

# **Christian Family and Spirituality**

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## **Introduction**

Anthropologists and sociologists agree that 'family' has been there in all ages and in all cultures and that it has been serving all the basic functions of society: the reproductive, social, educational and economic. Undoubtedly therefore, family is a primary and vital cell of human society. For us, Christians, it is much more! Family is 'small-scale Church' and 'church in miniature'.<sup>1</sup> It is "the 'domestic sanctuary' of the Church."<sup>2</sup> Nay, "Family is so to speak the domestic Church"<sup>3</sup>.

Recently, however, there have arisen certain developments mostly in the western society which seem to destabilize this age old institution.<sup>4</sup> Cohabitation or live-in relationships, trial marriages, same sex unions legalized as marriage, divorce and remarriages, single parenthood, surrogate motherhood, casual sex, premarital and extramarital sex, abortion, contraceptive mentality being accepted as normal, paedophilia, child molestation, incest, various addictions such as to drug, alcohol, mobiles, internet, pornography exerting a lot of negative impact on family life.

These developments cannot be brushed aside as purely problems of the West. On account of globalization, they are

spreading fast enough to the rest of the globe so as to become fads and fashions of the day. They are even taken to be needs of the contemporary times. In addition to them there are the typically Indian problems which worsen the crisis of a family life: premarital and extramarital sex, dowry, child molestation, incest, domestic violence, rape within marriage, wife-battering, interreligious marriages etc.

The present crises in family life are due to interplay of many interrelated factors. Globalization is chiefly an economic trend introduced by the Market Economy of the West demanding the rest of the countries to Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, initiating a new culture of "produce more, sell more and buy more." In this culture money, wealth and possessions decide status of family. People are led to think that self-gratification is the be-all and end-all of life. This kind of thinking has resulted in a change in socio-familial relationships. 'Use and Throw' culture, has entered in the interpersonal relationship. Manipulation of the human person and devaluation of any permanent commitment are considered natural. People have started to claim for rights and comforts aggressively, and conveniently forgetting their duties and responsibilities in family. The unprecedented economic booms, scientific innovations and technological revolutions particularly in the IT field that has produced an excessive individualism, utter selfishness, unwarranted greed, alarming consumerism, even to the extent of turning them all into new forms of idolatry.

In such a context then, the Church cannot but be anxious about these family challenges. That is precisely why Pope Francis convened the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome October 5-19, 2014 on the theme: “The pastoral challenges for the family in the context of evangelization”. The final report<sup>5</sup> of this Synod has rightly remarked: “The family is uniquely important to the Church and... needs to be rediscovered as the essential agent in the work of evangelization”.<sup>6</sup>

In this connection, there is a need to safeguard Christian families from being seduced and swamped with the enticements of Mammon. The market-driven milieu of today could easily induce even the well-meaning Christian couples to ignore genuine relationships. They may be led to overlook self-emptying love, selfless service and Christ-like sacrifice. Thus there is urgency to emphasise the role of spirituality in Christian families to defend themselves from the attacks of the contemporary challenges.

The attempt of this article is precisely to bring out the importance of spirituality and the ways of cultivating it. So the first part of this article elucidates that the very concept of ‘Christian family’ contains a deep spiritual dimension. Part two explicates the concept of spirituality in a rather comprehensive manner, in its basic meaning, in its historical development, finally indicating the Modern Trends too. In the light of the considerations of the first two parts, then, the third part pinpoints the type of spirituality most appropriate to family. The fourth and final part tries to suggest some practical hints for cultivating the family spirituality.

## **1. The Meaning of 'Christian Family'**

The adjective 'Christian' is used to qualify a noun which or who is "based on or believing in the teachings of Jesus," or "showing the qualities that are thought of as typical of a Christian".<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, a 'Christian family' is one that is based on the teachings of Jesus or believing in Jesus, manifesting the qualities or spirit of Jesus. To put it differently, a Christian family is one that is based on belief in Jesus as Christ and derived from Jesus' teachings, and that which shows the typically Christian qualities.

Now, if one were to look for central concept of Jesus' teachings on marriage/family it is evidently this: family is not an institution designed by merely by human beings but created by God himself. The Genesis account of creation shows that it was God, the God of Love, the author of Covenantal love, created humans as man and woman, binding the man-and-woman as partners in covenantal love so that each member understands and fulfills his or her God-given role. It is the love of communion between persons that constitutes precisely God's "image and likeness" (Gen 1:26-27). The second narrative of Creation (Gen 2:5-25) stresses also that gender differentiation also comes from God. But it is based on love, equality, and is meant to promote respect, sharing, complementarity and companionship. Reiterating the Genesis accounts, Jesus asks: "Haven't you read the scriptures that say that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female?" (Mt 19:4). Thereby he clearly establishes that marriage is a divine institution, not a merely human institution. As such therefore human beings are not free to renegotiate or redefine marriage/ family in any way they choose. On the

contrary they are called to preserve and respect what has been divinely instituted (Mt 19:6).

For this reason, marriage can never be just a social contract or a legal/juridical arrangement; it is a divinely instituted Covenant. This Covenant is entered into by the husband and the wife before God as Witness. Marriage therefore involves three persons: husband-wife-God. In the image and likeness of the Holy Triune God, marriage can be viewed as a circle or triangle with God at the top; the closer each partner moves towards God, the closer they move towards each other in selfless, life-promoting love.<sup>8</sup>

With creation of family, God gives the call to holiness, too. It is not mere coincidence that the Hebrew word for marriage (*kiddushin*) means 'holiness or sanctification'. To marry is to embark upon a life of holiness with the assurance of God's presence abiding by the divine decree: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). It clearly shows that marriage was instituted by God at the very beginning: one man is united to one woman in such a sacred bond as to two form one new family. "Become one flesh" not only refers to the establishment of one new family but also to the husband and wife's sexual union leading to the birth of children and perpetuation of the human race. Clearly, we see that marriage/family is part and parcel of God's primal plans for sanctification of humankind. This is further reconfirmed by St Paul who says: "The unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband" (1 Cor 7:14)

It is because of this sanctity-dimension of the family that Jesus denounced adultery (Mt 19:1-9). Echoing the Genesis-mandate that marriage is ordained by God, Jesus upholds the dignity and indissolubility of marriage. The early Christians were so imbued with the sanctity and stability of family that they saw growth and stability of their own community in terms of a family, although as God's family. That is why St Paul could address the converts thus: "So then, you the Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer, you are now fellow citizens and members of the family of God" (Eph 2:19). He also inculcated in them the need of helping members of the community in terms of the mutual aid of members as it is done in a family: "So then, as often as we have chance, we should do good to everyone and especially to those who belong to our family in the faith" (Gal 6:10).

The Apostles themselves must have had such a high esteem of marriage that they presented their Master as the bridegroom (Mk 2:19; Mt 25:1; Jn 3:29) and the Church as his bride and spouse (Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17). The apostolic Church also must have cherished a great respect for marriage. That is why St Paul identifies the Church at Corinth as "a pure virgin whom he has promised in marriage to one man only, that is, Christ himself" (2 Cor 11:2-3). St John also while describing the eschatological glory, compares the glorified Church "to the Bride, wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9). He relates the heavenly bliss to the "wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7). He sees himself being invited by both the Spirit and the Bride to join the heavenly bliss (Rev 22:17).

In short, the specific features of Christian family, as taught and conceived by the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, could be summed up in at least five vital principles:

(1) Marriage is divinely instituted unit already in the beginning by the Creator himself (Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6) and so is *sacred*. In other words it is not merely set up by human agreement between two consenting individuals.

(2) Marriage is the most *intimate* of all human relationships uniting a man and a woman in a 'one-flesh-union' (Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7-8), meaning that it is not to be a casual relationship of anybody with anybody.

(3) Marriage is a relationship of so *permanent* nature that no one can attempt to break the relationship (Mt 19:6; Mk 10:9) according to one's convenience and whims and fancies.

(4) Marriage involves such *mutual* love and fidelity that each one ought to give oneself freely and totally and with a self-sacrificing attitude (Eph 5:25-30).

(5) The marriage commitment between husband and wife is so *exclusive* to each other that self-giving of one to the other must never be interfered with any other human relationship (1 Cor 7: 2-5).

These five salient features of authentically a Christian family could be really present only if there is genuine spirituality in the marriage partners. What sort of spirituality it is? This is the question which we need to explore now. But before that, we ought to have a clear understanding of the meaning of the rich and complex concept 'spirituality'. This is what we are going to analyse in the following section.

## **2. Spirituality: A Conceptual Clarification**

If you look for the meaning of spirituality in the Internet, it seems that “more than 11 million entries are there” and if you search for ‘definition of spirituality’ you will discover “more than 5 million entries”.<sup>9</sup> This only shows the diversity of ways in which spirituality is understood by people. It is impossible to make analyze this variety of meaning and come to a conclusion regarding an acceptable definition. However, if we go by the etymological meaning of the term it may help us have a basic meaning on which all other definitions depend upon. The term ‘spirituality’ is a compound word, derived from two distinct words: ‘spirit’ + ‘(q)uality’. Now, the term ‘spirit’ refers to the principal component in human nature, which governs the two other components (body and mind). It is not directly perceived by our senses, nor is it known merely by inference of mind but is directly intuited and postulated by our very existence. So if one goes by the literal meaning of the term, spirituality would mean the quality of being beyond what is merely perceivable to the senses or inferred by the mind and yet of being related to both body and mind, guiding their inclinations or tendencies according to the higher goals of life.

### **2.1. In a Broad Sense**

Therefore, spirituality may be defined as ‘the pursuit of all concerns of the human spirit or Spirit within, as opposed to the merely material or physical or worldly concerns, or the process of enlivening our soul and making it an ever dominant principle of all other aspects of our life, the corporeal and mental and worldly activities of life. The need for conscious effort to refresh the spirit within

us arises because the actual situation of human existence is a dilemmatic situation wherein our inborn inclinations as well as the stimuli around us in the world all lead us to dampening of the spirit in us and smothering of the effulgence of soul and pulling us downwards to the brutal or animal level even worse than animal tendencies. This is precisely the attempt of pursuit in all religions.<sup>10</sup>

Making our spirit dominant actually means attuning our human spirit to the Ultimate Spirit, God. In the *Christian context* it means building up a person to person relationship with God in the manner of and striving after perfection of love, after Jesus “our Lord the Divine Teacher and Master the supreme model of all perfections”.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Christian spirituality is a kind of conscious thirst for loving God above all things, and also extending that love to our neighbours for the simple reason that they are all the image and likeness of God or that they are all children of the same Father. The fallen state of human nature, tinged with original sin and tainted by inbuilt inclinations for sin tend to break the true relationship of love with God and neighbours, or to slow down the growth of our intimacy with God. Therefore the need arises for a determined attempt to take “Positive Means” to strive after the spiritual ideal of life.

## **2.2. Classical Traditions of Spirituality in the Church**

In attuning their individual spirit with the divine Spirit, and in attaining the desired intimacy with God, the different saints of the Church devised various types of Positive Means, each according to one’s own charism; temperament, attitude and perception. After seeing the phenomenal success of their pursuits as well as their methods, the

particular set of practices or methods pursued by a prominent saint were codified into a package system either by themselves or by their immediate disciples, so that people with similar temperaments, attitudes and aspirations might put the success story of these great men and women in their personal or communitarian life.

Thus there arose a variety of schools of spirituality, differences among those systems were explainable not only in terms of the personal factors of the saints themselves, but also because of the differences of contexts of the time of their existence, and place or region in which they were born and brought up, and in accordance with the variations of climatic conditions and cultural contexts. However they all have appealing to larger number of followers over the centuries all over the world. As they have thus withstood the ravines of time, they have become standardized forms of spirituality. That is how many schools of spirituality have come to stay in the Church. To mention a few of the classical schools of spirituality, with their key features:

1. *Benedictine Spirituality*: rooted in the spirit of withdrawing from the world, and living a life of work and prayer, in an isolated place, but involved in community life of sacrifice, asceticism, order and obedience to superiors.

2. *Carmelite Spirituality*: strictly contemplative, emphasizing interior silence and solitude, and on severe austerity and detachment.

3. *Franciscan Spirituality*: along with the community life, emphasis is on life of poverty, love of nature, and charity to those in need.

4. *Dominican spirituality*: emphasis on poverty, love of preaching and devotion to the truth of the Church and focusing on its intellectual formulations.

5. *Ignatian Spirituality*: Marked by conscious effort to combine contemplation and action, discerning the will of God and be involved in societal or Church reformation, always with a special love for the Church and for the greater glory of God.

6. *Redemptorist Spirituality*: with a greater emphasis is on praying and preaching.

7. *Salesian Spirituality*: a practical, down-to-earth way of living the Gospel with an inspired common sense to do ordinary and everyday things with a great passion for God and great love for others.

Here it should be noted that the classical schools of spirituality are all marked by systematization of the 'Positive Means' into a particular framework, and formalization of the rules and regulations. Whoever accepts a particular system will have to anchor the pursuit upon the whole system like the main hub of a cycle upon which spokes depend for support and stability.<sup>12</sup>

In fine, the meaning spirituality according to the classical schools of Christian tradition indicates striving after the ideal of perfection as set by our Lord but by taking to a particular system as a whole, as package-deal.

### **2.3. Modern Trends**

One of the obvious signs of life is growth. For the Christian spirituality to be alive it had to move along with the dynamics of the time and place, on the basis of several

underlying factors and yielding to a change in nature, scope, vision, method and perspective of Christian spirituality. Given the fact that the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a tremendous change in the world, life and perception, there arose new trends in spirituality also. As against the classical schools of spirituality, they do not insist upon any systematization and formalization of the means. Rather they thrive as personal and spontaneous attempts by individuals, but within the small groups which are supporting the new initiatives. They are more lived out as daily commitments to life, and to professions one holds in life rather than following them as specific sets of spiritual practices, cut apart from daily chores of life. These modern trends in spirituality may be grouped in two broad categories: 'the Church-centred' and 'the World-oriented'.

*(a) Ecclesial Trends*

Showing a growing commitment towards the Church, many groups and communities within the Church have been involved in parish renewal efforts, and in helping lay groups to discover a new spirituality for them according to their status of life and family commitment, but always in obedience to the Church, and with sensitivity to the needs of the poor. Some of the well-known ecclesial communities<sup>13</sup> are Catholic Charismatic movement, Neo-Catechumenal Way, Shalom Catholic Community, Fondacio, Chemin Neuf Community, Santwana Community of Disciples, Jesus Youth etc.

The common features of these movements are sharing in faith, witness of mutual charity, and the community participation and prayer of the hours. The most visible effects of this trend in spirituality are the death-knell to

individualism and regeneration of baptized who assume risen life of God's community.

*(b) Incarnational Trend*

Taking inspiration from Incarnation, and strengthened by Vat. II's teachings, some Church groups have realized that they are invited to play a responsible role in the temporal world and, of course, to consecrate the world to God in Christ. Here spirituality is not viewed not so much as interior movement of spirit as what needs to be authenticated by exterior involvement in life-commitments or as an effort to enhance quality of life with a religious significance.

In summing up,

□ The meaning of spirituality *in its broad sense* refers to all that concerns the effulgence of spirit in one's person, so that it becomes a vibrant governing principle of one's being and channels the bodily and rational aspects of life according to its own directives only.

□ Thanks to the many positive means that have been devised by various saints for effulgence of human spirit and attune it to the ultimate spirit, the meaning of spirituality have acquired different phases of understanding *over the centuries*.

□ Recently however it has been gaining sharper and sharper focus of penetrating life in all details as necessary dimension of one's faith in God and ordering one's life according to the will of God. This focus of spirituality has grown into two main trends: *Ecclesial* and *Incarnational* trends.

### 3. Family Spirituality

If we try to apply the different traditional schools of spirituality to family situations, we see that it is not much helpful, not only because they all arose during the pre-modern times but mainly because they were the results of a spiritual search of consecrated people, who left the world and the family pursuits. It is mostly the charism of great saints that was responsible for formal structure of those schools, which would appear too high to be followed by ordinary masses.

On the contrary, the broad meaning of spirituality and the two modern trends of spirituality (ecclesial and incarnational) seem to contribute to creation of a relevant family spirituality. Surprisingly enough one finds three fitting models for understanding them. (1) The Trinitarian logic comes close to the broad meaning of spirituality. (2) There is the Ecclesial Model of spirituality, corresponding to the required ecclesial dimension in family spirituality. (3) Finally, Incarnational Model of spirituality is suitable to explain the socio-political dimension of family. Let me now try to explain first each of the models and then the implications for family spirituality.

#### 3.1. The Trinitarian Model

Here, to explain the Trinitarian model of spirituality, first we need to recapitulate the broad and basic meaning of spirituality and build up the specifically Christian view upon it.

a) *The broad & basic meaning of spirituality* analysed in the foregoing section indicates the need of human individual making the spirit within effulgent or dominant

in such a way that the other two components of body and the mind become subservient to the guidance and governance of spirit alone. The spirit within us is nothing but the ultimate spirit indwelling in us. So making our spirit effulgent simply means making one's own spirit *attuned to the Divine*.

This Divine being, as per the Judeo-Christian Revelation, is a triune being of love, each of the persons in a perfect communion with one another. The ineffable mystery of God revealed in and through Jesus Christ is indeed an answer to the mystery of human life, the fundamental predicament of human existence. The fundamental predicament of human existence or the unsolved riddle about human existence consists in this that we are all born necessarily with myriad of limitations, suffering and death. Yet there is such an inner disposition or innate longing for happiness in our nature that all people have universally attempted to go beyond the struggles of life and strive for wholeness, and to transcend the numerous limitations of life to encounter bliss despite its denial in the process. It is this striving that constitutes the broad meaning of spirituality.

Almost all religions in history have attempted to explain this process as upward movement ascending from this world of limitations towards the absolute goal of happiness, involving exclusion of the world, time, and corporality.<sup>14</sup> Contrastingly, our Christian religion alone talks about the solution as coming down from God to us. Already the existence of the world is creation from God. Again it is God who takes the initiative and chooses Abraham in order to prepare a chosen race for salvation. Finally He encounters

us in our history in and through Jesus Christ, who underwent all the limitations, suffering and death but he came out triumphantly through his Resurrection. It is in that victory and glory that he wants to give a share to every one of us. Just as the mother, through her warm embrace and loving smile awakens her child to self-consciousness of being accepted and loved so too God makes the initiative to make us know ourselves as loved and lovable. Our job is simply to surrender ourselves to this Word-made-flesh and attune our life to His. This is precisely the meaning of Christian spirituality in the broad and basic sense.

b) Now, the *God that is revealed in Christianity* is not a distant and isolated being but rather a mutual-being-for-one-another of three divine persons the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, all in communion with one another. It is in order to give us a share in this life of love that one of the Persons takes the human birth and lived among us (1 Jn 1:1-4).

It is in the life, death and the resurrection that Jesus Christ becomes the door way to God surrendering himself in the tragic destiny not by a negation of the world but rather in the involvement of our world and thereby transforming it with the maxim of Love. Jesus' cry on the Cross 'God, God why have you forsaken me?' represents the depth of human nostalgia. But the Easter declaration 'you are my son, today I have begotten you' expresses the Father's infinite love that fills every emptiness. It is in this ambiance of love relationship that we, Christians live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). If the Father is the home, the Son is the doorway and the Spirit is the key. We

are now able to pass from death to life (1 Jn 3:14) from meaninglessness of life to meaningfulness of bliss.

We are to encounter God not eliminating our history, our corporality, our world but rather by fulfilling and surpassing them all by our 'yes' not living outside our self, not making our own limited plans, but journeying in the mystery of God, a journey of unforeseen horizons. The logic of communion is concerned with the redemptive act of the Second Person in the Trinity. It is in the Word-made-flesh that a real 'communion' is effected. There is neither confusion nor separation but a real unity in distinction between humanity and divinity. In this divine human identity Jesus Christ is both turned toward the Father (in union with the Spirit) and towards humanity. By being the Word of God among us He is in a relationship of communion with God at the same time communicating His Trinitarian life to the world.

The Holy Trinity is particularly illustrative of human family, as Pope Pius XII had an insight way back in 1940. Taking the biblical statement that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), he argues thus:

Now, in the family, this image acquires, we might say, a peculiar resemblance to the divine model, because as the essential unity of the divine nature exists in three divine persons consubstantial and co-eternal, so also the moral unity of the human family is realized in the trinity of the father, of mother and of their offspring."<sup>15</sup>

In this Trinitarian model, it is not only one-ness that is emphasised but also the three-ness is equally emphasised I as much as the individuality and personality of each member is reaffirmed in this model. In other words, it not by negating the Fatherhood or Sonship or the Spirit

that the oneness is affirmed but it is the very distinction between Father-Son-Spirit is at the same time identically the principle of unity. Similarly the family communion among humans can be really the image of the communion of the Divine Trinity only if each of the persons in human family (father-mother-offspring), by existing for each other is his (her) fullest self.<sup>16</sup>

The human family not only re-presents the Trinitarian communion here on earth, but it also participates in the life of God. To say this let us follow a three step argument corresponding to each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. First, granted that “God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is given to us” (Rom 5:5), it is clear that the love that prevails in the family is the divine love. Secondly, if we accept that God blessed the first human couple “to be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28), it follows that God calls them to a special sharing in His love and in His power as Creator and Father, through their free and responsible cooperation in transmitting the gift of human life.<sup>17</sup> So, the human fatherhood-cum-motherhood is in fact the “revealing and reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God.”<sup>18</sup> Finally, taking the second Person of the Trinity for our argument, it is obvious that in Him God expressed his love for humanity in absolute *kenosis*. So also it is by every one of the family members living a life totally for the other, the whole family participates in the mystery of Christ, and thereby is drawn into the mystery of God.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, family spirituality, is both symbolic of, and participation in, the Trinitarian communion. This is precisely the real reason and basis for making marriage

truly a sacrament. That is why Pope John Paul II so emphatically said: "The primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of love."<sup>20</sup> Reflecting upon these words of the Pope rightly does a commentator remarks: "The family is thus an icon of the Trinity as much as it constitutes not only an epiphany but also a presence, or rather a real historical representation of this mystery".<sup>21</sup>

### **3.2 The Ecclesial Model**

The communion that is effected by Word-made-flesh is *real* communion, we saw above. For, there is neither confusion nor separation in it, but a real unity in distinction between humanity and divinity. In this divine human identity Jesus Christ is both turned toward the Father (in union with the Spirit) and towards humanity. By being the Word of God among us He is in a relationship of communion with God at the same time communicating His Trinitarian life to the world.<sup>22</sup>

It is precisely this communion that the Lord decided to share with us through his Church, which St Paul wondered as a 'great mystery of Christ and the Church' (Eph 5:32). von Balthasar, analysing this 'highest parable' for expressing God's encounter with humanity, points out some salient features of the conjugal communion:

□The marital union pre-supposes two persons distinct and separate even in their union.

□The physical union between them makes them 'one flesh' the external illustration of which is the child.

□It is the physical opposition of the sex in the bodily form that makes possible the union of the two spiritual persons.

□Wife and husband, with equal conjugal rights, are equally called and enabled to help their spouse to grow in the knowledge and love of God. They have equal claims upon mutual fidelity, and equal obligations to make this fidelity real.

□It is only in matters of domestic government she is expected, as a rule, to yield to husband. This does not mean that he can be authoritarian and autocratic. On the contrary he ought to love her as his own body (Eph 5:28), even as Christ loved the Church and gave his life for her (Eph 5:25).<sup>23</sup>

□But all matters of care and management of details of the household really belong naturally to the wife, because she is better fitted for these tasks than the husband. Thus it complementary relation that is expected of a good Christian family.

□Certainly woman's role is not purely passive. As modern biology has revealed woman's activity in the conception of a child and bringing it to birth is truly active. In her producing something new, she not only receives the semen but she unites the fecundity and bears a new creation. The embryonic make up of all the living beings is primarily feminine. Thus the conjugal relationship of the Christian couple conveys the unity in distinction of Christ and his bridal body the Church.

The same kind of communion is to be seen between Christ and His Church. The Church for von Balthasar is a community not in a sociological sense as if it is built on mere memory of Christ or as a social project based on his teaching, but it is rather in a theological sense because the Church is primarily brought about as a new community

by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and because it is an active sharing in *the* community of communities in the life of the triune God.<sup>24</sup> Connecting the two Pauline images of the Church namely, the Body and Bride. Von Balthasar writes of the Church in terms of “Body-Bride” of Christ. For, on the one hand the body image highlights the Eucharistic-sacramental mediation of the Trinitarian life poured out through Christ dying on the Cross into the Church. On the other hand the Bride image affirms the contra-distinct openness and response of love of the Church to Christ her bridegroom and head. This refers to the feminine element of the ‘supra-sexual’ relationship between Christ and the Church.

It is very significant that our Lord Jesus Christ, already during his ministry, presented himself as the bridegroom (Mk 2:19; Mt 25:1). On the part of the Apostles they saw the Church as his bride and spouse (Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17). St Paul goes one step further; he presents the relation of Christ to his Church as the model to be imitated by Christian spouses (Eph 5:23-27). Through the total giving of his body-and-blood, Jesus proved himself as the bridegroom of the Church in total fidelity and self-emptying love, making thereby the ‘New Covenant’. Quoting the scriptural passage: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife and the two will become one”, he takes the prevailing idea about relationship of husband and wife to be so sacred and so self-sacrificing that St Paul sees a mystery regarding the marital covenant as applying to the relationship of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32-33). It was through Christ the Bridegroom has gained the Church by paying an unbeatable price (*mohar*) for his Bride. This

price is his own blood and life (1 Cor 6:20; 7:21; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Heb 10:10,14). Further he sees the very same mystery as applicable to every Christian couple. This itself is a proof that the mystery that binds Christian couple is precisely the same one that binds Christ and Church.

The first Christians met together at homes to break bread in memory of Jesus (Acts 2:46). This was indeed an empowering encounter with the Risen Lord, who had become the bread broken for us.<sup>25</sup> In giving us the bread, Jesus was demanding from us a deeper communion with him. The loving sexual intimacy of the Christian couple is a very realistic celebration of the 'breaking of bread'. Jesus used bread as a symbol of himself. In sexual intimacy the couple give each other their real body. This is symbolic of their communion as persons, because our body is the sacrament of our person. This communion presupposes a lot of breaking of oneself, and leads to a greater self-giving. Thus the couple who draw spiritual nourishment by participating in the Eucharist, can also get a real nourishment by offering, like Jesus, their real body to each other with a sense of spiritual offering not merely for gratification, by really telling each other: "This is my body given up for you." Married life is a celebration of the Eucharist of Jesus. Then the family becomes the house church. In that far, the Christian family is the 'Church at home'. This is precisely what Pope John Paul II implies when he calls a Christian family a 'domestic Church':

This communion is rooted in the natural bonds of flesh and blood, and grows to its specifically human perfection with the establishment and maturing of the still deeper and richer bonds of the spirit... The Christian family is also called to experience a new and original communion

which confirms and perfects natural and human communion. In fact the grace of Jesus Christ, ...is by its nature and interior dynamism "a grace of brotherhood,".... The Holy Spirit, who is poured forth in the celebration of the sacraments, is the living source and inexhaustible sustenance of the supernatural communion that gathers believers and links them with Christ and with each other in the unity of the Church of God. The Christian family constitutes a *specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion*, and for this reason too it can and should be called "the domestic Church."<sup>26</sup>

So the Christian family is not a domestic Church merely in the sense of a basic home-unit of the universal administrative body called the Church. Rather it is in itself a realization of the ecclesial communion. There are in fact "many profound bonds linking the Church and the Christian family and establishing the family as a "Church in miniature" (*Ecclesia domestica*) in such a way that it becomes in its own way the family 'a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church'.<sup>27</sup> As such then, the Christian family shares in the triple ministry of Christ.

First and foremost, the sanctifying role of the Church-at-home becomes clear from the fact that it is grafted into the mystery of the Church in so far as the Mother Church gives birth to the Christian family and builds it up by putting into effect the saving mission which she has received from her Lord, by celebrating the sacraments, by proclaiming the new commandment of love, and encouraging and guiding into the service of love, self-giving and sacrificial love etc. In its turn, it is also called upon to communicate Christ's love to their brethren, thus becoming a saving community. "In this way, while the Christian family is a fruit and sign

of the supernatural fecundity of the Church, it stands also as a symbol, witness and participant of the Church's motherhood."<sup>28</sup> There is need for being evangelized constantly<sup>29</sup> and thereby more and more sanctified in its commitment and strengthened in the covenantal love. Daily prayer, scripture reading and celebration of para-liturgical ceremonies on the most important landmarks of a family life such as birth of a child, First Holy Communion, attainment of puberty, wedding, housewarming ceremony, death, etc.

In as much as it is an evangelized community, the Christian family becomes equally an evangelizing agent. In this the prophetic or teaching ministry of the domestic Church becomes clear too. The ministry of evangelization carried out by Christian parents is original and irreplaceable. It assumes the characteristics typical of family life, interweaving of love, faith and hope with simplicity, practicality and daily witness. The children must be educated for life in such a way that each one may fully perform his or her role according to the vocation received from God. Indeed, the family that is open to transcendent values, that serves one another with joy, that fulfils its duties with generous fidelity, and is aware of its daily sharing in the mystery of the glorious Cross of Christ, becomes the primary and most excellent seed-bed of vocations to a life of consecration to the Kingdom of God.

The parents' ministry of evangelization and catechesis ought to play a part in their children's lives also during adolescence and youth, when the children challenge or even reject the Christian faith received in earlier years. Just as in the Church the work of evangelization can never

be separated from the sufferings of the apostle, so in the Christian family parents must face with courage and great interior serenity the difficulties that their ministry of evangelization sometimes encounters in their own children.

It should be clearly born in mind that this service to the Gospel rendered by Christian family is essentially an ecclesial service. It has its place within the context of the whole Church as an evangelized and evangelizing community. In so far as the ministry of evangelization and catechesis of the Church of the home is rooted in and derives from the one mission of the Church and is ordained to the building up of the one Body of Christ, it must remain in intimate communion and collaborate responsibly with all the other evangelizing and catechetical activities of the parish and the diocesan Church.

Finally, the ruling/serving aspect Christ's ministry needs to be also carried out by the Christian family as part of its spirituality. Since this dimension comes much closer to the incarnational aspect of Jesus Christ, we are going to deal with it in the next section.

### **3. 3. The Incarnational Model**

The great event of Incarnation is basically the historicization of the great truth about the Christian understanding of God: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" (Jn 1:16). This God-made-man was so involved in the reality of the world that he shared in all the joys and sufferings of this world so authentically that he got entangled with the politics of the unjust leaders even to the extent of giving his life and finally realized the humanity through his Resurrection. So if a Christian family is to be really striving after the path of the Master then it must

accept the work of transformation of the world as its duty so that it grow into the plan of God and even to participate in world's struggles toward a fuller humanity in and through the Jesus' model of involvement. Actually the true meaning of salvation history is the struggle of this world groaning in travail (Rom 8:22) towards the ultimate explanation or the authentic humanization.

Already the Vat. II urged the lay faithful not to create a "false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other" but to get involved in all their earthly activities, their humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises by gathering them into one vital synthesis with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory."<sup>30</sup> It even went to the extent of declaring that the "Christian who neglects his temporal duties, neglects his duties toward his neighbour and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation."<sup>31</sup> It even went a step ahead and said that there are some areas which lay faithful alone can do the mission of the Church: "Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where *only* through them can it become the salt of the earth."<sup>32</sup>

This is precisely what may be named as the incarnating role of the Christian lay faithful, a privilege which is theirs alone. Though the whole Church is to play this role, yet it is specific responsibility of the laity to play it. For existentially it is only the lay faithful that are really inserted, as a stable form of life, into all the aspects of human life and work in the world, while they are off limits

to other states of life.<sup>33</sup> Thus in the clergy the mystery of the Church and its mission is symbolised and realized through their *transcendent-mediating* role, while the religious symbolise and realize the *transcendent-eschatological* dimension of the mystery of the Church. It is only in and through role of the lay people that the *incarnating-recapitulating* mission of the Church is symbolised and realized".<sup>34</sup>

Certainly the whole Church is sharing in this secular dimension of the Lord's incarnation. It is true that the clergy can at times be engaged in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But they are "especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry". So also, the specific call of the religious is to "give splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes." But "what specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature... They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven."<sup>35</sup> Thus the laity, by their very vocation, are to "seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God". That is why I think that the incarnating mission is "properly and particularly" theirs.

This general call to laity is applicable more specifically to the family, as pointed out by the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II:

The social and political role is included in the kingly mission of service in which Christian couples share by virtue of the sacrament of marriage, and they receive both a command which they cannot ignore and a grace which sustains and stimulates them.

The Christian family is thus called upon to offer everyone a witness of generous and disinterested dedication to social matters, through a "preferential option" for the poor and disadvantaged. Therefore, advancing in its following of the Lord by special love for all the poor, it must have special concern for the hungry, the poor, the old, the sick, drug victims and those who have no family.<sup>36</sup>

#### **4. Some Practical Hints**

To cultivate this Trinitarian model of spirituality, what needs to be done is nothing peculiar or spectacular. But everything that the family does need to be done with a spiritual dimension. That is all. It is the spiritual dimension of all that the family does that makes it authentically Christian family. The most important ingredient of the spiritual dimension is the love flowing between family members. Where genuine love is, we always find God because God is love." God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in union with God and God lives in union with him" (1 Jn 4:16b).

A singular loving gesture of God ignited the very existence of the Universe. From God's deep love streams all created reality, past, present and future. The artistic masterpiece of God's creation is, of course, the human person. God did not intend that the human person live alone, but as one immersed in the nourishing moments of communal experience. Life itself begins in a sexual expression of love and develops out of the continuing love

within the family as well as the love pulsing through the wider community. Into each heart God places a profound hunger for the experience of being loved and loving others. This hunger can only be satisfied by God's total and all-encompassing love, but snippets of God's love are mirrored or experienced within the daily moments of human respect, care, consideration and concern.<sup>37</sup>

So, Family spirituality is best thought of as family *life* itself. It includes everything alive in the family. It starts with the spirituality of intimacy in family relationship. The spousal relationship, the parent-child relationship, the siblings relationship are but different ways of living out the Trinitarian communion in privacy, in responsibility, in enjoyment, in sacrifice. These relationships are all arising out of intimacy rather than of authority. The kernel of family spirituality is in living out these intimacies. To put it differently, involvement and enjoyment in family intimacies are indispensable expressions of the family spiritual life.<sup>38</sup> The sexual intimacy of humans is not merely like that of animals meant directly and exclusively for production. In so far as the husband and wife are both image of God, they can love each other as persons. If they avail themselves of sexual intimacy as a sign of their mutual love it does have meaning, and therefore is sacred. Further, in so far as the human family mirrors faintly though reflection of the Triune God, conjugal sexual communion is part of the sacramentality of marriage. They must partake of the sacrament mutually and relax themselves in a mutual give and take. In fact as the couple grow older and more mature, sexual intimacy becomes less and less an impulsive act, more and more a freely chosen response. It becomes less

and less a means of self-satisfaction, even when mutually engaged. Rather it becomes more and more the symbol of self-denying and self-surrender and a means of reconciliation and healing.

The family can awaken itself to God's loving presence through prayer, both individual and communal, through shared activities, both religious and human, and through the countless efforts given to the care and support of each other. The family is like a cell in a larger living body. In the Church the family is rightly described as a domestic church, a church of the home, a household of faith. No family acts are too small, no words are too brief, for them all to be sacred or holy. From the stirring of the first family member with the sun rising to light a new day until the last light or candle is extinguished, the spiritual life of the family unfolds.

The Kingdom of God itself comes to be in families whenever two or three loving people connect and live together in a family. While on the surface most of what happens in the family may appear utterly worldly and temporal, actually every simple gesture of love in the family is virtuous in the eyes of God. For what alone lasts is love. Only love conquers death, only love can give birth to and energize all that is most sacred in creation, life itself. (1 Cor 13:8-10). It is the only commandment that our Master has given newly and as the only identification mark for being known as his disciples (Jn 13:34-35).

Viewed from this standpoint then, spirituality of the Christian family prospers in the caring relationships between the couples, first and foremost, and next, between the parents and children and between siblings and other

members of this family and the members of the extended family, like the in-laws and cousins and nieces and nephews. The main characteristics of the family love is that it demands unconditional acceptance of each person in the family, giving equal respect and dignity to every person for the simple reason that each one is an image and likeness of God, and recognition of the fact that each one has a special role to play in the overall plan of God.

Not infrequently families adopt such devotional practices as visits to shrines, and pilgrimages or at least spend some time in grottoes, adoration chapels, etc., to pray and thereby manifest their extra measure of Christian spirituality. It is not bad practice. But they must lead them to live an authentic religion rather than distracting them from practicing the real love among themselves and others. It is not the cult of some lifeless idol that will give us a sure entry into the kingdom of God that has been prepared from the beginning of the Creation, but the service of living icons (Mt 25:34-46). He knows that we are corporeal in nature and so we need to express the depth of our love to Him only through visible signs and symbols. Hence He himself provides us with the most appropriate icon: our neighbour in need, who is the sacrament of the real presence of the Risen Lord. This real presence is available first and foremost at home.

So it is imperative that children are trained to find God in their homes the living statues of Jesus and Mary, and the parents in turn spend quality time together among themselves as well with the children. They may not find him anywhere else. "Holiness is not something static. It is a living and loving relation to God."<sup>39</sup> Only persons can

enter into a living and loving relations at home that can really be authentic followers of Christ. The more Christians pray in their homes, the more will their whole life be pervaded by the Spirit of Jesus. Instead if they give primacy to grottoes, shrines, churches, adoration chapels, pilgrim centres, etc., as places for prayer, they may tend to come away from them leaving God and his concerns behind and become merely Sunday Catholics.<sup>40</sup> In fact when Vat. II identified family as the 'domestic sanctuary' of the Church, it means precisely the same meaning. The family "appears as the domestic sanctuary of the Church by reason of the mutual affection of its members and the prayer that they offer to God in common."<sup>41</sup>

But it is a plain truth that it is really an 'ideal' to convert our families into 'domestic sanctuary', in the sense mentioned above. It is precisely in striving after the ideal that the genuine spirituality of Christian family lies. Jesus' glorification is intimately connected with his passion, crucifixion and death. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). In fact this path of suffering and cross is the 'passage' and the core of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. If the husband and wife wish to be the source of real happiness to each other and to their children, they have to share in the passion and death of Jesus. Jesus who has been born in a family and brought up in a family and spent the major portion of his preparation for public ministry in the family knew the intensity of pain and agony parents go through in birth and nurturing their children. That is why, just before he leaves his disciples and gets his mind set for taking up the cross, he likens himself to

be a mother in travail. He openly tells his intimate disciples that his passion and death is going to be far greater than the pain and agony an ordinary mother (Jn 16:21). So, if we really to be authentic disciples of Jesus our Master, the Christian parents must be convinced of this basic truth about the success of happiness in their family life: unless they are ready to bear the cross of one another happily they cannot achieve joy and happiness in their family life. To put it in the words of a profound thinker of the Indian Church:

This needs to be said as loudly as possible. We are slowly becoming more and more uncomfortable with the Cross. We live in a society that gives a great importance to pleasure and comfort, glamour and show, cosmetics and decorations. Appearances are more important than reality. This culture has invaded our families.

To corroborate his point of view, the author of the above citation narrates a small but incisive incident. Once, a young man was referred to the author by his parish priest. After listening to him for almost an hour, he was convinced that his parents were very much responsible for his problematic frame of mind. So he felt he could not effectively help the young man without bringing his parents into the picture. So when he told him: "Son let's go home" the young man's response was immediate: "I have a very comfortable house, but I do not have a home."<sup>42</sup> So, he concludes that "this is the tragic situation of many of our traditionally pious and practising Catholics. It is not going to be easy for our married people to die to themselves".<sup>43</sup>

Unless there is a deep faith in the fact that the same Lord who suffered and died is the Risen, and that He is with us even now, there is guarantee to us the success of

happiness in bearing today's crosses of loving one another. Through their faith they discover that in their marriage there are three partners. The Risen Lord now walks with them, and he will be their companion all through their journey. The two will recognize him slowly, provided they believe what he said: a person who needs their love and concern is the sacrament of the Risen Lord (Mt 25:34–46). The Christian spouses mediate for each other the abiding presence of Jesus. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus were sad and discouraged. They even tried to discourage Jesus (Lk 24:29). The moment they realized that the stranger was Jesus himself their sorrow turned to joy, as Jesus had promised (Jn 16:20).<sup>44</sup>

As regards the details of the incarnational involvement of the family, it may be enough to recall the words of Vat. II and say that a family may be said to do its incarnational role “if it provides active hospitality, and promotes justice and other good works for the service of all the brethren in need” such as “the adoption of abandoned infants, hospitality to strangers, assistance in the operation of schools, helpful advice and material assistance for adolescents, help to engaged couples in preparing themselves better for marriage, catechetical work, support of married couples and families involved in material and moral crises, help for the aged not only by providing them with the necessities of life but also by obtaining for them a fair share of the benefits of an expanding economy”<sup>45</sup>.

True, the above-mentioned involvement is easy for the simple reason the members of family are all varied in taste, perception, background, convictions, motivations and aspirations. Each person is unique. Each one is born with

particular permutation and combination of chromosomes. The upbringing varies from child to child for the simple reason whether the child is first or second in order of birth. The environmental factors like the type and place of work of parents, the kind of school education a child gets, the sort of friends and company one acquires during the infancy and adolescence also contribute to the variation of personality in a family. Even among the couples/parents there is bound to be conflicts with one another. Their respective family-background which determined their birth, upbringing, their training, temperaments, perception, emotional makeup vary to such an extent that it is impossible to come to a real communion unless they are ready to sacrifice their ego and are constantly striving after reconciliation and communion. To corroborate it with the words of Pope John Paul II:

Family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires, in fact, a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wound its own communion: hence there arise the many and varied forms of division in family life. But, at the same time, every family is called by the God of peace to have the joyous and renewing experience of "reconciliation," that is, communion re-established, unity restored.<sup>46</sup>

In a word, then, the incarnational dimension of family spirituality consists in total involvement of the family in all aspects of temporal and the secular, with a Christic perspective and experience of communion and unselfish love for one another, facing the challenges boldly and

renewing the self-sacrificing love with the hope of a share in the glory of the Risen Lord.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing it is obvious that Christian family is far more different than a natural fulfilment of desires and instincts between spouses and of rearing up their children, as natural outcome of their conjugal union.

The difference between two may easily be explained with the help of a small parable: There are two stone masons, each doing the same job.<sup>47</sup> The first, a melancholy man, was asked what he was doing. Immediately his retort was: "Don't you see, I am laying stones. Day after day I just handle stones and mortar. No difference from one day to the next. I lay stones, I get paid." Obviously his life was a tedious and boring one. His fellow-worker just then carrying the next stone and laying it upon the others he'd laid. He was asked the same question. Immediately his eyes brightened. With a great gusto in his voice he exclaimed: "I'm building a cathedral!"

Similar is the difference between the families which go through the tedious work of parenting and those which live a spirituality of Christian family with the vision of the kingdom of God. To the extent that I can see the cleaning up, the doing chores, the driving children around, the to-do lists, the time for family and in-laws, and so on, as the stones for building up the God's Reign, it is easy to have a spirituality of family life. It may be just to unfold one diaper at a time, one act of forgiveness at a time, one chore at a time, one stressful day of balancing work and family at a time. This is the base level of Christian spirituality.

Over and above it, if the spouses/parents get themselves rooted ever deeper in the life of Christ, and do the ordinary things of life with an extraordinary love for Christ and serving the living icons of Christ, they certainly grow a higher level in their spirituality. At this level, they will get the necessary boost to energize their flagging spirit, if they not only participate in the sacramental life of the Church, but are also involved in daily prayer, scripture-reading.

A still higher level of spirituality would have been achieved in that family which is interested and involved in the socio-political issues and are committed to the betterment of the world and dare to contribute their mite to the building up of a just society and the upkeep of the bio-health of the earth.

The spiritual life of the Christian family is indeed a journey, started on the wedding day. It is an uphill journey with many pitfall and slow progress towards, calling for a great deal of effort and determination. If only we are committed to the covenantal love, and rely on the sacramental life of the Church, and involved in the serving the living icons of Christ in our own vicinity, we are sure to get a definite progress, though slow, from the authentic to the more authentic, from being *the already* to the *not yet*. This principle of graduality which was first enunciated in *Familiaris Consortio* has be reaffirmed by the III Extraordinary Synod too:

In the Christian life, the reception of Baptism brings the believer into the Church through the *domestic church*, namely, the family; thus beginning "a dynamic process [which] develops, one which advances *gradually with the*

progressive integration of the gifts of God” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 9), in an ongoing conversion to a love that saves us from sin and gives us fullness of life.<sup>48</sup>

“No mission is easy; but the struggles that make its execution difficult are also what make the mission glorious. And the glory is all God’s. And the joy that emerges, sometimes only in retrospect, is all ours”<sup>49</sup>.

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### **Endtnotes**

<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, 48 and 49, henceforth referred to as *FC*.

<sup>2</sup> The Decree on the Apostolate Of The Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 11, Henceforth referred to as *AA*.

<sup>3</sup>The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no 11, Henceforth referred to as *LG*.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A. Pushparajan, “Problems of Family Life Today”, in *Third Millennium*, Rajkot, XVII:3, 2014 July-September, pp.59-85.

<sup>5</sup> “Relatio Synodi” of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (5-19 October 2014), the English text officially released in the *Bolletino*, dated 18.10.2014. Here afterwards this will be referred to as *Relatio Synodi*. (<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/18/0770/03044.html>).

<sup>6</sup>*Relatio Synodi*, 2

<sup>7</sup> AS. Hornby, *New Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, Seventh Edition, p.261.

<sup>8</sup>“Challenges To Family Life: A Theological And Pastoral Analysis,” Unpublished Report of XVI Colloquium of Bishops And Theologians In India, NBCLC, Bangalore, July 7–10, 2014.

<sup>9</sup><http://spirituality4now.blogspot.in/2010/02/meaning-of-spirituality.html>, accessed on 17th December 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Second Vatican Council, The Declaration on the Church's Relation with other religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

<sup>11</sup>*Lumen Gentium*, 40.

<sup>12</sup>Leonard Doohan, *The Lay Centered Church: Theology and Spirituality*, Minnesota: Winston Press, 1984, pp. 103 ff.

<sup>13</sup> The Pontifical Council for Laity has published a Directory of nearly 150 ecclesial communities. It will be worthwhile to have even a cursory glance at the description of the various ecclesial groups. For a critical account of six select groups Cf. A. Pushparajan, "Spirituality of the Laity and New Initiatives" in *Dhyana: Journal of Religion and Spirituality*, 7/1 (2007), pp.95-111.

<sup>14</sup>Brendan Leahy, *The Marian profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, New York: New City Press, 2000 pp. 43-45.

<sup>15</sup> Pope Pius XII, "To The Newly Married" 19 June 1940, as quoted in John Kulandai, *The Perfect Triangle Towards the Spirituality of the Indian Family*, Tiruchirappalli : St. Paul's Seminary Publications, 1995,pp. 250-251

<sup>16</sup>John Kulandai, 251

<sup>17</sup>*FC*, 28.

<sup>18</sup>*FC*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> John Kulandai, p. 256.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, Letter to the Families for the 1994 Year of Family, 2 Feb. 1994, 6.

<sup>21</sup> D. Tettamanzi, "Communion of Peron in the Family derives from the Trinitarian Mystery (Reflection on Pope John Paul's II Letter to Families, in *L' Osservatore Romano* (English Edition) 20, July 1994 pp.6-7, as quoted by John Kulandai, foot no. 172, in p. 249.

<sup>22</sup>Brendan Leahy, *The Marian profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, New York: New City Press, 2000, pp.50-51.

<sup>23</sup> Brendan Leahy, *op.cit.*, pp. 52- 53

<sup>24</sup> Brendan Leahy, *op.cit.* p.59

<sup>25</sup> Subhash Anand, "In God's Image: The Biblical view of the Family" in *Third Millennium*, XVII/3 July-September, (2014), p.29.

<sup>26</sup>*FC*, 21.

<sup>27</sup>*FC*, 49.

<sup>28</sup>FC, 49.

<sup>29</sup>FC, 51.

<sup>30</sup>*Gaudium et Spes*, 43.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>LG, 33

<sup>33</sup> Peter C Phan, "Possibility of a Lay Spirituality: A Re-examination of some Theological Presuppositions" in *Communio* 10 (Winter) 1983, p 386, as quoted by John Kulandai, op.cit p. 268.

<sup>34</sup> Peter C Phan, "Possibility of a Lay Spirituality: A Re-examination of some Theological Presuppositions" in *Communio* 10 (Winter) 1983, p. 384, as quoted by John Kulandai, op.cit p. 269 footnote No.259.

<sup>35</sup>LG, 31.

<sup>36</sup>FC, 47.

<sup>37</sup>[http://www.bethanyfamilyinstitute.com/family\\_spirituality.htm](http://www.bethanyfamilyinstitute.com/family_spirituality.htm), accessed on 19 Nov. 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Virginia Sullivan Finn, *Pilgrims in the World :A Lay Spirituality*, New York : Paulist Press, 1990, pp.77-92, as quoted by John Kulanadai, p.257.

<sup>39</sup>Subhash Anand. "In God's Image: The Biblical View of the Family", *Third Millennium*, 17/3 (July-September 2014), p. 32 (Footnote no.57).

<sup>40</sup>Subhash Anand, Art.cit., p. 20.

<sup>41</sup>AA, 11.

<sup>42</sup>Subhash Anand, p.33, Footnote no 74.

<sup>43</sup>Subhash Anand, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup>Subhash Anand, p.26.

<sup>45</sup>AA, 11.

<sup>46</sup>FC, 21.

<sup>47</sup>Tim Muldoon, "Spirituality of Family Life" <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/5440/spirituality-of-family-life/>

<sup>48</sup> *Relatio Synodi*, 13. Emphasis added.

<sup>49</sup>Tim Muldoon, " Spirituality of Family Life", opp.cit.