and tribe must be measured against God's standards through the whole of the Bible, and the choice must be made to live God's way.

To Look After - A Christian husband is to look after all the needs of his family (Eph. 5:29). As Jesus Christ seeks to supply the material, emotional and spiritual needs of the Church, so a man should do all he can to provide for his family. God told Adam he should work hard (Gen. 3:19). Working is part of our worship of God (Rom. 12:1-2). If any sacrifice has to be made, we should make it ourselves before asking any other family member to join us. God took something away from the man in order to bring him his wife. The sacrificed rib (Gen. 2:21-22) was used in the Creator's hand to make the best "thing" ever to come into Adam's life! In God's intended way of life for us, giving is regularly our best way to receive.

To be a Living Example - God trusts you with being a father to your children. It is an awesome responsibility. God the Father in heaven, will be understood by what your children see in you as their father on earth! Pray and live so that you will show many of your heavenly Father's qualities to your earthly children. All children learn by copying. We dads have to present to our kids a life worth copying!

To Keep Learning - A Christian husband will be always learning about his wife (1 Pet. 3:7). As Jesus Christ knows all about us, so a man should try to understand his wife (Song 4:1-15). The more years that go by in my marriage the more I appreciate my wife. The better I get to know her by the things we live through together, the more I realize how thankful I should be to God for His gift of her to me. Christianity always puts self last. You probably love most what you think about most. Little actions you do and words you say that please your partner come from your thinking less about yourself and more about her. They are two good habits to cultivate.

To Really Live with your Family - A Christian husband and father spends time living with his wife and family (1 Pet. 3:7). As Jesus Christ promised to be with us always, so a man should invest a lot of quality time with his family. The family is the proving ground for Church leaders (1 Tim. 3:5). Even local Church activities should strengthen family life, not stretch it to breaking point. God made the family before He made any other institution of society. We must learn from God's priority and make our priorities the same as His.

(Excerpts from an article by Colin Salter)

- After reading the synopsis given above, what do you consider to be the most important role of a husband and father in the family? Why?
- Are there some aspects of these responsibilities on which you would like to comment?

ACT

- In the intervening month pick out verses from the Bible (other than those quoted in this inquiry) on relationships between spouses and parents – children. Reflect on them and share your insights in the next meeting.
- As a group in collaboration with your parish organise a session for parents bringing out the role of men as husbands and fathers based on the sharing and conclusions of this inquiry.
- Any other action of your choice.

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Husbands' Prayer

O gracious Father, maker and preserver of heaven and earth, who in the beginning didst institute matrimony, thereby foreshadowing the mystical union of the Church with our saviour Jesus Christ, who during His ministry on earth, did honour marriage with His first miracle, help me to live in holiness and purity with the wife thou hast given me.

Mortify in me all violence of earthly passion, all selfishness and inconsiderateness, that I may love her as Christ loves His church, cherish and comfort her as my own body and have as great care for her happiness as for my own. Grant that we may live in peace, without contention; in unity, without discord.

Give us, Lord, discreet hearts and understanding minds, to bring up our children in Thy faith and the fear that is required of them in their duties towards their parents.

Give us, O Lord, a sufficiency of those things necessary to maintain ourselves and our family according to that rank and calling wherein thou has placed us, without excess or vain glory, in singleness and pureness of heart. Grant this for Jesus Christ's sake to whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory now and forever. Amen.

(Holy Ghost Church Hymnal)

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5E_9SopjkRw

Dear St. Joseph, pure and gentle, guardian of the saviour child
Treading with the virgin mother, Egypt's deserts rough and wild

Hail, St. Joseph, spouse of Mary, blest beyond all saints above,
In these times of selfish seeking, teach, oh teach us how to love.

Dear St. Joseph, kind and loving, stretch to us a helping hand
Guide us through life's toil and sorrows, safely to our true homeland.

THE “SUCCESSFUL” FAMILY

OPENING HYMN

Ask and you will receive
Seek and you will find.
Knock and the door will be opened
For the love of the Lord has no end.

1. Is there any one here, when his son asks for bread,
Would turn him away with a stone instead?
Is there anyone here when his child asks for meat,
Would then give him a poisonous snake to eat?
2. So how could your Father in heaven above
Who knows so much more of the ways of love
So then how could your Father refuse what is good
When you ask in the name of the Son he loves?

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

O God of goodness and mercy, to Thy fatherly guidance we commend our family, our household and all our belongings. We commit all to Thy love and keeping; do Thou fill this house with Thy blessings even as Thou didst fill the holy House of Nazareth with Thy presence.

Keep far from us, above all else, the blemish of sin, and do Thou alone reign in our midst by Thy law, by Thy most holy love and by the exercise of every Christian virtue. Let each one of us obey Thee, love Thee and set himself to follow in his own life Thine example, that of Mary, Thy Mother and our Mother most loving, and that of Thy blameless guardian, Saint Joseph. Amen

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Who does not want to make a success of his/her life? All of us strive to achieve great things and be remembered for what we have bequeathed to our families and society. However, we should always keep in mind that there is a big difference between success and fruitfulness. We may achieve great things, but our lives may not always be fruitful. So, the question we are going to ask ourselves today is: How do we make our families truly successful families?

SEE

A successful family is one that speaks with respect, honours differences, provides a nurturing environment, empowers each other, and enjoys being together. Successful families have a knack for really enjoying and appreciating the good times, while at the same time, they have the ability to effectively deal with difficult issues that come their way.

All over Asia, economically the world's fastest growing region today, an unprecedented number of businessmen and professionals are pursuing and achieving – the new Asian Dream. They are the so-called “Fast Trackers.” The smell of success has ushered in a whole new set of its problems and pressures being created by their pursuit of their ambitious goals and the high expectations they have imposed on the children. The children of these “fast-trackers” are beginning to pay the price of success – and these parents may not realise it.

Archbishop of Singapore

- Do we find such “Fast Trackers” also in our Indian cities? In our Catholic community?
- Mention some of the problems and pressures which such families experience
- How do these problems and pressures affect the traditional Indian Christian family?

JUDGE

Matthew 6: 19-21, 24

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...

24 “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Luke 16: 20-25

19 “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 24 He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’

25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ 27 He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ 29 Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ 30 He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ 31 He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

In the reading of Matthew, we are told that we are stewards of what God gives us, and He tells us not to store up these goods for ourselves.

- How do I manage this in real life?
- What have I stored up?
- Should I share a little part or everything?

In giving, the Church talks of time, talent, and treasure.

- What would be ways of hoarding these instead of sharing them?
- Are there other things from God to be given to others?
- Do I share a little and enjoy the most for myself?

Every time that Jesus has something important to communicate, he creates a story or tells a parable. In this way, through reflection on an invisible reality, he leads those who listen to him to discover the call of God, who is present in life. When we read the parable reported by Saint Luke, we may ask ourselves:

- How do I treat the poor? Do they have a name for me?
- In our attitude towards them, am I like Lazarus or like the rich man?

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is a faithful mirror of what was happening during the time of Jesus and the time of Luke. It is also a mirror of everything that is happening today in the world!

- How can I balance my family life so that I don't end up like the rich man?

ACT

- Who do I consider are the poor? There are many kinds of poverty. Identifying these kinds of poverty should cause us to expand whom we help, rather than limit us to "giving a donation" and not becoming personally involved.
- When I share, or give to others, do I give a little and keep most of it, or give most and keep only what I need for the day?
- Open the door to the poor, as in giving you shall receive a hundredfold.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Almighty God,
our hope and our strength,
without You we falter.
Help us to follow Christ
and to live according to Your will
Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

1. Love is His word, Love is His way,
Feasting with all, fasting alone,
Living and dying, rising again
Love, only love, is His way.

Chorus

Richer than gold is the love of my Lord.
Better than splendour and wealth. (2)

2. Love is His way, love is His mark,
Sharing His last Passover feast.
Christ at the table, host to the Twelve
Love, only love, is His mark.

3. Love is His mark, love is His sign,
Bread for our strength, wine for our joy,
This is my body, this is my blood
Love, only love, is His sign.

4. Love is His sign, love is His news,
Do this He said, lest you forget
All my deep sorrow, all my dear blood,
Love, only love, is His news.

TIME MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY TIME IN THE FAMILY

OPENING HYMN: There's a Time

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhZOZ7ZL_o4

There's an appointed time for everything
And a time for every purpose under heaven
There's a time to be born and time to die
There's a time to plant and for uprooting
There's a time to kill and a time to heal
There's a time to tear down and a time to build
There's a time to weep and a time to laugh
There's a time to mourn and a time to dance
There's a time to throw stones and a time to regather
There's a time to embrace and for distances
There's a time to seek and a time to lose
A time to keep and to cast away
There's a time to rend and a time to sow
There's a time to speak and for silences
There's a time to love and a time to hate
There's a time to war and a time for peace
There's an appointed time for everything
And a time for every purpose under heaven

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

You have ordained each day for me on this earth. Help me to fulfil the plans You have created for me before I was even born. I want to live out the destiny You have determined for me. I want Your way, not my way. I give myself to You and say, "Take my life, my time, my days –this day – and do something with it." Amen.

*You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in Your book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed. (Psalm 139:16)*

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Do you feel like you need more hours in a day? I certainly do. Whenever I don't accomplish all that I wanted to, I blame it on time. It is easier to blame a lack of time than to look at how I am managing the time that I have. Managing time is like managing

money. It is limited. I know how much I have, and when it is spent, there is no more. The challenge is to make the best of what I have.

I am doing a little exercise to help in this process. It begins with deciding whether my time is negotiable or not. Some of the things I have to do are non-negotiable, things like work and sleep. I need eight hours for work and sleep, respectively. There are days when I function on much less than eight hours of sleep, but that is not ideal. How I spend those remaining eight hours gives is negotiable, and they do not have to be spent on the same thing each day.

I allocate my flexible time according to my roles. Roles like mother, wife, pastor, volunteer, teacher, etc. There have been days when I focus on only one role, based on need and urgency. This gives me a greater sense of accomplishment. I am not trying to spread myself around for the sake of time.

I began this process with prayer, ask God to help me strike a healthy balance. In prayer, I ask for the ability to take care of myself in the process of fulfilling all of my roles. I realize how important it is to make good use of time, because you can never get back what you lose.

Peola Hicks, Posted in Pray Effectively, Jan 18, 2013, www.guideposts.org

SOCIAL ENQUIRY

“Effective executives do not start with their task. They start with their time. And they do not start out with planning. They start by finding out where their time actually goes. Then they attempt to manage their time and cut back unproductive demands on their time.”

Peter Drucker, management guru

The need for time management and quality time in the family cannot be overstressed. Apart from overshooting schedules and its attendant professional and social time implications, poor management of time can lead to stress. The end result of this could be a feeling of harassment and frustration within oneself and an appearance of inefficiency to others. Time management techniques are important for all the four dimensions of life: biological, professional, family time, and social time.

Time management is a technique of managing time in a way to make optimal use of it. It's also essential to manage your time in order to achieve success in any field.

The rule of thumb for time management is time analysis, time budgeting and identifying/managing time wasters. Time management is thus a continuous process of time budgeting so as to control the time wasted on unproductive activities. Every analysis of time utilisation must begin by asking oneself several questions.

SEE

- Which was the most productive period of the day for you today? Why?
- What were today's 3 major time wasters? How can you eliminate them?
- Could you have spent more time with the family? If so, with whom?
- How can you use your time better tomorrow?

- Your approach to time management will change at different stages in your life. Describe the approach to be taken for each of the following stages.

As a young couple:

With pre-school and young children:

With teenagers:

With adult children:

As an elderly couple:

As a widow/widower:

JUDGE

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace. *Ecc1 3: 1-8*

.....

Time together is the bonding mortar that binds family members together before God in love. In creating a strong family life centred on God, there must be shared time together.

Moses commanded Israel: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I'm commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." *Deut 6: 5-8*

Moses' timeless advice is the foundation for growth of spirituality in the home. Time together is the bonding mortar that brings us together before God in our lived experience.

- You never know when you are making a memory with your children. Would these passages help you to set your time management priorities right? How?
- Where would you start if you are not spending enough time with your spouse and children?

- How can quality time in the family be handled more effectively?
- How would quality time enrich both relationships and communication, in our families?

ACT

- God scheduled every day of your life before you were born. What's on your calendar today? Check God's Word, and make sure your to-do list aligns with His. Here's a start of a few things we can make every effort to get to today:
 1. Love God – worship and sing praises to Him.
 2. Seek His Kingdom before anything else.
 3. Help others; look for opportunities to serve.
 4. Forgive everyone who has hurt or offended you.
 5. Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord.
(www.beliefnet.com)
- Making changes to the tiniest of routine can make a big difference to your family and children. Here are 5 things recommended for starters –
 - a) come in relaxed and without baggage before you sit down with your family
 - b) eat with your family, each one talking about their day
 - c) do something together even if it's just watering the plants or taking the dog for a walk
 - d) enjoy the bed time routine – could be story/bath time with a child or clearing up after dinner with your spouse
 - e) make one night your special night for the children with games or movie or cooking together – an activity they choose

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God, You know what's on my calendar. You know I have more 'to dos' than I have slots in my day. I am not sure what needs to be set aside, but something has to go. I need Your guidance to help me set priorities. You tell me in *John 15* that you want my life to be fruitful, full of rich abundance that multiplies into the lives of others. But You also warn me that fruitfulness means pruning. A branch on a vine that bears no fruit is lopped off. And a branch that does produce is snipped back so that the energy flowing through it will be directed to fruitfulness and not merely greenery. Prune my life, Father, great and wise gardener that You are. Help me now to cut back what might be good, but not best, what takes more energy than it produces, impressive as it might seem. This is a discipline, a discipline of focus. I am often so greedy to pack my life with more, to 'have it all.' I have to choose the right from among all the good. Give me direction by giving me peace in one direction. I give You my calendar and the priorities it represents.

I give You rights to my priorities. I will audit and You will help me choose, realistically what is and is not intended by Your will. Thank You for the pruning! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN: In His Time

In his time, in his time
He makes all things beautiful
In his time

Lord please show me everyday
As you're teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time

In your time, in your time
You make all things beautiful
In your time

Lord my life to you I bring
May each song I have to sing
Be to you a lovely thing
In your time

Lord please show me everyday
As you teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time

In your time (in your time), in your time (in your time lord)
You make all things beautiful
In your time

UNDERSTANDING REBELLIOUSNESS IN OUR CHILDREN

OPENING HYMN

Chorus

O the word of my Lord
Deep within my being,
Oh the word of my Lord,
You have filled my mind.

Before I formed you in the womb
I knew you through and through,
I chose you to be mine.
Before you left your mother's side
I called to you, my child, to be my sign.

Chorus

I know that you are very young,
But I will make you strong
I'll fill you with my word;
And you will travel through the land,
Fulfilling my command
Which you have heard.

Chorus

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

O Heavenly Father, I commend my children to Thy care. Be Thou their God and Father; and mercifully supply whatever is lacking in me through frailty or negligence. Strengthen them to overcome the corruptions of the world, whether from within or without; and deliver them from the secret snares of the enemy. Pour Thy grace into their hearts, and strengthen and multiply in them the gifts of Thy Holy Spirit, that they may daily grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and so, faithfully serving Thee here, may come to rejoice in Thy presence hereafter. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

When our children become teenagers, they often turn out to be rebellious and stand against any decision we make in view of keeping our family united and happy. Today, we shall reflect on the way/s they express their rebellion and how, in the light of God's Word, we can still help them to grow and find happiness in life.

SEE

Rebellion is a deliberate defiance and opposition to authority and it often leads to confrontation and suffering. It is especially hard for parents and families when they have a rebellious child, as their heart breaks for the poor decisions that their children are

making. Whether it is a child, a teenager or an adult child, their words and actions impact the people around them. These decisions will affect the rest of their lives

Karla Hawkins

The primary goal of parents is to love their children. The best way to raise children up in the Lord is to love them. If you teach them the Bible, if you get them to behave, and you make them really successful people in the world's eyes, but you have not really loved them, then you have not done your main job. Your kids must know you love them. If you try to shape their behaviour but they don't know you are doing it in love, you are setting the groundwork for rebellion during the teenage years.

Mark Ballenger

- Can you illustrate any of the above statements with facts from your life or from the lives of people you have met?
- List some of the symptoms of rebelliousness you have observed in pre-adolescent and adolescent children, including your own children. What are the differences?
- How do you and the parents you know cope with these modes of rebelliousness?
- Can rebelliousness sometimes be a child's way of letting parents know that he/she is unhappy and dissatisfied?

JUDGE

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not listen to the voice either of his father or of his mother and, even when they punish him, still will not pay attention to them, his father and mother must take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. To the elders of his town, they will say, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and will not listen to us; he is a wastrel and a drunkard". All his fellow-citizens must then stone him to death. You must banish this evil from among you. All Israel, hearing of this, will be afraid.

Deuteronomy 21: 18-21

Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents, for this is the right thing to do. "Respect your father and mother" is the first commandment that has a promise added: "so that all may go well with you, and you may live a long time in the land." Parents do not teach your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead bring them up with Christian discipline and instructions.

Ephesians 6: 1-4

- Will the first text be effective in disciplining children today? And why?
- How can "Christian discipline and instruction" help children to overcome their urge to be rebellious? What in modern life would constitute "Christian discipline"?
- What are the differences between "parenthood as a duty" and "parenting as a gift"? Which of these would discourage rebelliousness in our children and why?

- What other social influences, which are beyond the control of parents, cause children to become rebellious?

ACT

- Look back at what you were like when you were a teen, and have empathy for your son or daughter. The adolescent years are a time filled with rapid change, mood swings, and growing independence, but it does not have to be a time of war. So many people talk about the difficulties of raising a teenager that many parents approach the adolescent years as an ordeal to survive. But this is still your child, and he or she needs you. So, while you should stay alert for problems, you should also stay focused on the positive.
- Enjoy the unique person your teen is becoming. After all he/she is your child and has imbibed traits from you as parents!
- **The Privileges for Good Behaviour**
 1. Avoid Repetition.
 2. Enforce Consequences.
 3. Have a Plan.
 4. Praise Good Behaviour.
 5. Teach Problem Solving.
 6. Focus on One Behaviour.
 7. Pick your Battles.
 8. Stay Respectful.
 9. Get Support. When Defiance Has Gone Too Far (get help from a professional).

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

O God the Father of mankind, who hast given unto me these my children, and committed them to my charge to bring them up for Thee, and to prepare them for eternal life: help me with Thy heavenly grace, that I may be able to fulfil this most sacred duty and stewardship. Teach me both what to give and what to withhold; when to reprove and when to forbear; make me to be gentle, yet firm; considerate and watchful; and deliver me equally from the weakness of indulgence, and the excess of severity; and grant that, both by word and example, I may be careful to lead them in the ways of wisdom and true piety, so that at last I may, with them, be admitted to the unspeakable joys of our true home in heaven, in the company of the blessed Angels and Saints. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

All to Jesus I surrender
All to Him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him
In His presence daily live
I surrender all
I surrender all
All to Thee my blessed Saviour
I surrender all

All to Jesus I surrender
Humbly at His feet I bow
Worldly pleasures all forsaken
Take me, Jesus, take me now,
I surrender all
I surrender all
All to Thee my blessed Saviour
I surrender all

All to Jesus I surrender
Make me Saviour wholly Thine
May Thy Holy Spirit fill me
May I know Thy power divine
I surrender all
I surrender all
All to Thee my blessed Saviour
I surrender all

ROLE OF THE ELDERLY

OPENING HYMN

Chorus

*Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done,
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.*

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Chorus

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, in these my Senior Years, when my energies decrease, more than ever hold me by Your Power.
Give me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and wisdom to know how and when to guide and help my family.
Give me the strength and opportunities to share my talents and knowledge, and work in Your Service till the last day of my life.

*(If not senior group, the prayer could be : "Heavenly Father, we pray for those in their Senior Years, when their energies decrease, more than ever hold them
.... Till the last day of their life.)*

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

It is the time when men and women must reap the harvest of the experience of their whole life, make an apportionment between what is essential and what is subsidiary and attain a level of great wisdom and deep serenity.

It is the period when they can devote a great deal of time, or even all their time, to loving their families or casual acquaintances with the disinterestedness, patience and discreet joy so admirably displayed by many old people.

It is also, for believers, the blessed opportunity of meditating on the splendours of the faith and of intensified prayer.

The rich promise of these values and their survival are linked to two inseparable conditions. First, the elderly themselves must whole-heartedly accept their age and appreciate its potential. The second condition is that modern society must become capable of recognizing the moral, emotional and religious values enshrined in the mind and heart of the old, and it must strive for their integration in our civilization, which suffers from a disturbing gap between its technical level and its ethical level

John Paul II, Message to the World Assembly on Aging, 1982

We live in a world where the number of elderly people have noticeably increased. The advances in science, the progress that has been made in medicine, preventive care and fitness regimes, have all contributed. Men and women in their 60s, 70s and even 80s are not only mentally alert but physically fit.

Let us explore how our Seniors can work “in the Lord’s Service till the last day of their life”.

BIBLE INQUIRY

They shall bear fruits even in old age,
They will stay fresh and green,
To proclaim “The Lord is just;
My rock, in whom there is no wrong”.

Psalms 92: 13-16

“Ye shall walk in all the ways that the Lord, your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days.”

Deuteronomy 5:33

“So with old age is wisdom,
And with length of days understanding”

Job 12:12

SEE

- How motivating are the above quotes from the Bible?
- What are the different “fruits” that one can bear even in old age? List them.
- According to Scripture, how can one be well and prolong one’s life? Do we believe this?
- In today’s fast paced world, with its changing technologies, do we consider the elderly to have wisdom and understanding?

Quotes of Pope Francis:

“We, older people, can remind ambitious young people that a life without love is barren. We can tell fearful young people that worrying about the future can be overcome. We can teach young people who are in love with themselves too much that there is more joy in giving than receiving.”

“The elderly who have faith are like trees that continue to bear fruit.”

“The elderly pass on history, doctrine, faith, and they leave them to us as inheritance. The wisdom of our grandparents is the inheritance we ought to receive. A people that does not care for its grandparents, that does not respect its grandparents, has no future since it has lost its memory.”

JUDGE

Pope Francis’ particular point seems to be that not only do older men and women deserve our praise, but that they have much left to give.

- Do you feel that the elderly have no purpose in life?
- What role does the younger generation play in keeping the elderly motivated and productive?
- What is the role of the Church in acknowledging the importance of the elderly?
- If bed-ridden or house-bound, how can the elderly still be productive members of society?

ACT

- With many children and grandchildren living abroad, with different time zones, discuss and plan how grandparents can pass on their history, doctrine and faith.
- List the different ways that the elderly can reach out to the youth in their community.
- Encourage elders in your family or parish to join/be connected with Church organisations.

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We thank You for the wonderful life You have given us and for all the mercies that You give to each of us day by day.

Dear Lord, we bring before You all the Elderly: not only those that we know, but all who are facing this stage of their life. Draw those that have never placed their trust in You into a saving relationship with Jesus, and give those that are faithful to You, Your peace and wisdom as they fulfil Your purpose for their lives, in whatever condition or situation they find themselves.

We pray that in Your love and mercy You will draw each one of us into closer fellowship with Yourself, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN: How Great Thou Art

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
 Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made
 I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
 Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

And when I think of God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

CONFLICTS



OPENING HYMN: More Love

More love, more power }
More of you in my life } (2)

I will worship you with all of my heart,
I will worship you with all of my mind.
I will worship you with all of my strength,
For you are my Lord,
You are my Lord.

I will seek your face with all of my heart,
I will seek your face with all of my mind,
I will seek your face with all of my strength,
For you are my Lord,
You are my Lord.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

God our heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for all the blessings You have bestowed on us and our families. We have experienced Your mercy on many occasions in our life for which we are ever grateful and know Your love for us. In our families, society and communities tolerance and living in harmony has been disturbed and has led to conflicts among persons, communities and nations. We hear and know of lives lost, families broken and communities living as enemies.

Today we seek to know Your will and Your ways to recognize, deal and resolve conflicts as best we can. Make us messengers of Your peace and love. We acknowledge Your presence in our midst, send Your Holy Spirit on all gathered here today to enlighten us. We make this prayer through the intercession of the most Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Amen

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

A dour Englishman was seated on a train between two ladies arguing about the window. One claimed that she would die of heatstroke if it stayed closed. The other said she would expire of pneumonia if it was opened. The ladies called the conductor, who didn't know how to resolve the conflict. Finally, the gentleman spoke up. "First, open the window. That will kill the one. Then close it. That will kill the other. Then we will have peace."

India is characterized by more ethnic and religious groups than most other countries of the world. Aside from the much noted 2000-odd castes, there are eight "major" religions, 15-odd languages spoken in various dialects in 29 states and nine union territories, and a substantial number of tribes and sects. Ethnic and religious conflicts have stood out, but of late religious conflicts are more prevalent.

Among Christians, the subject of conflict and its proper resolution has been a source of misunderstanding and angst for centuries. Literal reading of the scriptures concerning the proper Christian life have to an extent brought out passivism and have been interpreted broadly by Christendom to require avoidance of all conflict as a virtue. Christians, necessarily a part of Christian institutions, have treated conflict as something to avoid—an approach that has led to their detriment both individually and corporately.

The number of lawyers and law suits are ever on the increase. The courts are overloaded and the number of pending cases (in India) are huge. This is not to bash lawyers. But we have to ask the question: Is there a better way to resolve conflict than to drag someone to court? For those of us that follow Christ, how do we respond to our brothers and sisters in Christ when we are wronged?

The world has many ways to resolve conflict, but invariably, they leave God out. God tells us that His ways are not our ways (*Is 55:8*). His ways are much higher than our ways, and often run counter to our ways. If we want true and lasting peace in our relationships, then we need to resolve conflicts God's way. His way for resolving conflicts is not to give us surface techniques that achieve outward peace. Rather, God goes for the heart—primarily our heart relationship with Him. When our ways please Him, then we have a foundation for resolving conflicts with others (*Prov. 16:7*).

BIBLE INQUIRY

You are God's chosen race, His saints; He loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as the quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Col 3: 12 – 17

- Why is St. Paul writing this exhortation to the Colossians?
- What is the conflict that was prevailing at that time?
- Do you think that these attributes are practical to resolve a conflict?

JUDGE

Scripture has something to say to us in this regard. While studying *Colossians 3: 12-17*, I was taken by the fact that these attributes — which we are to cultivate in our lives as Christians — should be exercised both externally (to the world) and internally (to our Christian brothers and sisters). I think *Colossians 3:12* specifically helps us to get a bit of a roadmap for what it looks like for Christians to struggle alongside and with one another:

Compassion

It is no surprise that compassion is the first attribute listed for Paul. Compassion is the emotion most often ascribed to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (*Matthew 20:34, Mark 1:41, Luke 7:13, Matthew 9:38, 14:14, 15:32, Mark 6: 34, 8:2*).

To be compassionate means to be moved, deeply, by the state of another. In order to be moved by someone's condition, we must struggle to understand his or her condition. It means rushing to hear rather than to speak (*Proverbs 18:13*). It means being willing to understand how they've been hurt, even when you are the one who has done the wounding. This is especially difficult when both parties feel that they've been wronged. However, it is a sign of spiritual maturity to be the first one to lay aside (if only temporarily) one's own feelings in order to listen to someone else's.

Kindness

Kindness is compassion in action. Be willing to show through your actions that even in the midst of conflict you still love and care for one another. Nothing can escalate a conflict more quickly than a poorly placed eye roll, shrug, or sigh. Body language and tone of voice are crucial to communicating care in tense times. Being kind also means guarding your thoughts and your words. Constructive communication is so often scuttled in advance as both parties stew in their own thoughts and feelings of hurt and anger

Confront those thoughts. Remind yourself that you, too, are a sinner who desperately needs grace (*Romans 3:23*). Pray prayers of thanksgiving for God's provision of forgiveness in your life and beseech the Lord that you would reflect some of that back to the person with whom you are in conflict (*Colossians 3:13*).

Humility

Humility is action without regard for reward. So often people enter into conflict with a sort of "game theory" mentality. The whole exchange becomes about assigning blame and fault rather than building each other up in Christ (*Ephesians 4:15-16, Romans 14:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11*). Die to your desire for personal gain through conflict and instead live to the idea that you have an incredible opportunity to display Christ!

Gentleness

Gentleness is action received as help, not just condemnation. This means that our conflict needs a measure of intentionality to it. So often conflict is just a volcanic eruption of emotion rather than a strategic release of pressure. While we cannot choose when and where someone will hurt us (or us them), we can choose how and when we will communicate about it.

Also, *not all hurts need to be discussed*. If on a scale of one to ten, your hurt is less than or equal to five, then try to forgive and just move on (*Colossians 3:13*). But if you can't or if it's bigger than that, then be wise about how and when you discuss it. For example, some people are morning people; if you start the conversation and it's late into the night, you can't expect them to pay very much attention and vice versa for night people. You can also choose to use words which are not meant to be hurtful and which lack accusation (*Proverbs 16:24*). No matter how frustrated and angry you feel, choosing to use words that put someone on the defensive rarely works (less than 8% of the time!) We have the ability to accurately describe our experiences of pain without having to try to hurt others.

Patience

Patience allows us to continue to offer help even when it doesn't appear to yield results. In seminary I had a professor who once asked, "Can you be as patient with X as God is being patient with you?" Replace X with the name of the person with whom you are in conflict. Every time we sin, God doesn't send a giant lightning bolt to zap us. And I'll be darned if I don't tend to sin in the same ways now as I did in the past. Yet God doesn't cast me off or throw me aside. Instead he promises to his people, "[I] will never leave you nor forsake you" (*Deuteronomy 31:6*).

People tend to struggle with the same sorts of things their entire lives. Are you friends with someone who isn't good at asking for help? Is your spouse someone who doesn't communicate well? Does your sibling stink at details? Guess what, that's probably not going to dramatically change anytime soon. We don't have to pretend that those things don't cause hurt — they do — but we shouldn't let our expectations get too crazy either. Being a lovingly consistent voice is far greater than an occasionally shrill one. Being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient in the midst of conflict can be extraordinarily tough. Yet Paul's advice is clear that these attributes need to be self-evident in every sphere of our lives and at all times (*Colossians 3:17*). Doing so not only increases the chances that on the opposite side of conflict we will be closer together, but it effectively points to the character of Christ at a time and in a place where the gospel is needed most.

Josh Squires

- Agree/disagree: Almost all relational conflicts are rooted in one or both parties not being fully in submission to God.
- In our experience of conflict, what attributes or characteristics do we see in the people involved in the conflict?
- Conflicts bring damage or conflicts bring people closer. Is the second part true?

- We would have heard of conflicts that are resolved - what were the factors that brought success?
- There are different attitudes that we adopt when we find ourselves in a conflict:
 - To remain passive and uncommitted, as if we did not see the conflict, or to behave as if the conflict would get solved by itself.
 - To say that the other is responsible for the conflict, while becoming aggressive or violent against him/ her.
 - To find a solution which is acceptable to all, i.e., a compromise.
 Which approach do you adopt mostly? Why?

ACT

- Read the passages referred to in this inquiry, reflect and talk about them in your family, parish and friends circle.
- When opportunity arises in your family, place of work, community consciously implement what you have realised from this inquiry.
- As a group have a reflection and prayer hour interceding that all those in conflict may be enlightened and seek to resolve conflicts God's way.

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Breathe in us Holy Spirit that our thoughts may be holy,
 Act in us Holy Spirit that our work may be holy,
 Draw our hearts Holy Spirit that we may love all that is holy,
 Strengthen us O Holy Spirit that we may defend what is holy,
 Guard us then O Holy Spirit that we may be holy.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN: Turning the World Upside Down

O Lord, all the world belongs to You,
 And You are always making all things new
 What is wrong You forgive
 And the new life You give
 Is what's turning the world upside down.

This world lives divided and apart,
You draw all men together and we start
In your body we see
That in fellowship we
Can be turning the world upside down.

O Lord all the world belongs to You,
And You're always making all things new
Send your Spirit on all
In Your people You call
To be turning the world upside down.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

OPENING HYMN

**Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers
That you do unto me.
Whatsoever you do to the least of my sisters
That you do unto me.**

When I was hungry, you gave me to eat;
When I was thirsty you gave me to drink.
Now enter into the home of my Father.

When I was weary, you helped me find rest;
When I was anxious, you calmed all my fears.
Now enter into the home of my Father.

When I was homeless, you opened your door;
When I was naked, you gave me your coat.
Now enter into the home of my Father.

When in a prison, you came to my cell;
When on a sickbed, you cared for my needs.
Now enter into the home of my Father.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son to bring good news to the poor, release for prisoners, sight for the blind, and restoration for every victim. I ask You in the name of Jesus Christ to defend the cause of the weak and powerless, and to maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed in our world. Fill us, with Your zeal to come to those who are rejected, despised and persecuted, not just as servants, but as neighbours, to be with them and of them. May our solidarity with those in need be a visible sign of reconciliation which You have given us through Jesus Christ, your Son, who with You and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Instead of defining dogmas of faith as was done earlier by traditional theology, liberation theology reflects on the problems of oppression experienced by the poor and seeks to liberate human beings from every form of tyranny in the light of God's Word. That is why Cardinal Ratzinger could write: "Some forms of liberation theology are valid, good and encouraged by us, while in other forms the Church loses its religious significance and becomes politicized in a totalitarian sense". That happens especially when the main form of oppression – that of sin – is ignored.

Millions of people in our country have been living in poverty or in various forms of oppression since a very long time. Human tragedies go on multiplying day by day.

Today, in order to see more precisely what liberation theology entails, we are going to ask ourselves a fundamental question:

“How can we contribute to alleviate the suffering of the poor and the oppressed?”

In other words, how can we help the poor liberate themselves from situations of poverty and oppression?

SEE

Read the following testimony and share on the questions given below.

Testimony

“I always remember that man from our neighborhood in Osasce, Brazil, who studied how to read and write. Even at 35 years of age, that man, Sebastian, was not much open to intellectual things. I could see him before the black board, looking intently not at a sentence, but at a simple word of four letters, the word ‘vila’, which means ward. His brow was deeply lined and he was tense as if he was about to dash forward, like an Olympic runner who tries to beat a record, trying to decode these four letters! Then, all of a sudden, for the first time he succeeded in reading that word ‘vila’. Immediately, his face relaxed with an indefinable smile. Then I saw that smile of joy about which Jesus speaks, because a man had just been born to the world. By reading that word of four letters for the first time in his life, Sebastian had become a man.”

Carlos from Recife, Brazil

Share only on the questions that you find relevant to your group:

- What is the form of oppression highlighted by that testimony?
- What are the worse situations of poverty experienced by our people in India?
- How do the people suffering from these problems react to their situation?
- How do we, parents, react to them, or what do we do about these problems?
- Is the government doing anything about them? If so, what exactly?
- What is our attitude towards the government and its action or inaction?
- Do we speak about these problems with our children at times?
If so, how?
How do they react?
Do they have any suggestion to make?
- Do we, as parents, stand in solidarity with the people who are caught in acute situations of poverty? If so, how is our solidarity expressed?
- There are interesting initiatives taken up in India to answer the needs of the poor.
Do we know them?
Do we get involved in some of them?

JUDGE

Jesus came to liberate people from any kind of oppression, as we can see in the following Gospel passage.

“Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:

*The spirit of the Lord is on me,
for he has anointed me
to bring the good news to the afflicted.
He has sent me
to proclaim liberty to captives,
sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim a year of favor
from the Lord.*

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, ‘This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.’

Luke 4, 16-21

- After pondering on the Word of God, do we see anything positive or negative in our reactions or the reactions of our children to the problems of poverty in India?
- What is it that can make the poor grow in human dignity? What is it that degrades them?
- How can our dialogue with our children foster a worthy reaction towards the problems of poverty?
- Does your faith enlighten you with regard to the situations evoked earlier?

ACT

- Think of ways we can sensitize our children to be concerned about human rights and the needs of the poor.
- Suggest some initiatives we can take up in collaboration with Civil Society to assuage the condition of oppressed people.
- If we have not involved ourselves in helping the poor and oppressed, think of ways we can change this mentality.
- Suggest ways in which the CFM can help parents instill a healthy social concern in their children.

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, teach us to love those who are not loved. There are millions of human beings, Your brothers and sisters, who die of hunger without having merited to die of hunger, who die of thirst without having merited to die of thirst, who do not know You without having merited that tragic ignorance. Lord, do not allow us to live happy and satisfied in our little corner. Help us to become concerned about the poverty of so many people all over the world and deliver us from our blind selfishness. That is our fervent prayer. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN'S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

Chorus

The world stands in need of liberation, my Lord,
It still has to feel your power.
The blind and the deaf, the dumb and the maimed,
All need to feel your healing touch.
The world stands in need of liberation, my Lord.
It still has to learn to love.

There are those who have eyes but refuse to see
the inhumanity that's done.
There are those who have ears but refuse to hear
the cries of those in agony. **Chorus**

There are those who have mouths but refuse to speak
against injustice done to some.
There are those who have hands but refuse to reach
out in love and charity. **Chorus**

THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

OPENING HYMN: Because He Lives I can Face Tomorrow

God sent his son, they called him Jesus,
He came to love, heal and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives.

Chorus

Because he lives
I can face tomorrow
Because he lives
All fear is gone
Because i know he holds the future
And life is worth the living
Just because he lives

How sweet to hold a new born baby,
And feel the pride and joy he gives,
But greater still the calm assurance:
This child can face uncertain day because he lives. **Chorus**

And then one day I'll cross the river,
I'll fight life's final war with pain.
And then, as death gives way to vict'ry,
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know he reigns. **Chorus**

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, I come to You in total expectation of the best.
I believe in miracles because I believe in You.
I cooperate with You by holding in my human mind the very best outcome.
I do not come to You in desperation, but in gratitude and excitement of the result given to me ahead of any need.
I live my days in prayer and my days bless me.
I go to You first each day to prepare my human mind for the blessed life.
I live my moments, day by day, in positive expectation and overflowing gratitude as I witness and take part in the miraculous results.
I believe that spiritual power is the most important activity that I can take part in.
I give myself to it, and it gives its power to me.
I am grateful and thankful for every moment spent in sacred prayer.
In Jesus Christ's name. Amen

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SOCIAL ENQUIRY

Thoughts – optimistic, pessimistic and everything in between – flit through our minds all day along. And they affect everything about us from our emotions to our health. Thoughts are the origin of our behavior. A thought stimulates an electro chemical

response which produces emotion – emotion results in an attitude – attitude produces behavior. This process affects the way we think and feel. Each behavior begins this way.

“Our thoughts influence our character, shape our attitudes, determine our behavior, affect our spirituality and even influence the immune system,” says author, educator and psychologist Dr. Archibald D. Hart in his book, *The Anxiety Cure*. “Your thinking determines whether you will be happy or sad most of the time.”

Research shows that around 87% of illnesses can be attributed to our thought life and approximately 13% to diet, genetics and environment (Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Who Switched off my Brain?*)

As a negative thought begins to develop, it activates a section of the brain that releases emotions related to thought, and one of those insidious “downer” chemicals is released, stimulating a chain reaction. Chemicals released by negative emotions can affect your brain’s nerve cells causing difficulty in retrieving memories and some chemicals can even effect your body.

Chemicals released as a result of positive thoughts don’t cause this kind of damage; instead they make your body and mind feel good.

Napoleon Hill – the early 20th century guru of positive thinking - said “the starting point of Success is desire whatever your mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve regardless of how many times you may have failed in the past ”. However the average person won’t even try something new if he thinks he won’t be successful. So the proponents of positive thinking believe that you can learn to control your thoughts which change your brain’s chemistry, affect your emotions and even influence your character, if you believe in it with your conscious and unconscious mind as well.

Thus, one definition of positive thinking is: the act of reviewing thought processes in order to identify areas that need improvement and then using the appropriate tools to change those thoughts in a positive, goal oriented way.

Pastor and author Charles R. Swindoll describes the power we have to direct our thoughts. He says, “Happiness (like winning) is a matter of right thinking, not intelligence, age or position. Our performance is directly related to the thoughts we deposit in our memory bank. We can only draw on what we deposit.”

BIBLE ENQUIRY

Is science confirming what scripture has been saying all along: why else would the great apostle Paul say –“Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right” (*Phil 4: 8*). The Bible has much more to say about the act of thinking and our thought life. The words *think*, *thought* and *mind* are used hundreds of times in the Bible:

“As he thinks within himself, so he is.” *Proverbs 23:7*

Often the scriptures refer to the heart as the source of our thoughts – “The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.” *Proverbs 15:28*

“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart and these make a man unclean. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” *Mt 15: 18-19*

The Bible demonstrates the power of positive thinking when it says “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13)

“..... if you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could tell that mountain to move from here to there.... Nothing would be impossible to you.” (Mt 17:20)

“All things are possible with God.” (Mk 10:27)

SEE

- Think of an instance in your own life when the power of positive thinking enabled you to face life cheerfully and confidently. Share it with the group
- Share with the group your lived experience of accomplishments / reaching your goals or overcoming anxiety through Prayer?

JUDGE

The author of the famous quote, “Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it,” Charles R. Swindoll, says that power packed promises made to oneself really work wonders when fertilized with constant repetition. It can work the other way around also, for what you fear, you would attract too.

Positive thinking in itself is not wrong. The problem is in believing that there is some kind of supernatural power in positive thinking, and that it can work without the Grace of God. The power of positive thinking that promotes faith in oneself leads naturally to a false belief in creating one’s own outcome. While there is a positive correlation between a positive outlook and performance, it is a far cry from positive thoughts creating an outcome. Every good gift is from God above (*James 1:17*). The best gift of all is the indwelling Holy Spirit (*Luke 11:13*). Once the Holy Spirit indwells us He begins the process of sanctification in which the transformative power of the Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus. The Bible says that man cannot be good on his own (*Is 64:6*). The only good in us comes from the righteousness of Jesus Christ applied to our account (*Eph 2:1-5*).

If we want to better ourselves and make positive changes we need to have more than the power of positive thinking. True spirituality will always start and end with our relationship with Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who is the key to changing one’s life - not our thoughts, and not our efforts alone. As we actively yield to the Spirit, He will transform us. “We have the mind of Christ.” (*1 Corinthians 2:16*)

- Take a moment to reflect on your thought life, what sort of deposits do you usually make?
- “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks.” (*Luke 6:45*) - Are your thoughts shaping you? Or are you shaping your thoughts? And what has been your experience on the mouth articulating the overflow of the heart?

- Who has control over what you think – you or God? God knows our thoughts. Will God give us a well- balanced mind?
- Can you share something that happened in your life recently because of what you thought?
- What are the factors that prove an obstacle for unleashing the power of positive thinking in your own life?
- Choose 7 of the factors mentioned below which you think can foster positive thinking:

cheerfulness – good health – loving nature – worry and anxiety – friendship – bitterness and resentment – punctuality – judging nature – forgiveness – patience – jealousy – commitment – respect for others – hard work – faithfulness - – integrity – humility –acceptance of God’s plan – infilling of Holy Spirit

ACT

Psychologists have shown that lack of self- confidence, doubtful thoughts, feelings of inferiority and lack of desire are the major factors that substantially curtail your growth.

- List some of your goals/desires and think of ways and means to accomplish them through a Christian response.
- Consciously practice using the factors you chose from the list above to foster positive thinking.

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Abba Father, help us to remember that You are always with us. We labour in vain without Your blessing. When we are frightened and lonely help us to remember that You are there, and we don’t ever need to be afraid. Give us the wisdom to understand that Your grace is sufficient for us. We are able to live every day because of Your strength and protection. Grant us the serenity to face the ups and downs of life with a strong and steady will through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This we ask in the mighty name of Jesus, Your Son and our Lord. Amen

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN’S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN: God Will Make a Way

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

Oh, God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me
And rivers in the desert will I see
Heaven and Earth will fade but His Word will still remain
And He will do something new today

Oh, God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me

He will...

GETTING RID OF PREJUDICES

OPENING HYMN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AYPEjMqr40> - instrumental

I have roamed, I have groped in the night,
I have stumbled on paths without light,
Still I know I could walk without fear
You were there by my side always near!

Chorus

For this,
I thank you, Lord,
Yes, Lord, for the gift of your life!

There were times in my life when I cried,
when I cheated, offended and lied
Yet, O Lord, all my sins you forgave:
not to judge did you come but to save.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY (Page 72)

OPENING PRAYER

O God our Father, You know how difficult it is for us at times to follow Jesus Your Son on the path of love and mercy, because we are so weak. Increase our little faith so that we may overcome all our fears and get rid of our prejudices. Strengthen the weakness of our love that we may be ready to communicate to others the love we have experienced from You. May our will be so strong that we may be able to overcome the temptations to judge and condemn others. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this meeting, we are going to reflect on our tendency to perpetuate prejudices so that we may gradually reduce them where they exist by shutting off their sources. It is also important for us to know how, sometimes, we may transmit our prejudices to our own children.

SEE

Two friends were inseparable. One day, one of them heard a story about his friend, believed it without making enquiries as to its truth and passed it on. As it went, it grew. His friend heard of it and their friendship was broken. The man thus maligned was taken seriously ill and lay on his deathbed. His friend, who had spread the prejudice, heard of his illness and came to see him, confessed his wrong and asked his forgiveness, which was readily given by the dying man. "Now," said the dying man, "I want you to do something for me. Take my feather pillow and scatter the feathers in the garden." Though he thought it a strange request, the visitor carried it out and returned to his friend's bedside. "Now," said the dying man, "go and gather the feathers up again."

“That is impossible,” said the other. “Just so,” said the wronged man, “I frankly and willingly forgive you for scattering those stories about me, but even my forgiveness cannot revoke the evil that has been done.”

- Am I aware of some of the prejudices I have in my own life? If so, could I describe briefly what they are and how I acquired them?
- What are some of the early indications of prejudices in our children?
- At what age do parents find their children showing evidence of prejudices?
- How are these prejudices transmitted to the children?

JUDGE

- After reading the following statements, share your own comments on them and illustrate them with facts.

“Most of our prejudices are like pyramids upside down. They lie on tiny trivial incidents that grow upwards and sideward until they crowd our minds and confuse their functioning.” (auc)

“Prejudice is a device that enables you to form opinions without getting the facts.” (Robert Quillon)

“Prejudice is self-inflicted blindness.” (auc)

“To the jaundiced eye all things look yellow.” (Alexander Pope)

“It is more difficult to disintegrate a prejudice than an atom.” (Albert Einstein)

“The chief cause of human errors is to be found in the prejudices picked up in childhood.” (René Descartes)

The first Christians had their own prejudices. We may ask ourselves how Saint Paul motivated them to get rid of these prejudices. Read the following extract from his Letter to the Galatians:

“But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3: 25-29)

- What is the main prejudice Saint Paul deals with in his Letter to the Galatians? How does he deal with it?
- Why is it particularly harmful to nurture prejudices within the family?

- What responsibility do parents have to get rid of their own prejudices and avoid transmitting them to their children?

ACT

- Let each one of us resolve to get rid of the prejudices that we may have, so that the family spirit may not be spoiled because of such wrong judgments.

However, keep in mind the wisdom of the following proverb: “Drive out prejudices by the door, they will come back by the window.”

NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

CONCLUDING PRAYER

O Lord, purify our tongues to not speak ill against our brothers. All bitterness, resentment, hatred, prejudice, malice, jealousy and pride will flee, in Jesus’ name.

We will experience Your unconditional love at this very moment and be able to spread it like a wildfire across our neighbourhood. Cleanse our minds, bodies and souls as we go out to represent You, Lord, in love’s purest form. In Jesus’ holy precious name we pray.

Clear our minds of negative thoughts. Free them from any prejudice that may cause them bondage. Help us all to live in peace and harmony with one another. Remind us that we are all created equally and we are all your children. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT (Page 73)

SHORT INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

CHAPLAIN’S BLESSING

CONCLUDING HYMN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp5KQmQNJsU>

1. Love is His word, love is His way,
Feasting with all, fasting alone,
Living and dying, rising again
Love only love is His way.

Chorus

Richer than gold is the love of my Lord.
Better than splendour and wealth. (2)

2. Love is His way, love is His mark,
Sharing His last Passover feast.

Christ at the table, host to the twelve
Love, only love, is His mark.

3. Love is His sign, love is His news,
Do this He said, lest you forget
All my deep sorrow, all my dear blood,
Love, only love, is His news.
Love of the Spirit, God ever one,
Love, only love, is His word.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Lord God, from You every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

Father You are love and life.

Through Your son, Jesus Christ, born of woman
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,

Grant that every family on earth
may become for each successive generation
a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives,
for the good of their families, and of all the families of the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity
and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage,
may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials
through which our families sometime pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth

Grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission
in the family and through the family.

Through Christ, our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, forever and ever.
Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT

O Holy Trinity, You are one in three.
We believe You wish our families to reflect Your heavenly oneness.
Jesus has called us to Family ministry
and asked His heavenly Father not to take us from the world
but to deliver us from evil.

And so we pray for the Christian Family Movement
that present members may grow in grace
and that new families may join us.

Through good example and prayer
may our homes become that which You desire them to be
true domestic churches,
temples of your Glory,
and schools of humanity ushering in the reign of God.
Amen.

CFM ANTHEM

We are one in the CFM
Grow as one in the CFM
We observe and judge and..... act in God
Walk the talk of Christ and proclaim our God.

Yellow, brown and red and black and white
Forging ahead towards family might
With faith and love and truth our tools
Towards a better world, where family rules.

No place too far, no group too small
The CFM embraces all
By example working for unity
And a loving caring world family.

ICCFM ANTHEM

Refrain

Let us sing together joyfully
For the Church and for the family
Let us cast our nets into the sea
To gather all humanity.

1

To serve the world is our resolve
To be in homes a voice of hope
With open hands able to help
All families are in our scope.

Refrain

2

To form in all a joyous power
Together seek a loving union
Tell the world our firm intention
And fulfil our social mission.

Refrain

3

We come from different continents
Pledging a friendly harmony
Our goal to form communities
May soon become a reality.

Refrain

4

As in the home of Nazareth
All united in work and commitment
So we spread the Confederation
Of Christian Family Movements.

Refrain