

## PASTORAL LETTER ON FAMILY – II

Dear Rev. Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people,

### **Thy Kingdom Come!**

I wish to write this Pastoral Letter on FAMILY in the context of Pope Francis' invitation to dedicate a special focus on families. We all know that the family is the minute unit of the society and the Church. So the Vat. II declared – Family is the Church in miniature form. So the families should manifest the qualities of the Church – One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic. As missionaries we are appointed as the guardians and guides to our families in the parishes.

We are called to preserve the unity of the families and harmony among its members. As the Church is the sacrament of Christ so also every family. As sacraments they must communicate the invisible grace of God by their presence, morality and witness. In other words the holiness of the Church has to be transmitted to world by a holy life of parents and children. To be apostolic is an invitation to hand over the deposit of faith to the future generation (Dt 11:19). By prayers, sacraments and the word of God every family is called to live the tradition of the Church, give witness to the Kingdom values and prepare the future generation to continue the Church to the final day of judgment (Mt. 25:31-46). The Catholicity of the Church points to the universal nature of the families. Culture, ethnicity, language, customs may vary from place to place and country to country but the universal nature of the family remains the same for we have one Lord, one faith and one baptism (Eph 4:5).

Here, it is worth mentioning the highlights of the encyclical Letter of St. Pope St. John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*. The document describes the position of the Catholic Church on the meaning and role of marriage and the family, and outlines challenges towards realizing that ideal. It refers to marriage as one of the most precious and most urgent tasks of Christian couples in our time “as” the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning.

Among other observations, *Familiaris Consortio* restates the Church's opposition to artificial birth control, stated previously in *Humanae Vitae*, and briefly mentions the opposition of the Church to abortion. It also discusses the responsibility and expectations of the family regarding the education of children. It continues with a description of the expectations of the family relative to the larger society, including service to the poor.

The document establishes that “any violence” applied “in favor of contraception or, still worse, of sterilization and procured abortion, must be altogether condemned and forcefully rejected”. It foresees the restoration of the Covenant mediated by Jesus Christ God, and the restoration of the society in compliance with the God's plan of salvation for all the human kind.

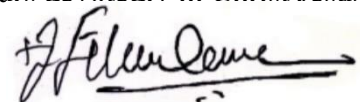
The final (and more articulated) portion of the document describes expectations of the family which more directly involve the Catholic Faith in daily life, relating it to several of the Catholic sacraments, particularly marriage, and strongly urging family prayer. In particular, this section of the document restates the expectation of a permanent Catholic union for all members of the Church seeking marriage. It rejects the acceptability of alternative arrangements, including "trial marriages", exclusively civil marriages, and unions with no publicly recognized bond.

When Families are good, Church will be good and the society also will be good. So, to make our Church/diocese "good", "productive" and "witnessing" first and foremost we have to make our families good. The basic elements that boost our families 'good' is daily family prayer. To keep daily family prayer alive and active to possible primary by continues monitoring of the same by the priest- in-charge and missionaries involved in parish ministry - the sisters and the catechists. Once the faith is deeply rooted in one's personal life, family prayer become a natural output of it. Until then constant reminders are required by different ways and means – retreats, seminars, reception of sacraments, regular family visits by the missionaries, dissemination of Christian literature by print media, social media or mass media etc. Street plays, video presentations, folk dances presenting the theme of family life unity, harmony, morality, rearing of children, prayer etc. also could foster family prayer. Whatever method we adopt or means we use, let us not forget that it shall be one of the important focus of our mission.

It is beyond description the importance of family counseling. It is a naked truth and our experience is that we meet with number of broken families and not able to lead a sacramental life for one season or other. We are duty-bound to help them within the framework of biblical teaching canonical injunction and tradition of the Church. Certainly we can help a great number of them, leaving behind a few exceptions. In the cultural ethos of our area the people may not be aware about such problems and may not take any interest. As genuine missionaries it is our duty to reach to them and do the needful so as to save also their souls.

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, responding to the call of Pope Francis we shall focus on Family Ministry as a priority in this Jubilee Year go ahead with vigor and enthusiasm. God bless you all.

Yours devotedly in Christ Jesus



† Ephrem Nariculam  
Bishop, Eparchy of Chanda

