

Jeev♥tsav! *To Celebrate Life!*

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The Joys of Family Life

Fr. Ashwin Castellino

Jesus in his word said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name I am there among them". A family begins as a communion of a man and woman. When husband and wife are united in the name of Christ this ecclesial communion comes into existence. Gradually, this communion expands with children who are the very fruits of this communion. It is truth that forms the basis of family life. It is love that binds the couple and other members of the family together. God is love and Christ is the incarnate expression of God's love. Let me enumerate some of the ways we can experience the joys of family life by our Pro-life attitudes.

a) **Sharing** what one is and what one has, this is what Christ did. This is what husband and wife are supposed to do to build a family. Different degrees of sharing bring the family together. It will be sharing of ideas, opinions and feelings where every member feels accepted and listened to with a spirit of openness and trust.

b) **Foot washing leadership**: The Pauline saying that "the husband is the head of the wife" loses its sting and negativity when the foot washing leadership of the kingdom is insisted on. When there is mutual respect and efforts are made for mutual growth then there will not be any authoritarian anti kingdom leadership. When the husband or wife falls ill and the spouses spend hours in taking care of the sick person, this type of leadership becomes very obvious. In short, foot washing leadership is for the growth of others, not for satisfying one's own ego.

c) **Forgiveness**: This is an important criterion of love in God's kingdom. The Lord's prayer teaches us that when one is able to forgive another by understanding and giving them opportunity and avenues to change, this leads to growth not only in the individual but also in the relationship of family life. Forgiveness is a must to maintain happy family relationships.

d) **Special concern for the needy**: An aging parent, newly born children, mentally or physically challenged family members and the like, need special care and concern. The family, in a sense is the natural unit for Christ's teaching to have special care for the poor and marginalized. When we are able to serve others in need with joy, we become an example to those around us. This calls for much sensitivity, patience and kindness towards family members, and the fruits and blessings are innumerable.

e) **Equality:** is a kingdom value which is best exemplified in the family. The underlying law of family equality is the following: "To each person according to his or her need and from each person according to his or her capacity". When there is equality, every member feels valued, cared for and at home in the family structure.

The joys of family life do not mean there will be no pain or suffering but amidst any crises there is a reason to hope to the love and support that is shown to each other in the family. I would like to quote what Pope Francis says about the family "No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love" I pray that our families constantly grow and be transformed into the Holy Family of Nazareth.

The Gift of Fatherhood

By Dr. Jeanette Pinto



It is a joy to see a married couple celebrate their Silver, Ruby or Golden Wedding Anniversary, it reminds one of how blessed their family has been through their loving presence. Imagine being faithful to each other for very many years, it certainly calls for celebration. Truly Marriage is a strong bond that ties two individuals and wraps them in the warmth of social, emotional, legal and even physical bonding. Society has sadly been suffering from an epidemic of broken families and especially fatherlessness. Fatherhood is a gift. The statistics of children in advanced countries living without a biological, adoptive or step father in the home is stunning and unbelievable. One wonders, where did all that love disappear?

Our world needs fathers. "The family is the community in which from childhood one can learn moral values, begin to honour God and make good use of freedom." (CCC 2207) We all live in a fallen world but that does not mean that mother or father should down play their important God given role. In his apostolic letter announcing the Year of St. Joseph, *Patris Corde*, Pope Francis affirms, "Our world today needs fathers...Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice." A father is called to lead his children to God the Father, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." (Eph 3:15)

St. Joseph was a simple man of silent witness. God entrusted to him the duty to protect and defend the Holy Family, which was really the very first Church. He was humble and obedient to God's plan. He listened to God and then made his life one of service and sacrifice to Jesus and Mary. St. Joseph's example should be an inspiration to our worldly fathers. Fathers protect their families through countless selfless acts that often go

unnoticed and sometimes unrecognized. So let them never underestimate the power of their presence in the lives of their families.

Changing times and cultural shifts bring considerable new challenges, but fundamental principles of parenting remain the same. For Catholic fathers, the practice of faith is not the only thing, but it's the basis of everything for bearing fruit in their children's lives. Raising children to become mature, responsible, faithful adults is the whole point of Catholic fatherhood. This really begins with making the family a "domestic church", and "a community of grace and prayer" (CCC, 1666) Most grand-dads wish they had spent more time with their children. Work of course takes precedence to keep the home fires burning, and the burdens of travel and work to support the family sometimes negatively impacts family life. Nevertheless, being an attentive devoted husband and father is Job number ONE, and it might require pushing back on career demands, and making good choices.

Fathers who abandon their children and mothers who take their children away from their fathers have no idea of the price the children are going to pay. Children without fathers in the home are almost twice as likely to be hyperactive as children in homes with both parents. Studies have shown that suicides, runaways and homeless children grew up in fatherless homes. Also, it has been observed that children with behaviour disorders, of high school drop outs, of juveniles in state operated institutions and youths in prison grew up in homes without a father. Indeed, the most reliable predictor of crime is not poverty, it is not race, it is growing up without a dad.

The experience of fatherhood isn't something that can be easily put into words. It's wonderful. It's terrifying. It's a job that begins with conception and goes on until the day you die. Patience is a virtue that fathers must cultivate. It is the responsibility of fathers to guide the children to holiness. Fathers must be Pro-life, they must show respect for their wives, take on household and other tasks without complaint and also serve parish and community needs when possible. It transforms your relationships with everything else in your life: your spouse your work, your own parents and children. Catholic fatherhood brings immense joys, to see the growth of their children into young men and women which is a great satisfaction.

St. Joseph has not changed; what he was in the New Testament he has remained through all Christian history: the earthly father of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the chaste and loving husband of the Virgin Mary, an iconic witness to the dignity of work, and an effective guardian of the Church throughout the world. Among the many depictions St Joseph is portrayed as a man who sorts problems in a radical way. He finds solutions by being both brave and prudent.

In conclusion let me quote Stratford Caldecott a Catholic writer who said, "In St Joseph, justice is combined with tenderness, strength and decisiveness with flexibility and openness to the will of God." Our dear fathers could take a page out of this, and believe that their role of fatherhood is truly a gift from God.

Compassionate Caring for the Elderly

Dr. Armida Fernandez



Compassionate caring for the Elderly, is what the world is in great need of today. Compassion is not just "sympathetic pity or concern for the sufferings and misfortune of others". To me, it is more empathy, feeling the sufferings of others which moves us to do action. It is not just addressing the needs and problems of the elders but reaching out with empathy, understanding their problems, feeling for them as though we were walking in their shoes.

Ageing is a continuous, irreversible, universal process, which starts from conception till the death of an individual. Technological advances in medicine have made it possible to increase the lifespan of people. This has resulted in increased survival rates. Many elderly people live both physically and mentally healthy, and may continue to work. We need to understand the problems of the elderly to understand their needs so that we can care for them.

Social: Indian society has undergone rapid transformation under the impact of industrialization, urbanization, technological change, education and globalization. Consequently, the deeply rooted traditional values and institutions, once a hallmark of the Indian family, are in the process of erosion and adaptation, resulting in the weakening of intergenerational ties. Today, nuclear families are on the rise, large number of children migrate to other countries and parents are left alone to fend for themselves. In the West there are retirement homes for the senior citizens that offer comfortable living and care.

Medical: These include nutritional, medical, psychological and mental issues. As one grows older malnutrition is common, which could be obesity or under nutrition. They also suffer from dual medical problems, both communicable as well as non-communicable diseases. There is the impairment of special sensory functions like diminished vision and loss of hearing. A decline in immunity as well as age-related physiologic changes leads to infections in the elderly, as also diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes, chronic kidney and lung disease, neurological disease and cancer. Most of the elderly succumb to these diseases.

Psychological: problems and mental illness are frequent and often not treated as it is accepted to be a part of growing old. Depression is common and Dementia and Alzheimer's are on the rise. As one grows older either because of instability, poor vision or Parkinsonism, there is a tendency to fall. An unattended fractured hip can incapacitate one for life. The real challenge for the elderly and the family is when any of these conditions restrict movement and confines the person to a life in bed.

Financial: This is a major issue in our country especially rural India. The Indian tradition of an extended or joint family was a good solution but this is changing. A major illness can exhaust savings and worsen the situation. This problem increases the anxiety and other mental issues of the elderly.

Social Activities: People must understand that the elderly need to have a purpose to live. They should have activities and social interactions which is a key factor in mood and mental health. Loneliness can lead to increased depression. Other factors in maintaining a healthy lifestyle are regular exercise and nutrition.

Other problems: The elderly is also prone to abuse in their families or in institutional settings. This includes physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, and even sexual abuse.

Thus, caring for the elderly and showing compassion starts from the home. These values must be taught to children by their parents who demonstrate such care to the elders in the family. It should also be taught in our schools. When adult children move away, we as a society and community must reach out to the elderly to help them lead a life worth living.

Sharing our experience: Some years ago, a few seniors at St. Andrew's parish decided to reach out to our senior citizens, especially those who were lonely and housebound. We formed an organization called Connect and Care. The vision was to create a caring community committed to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable.

With the support of the Church, we had over 40 volunteers who underwent training sessions by professionals on problems of the elderly; communication, listening skills, confidentiality, Do's and Don'ts. The don'ts particularly emphasized not to get involved in family, finance and legal issues. The Volunteers worked in groups with one leader of the Core committee and assigned families in a locality close to them.

Next, each family was personally contacted to explain our objectives and those willing were enrolled. It was an enriching experience for all. We enrolled around 80 elders. We visited them once a fortnight, listening to them, playing games, reading, running small errands, accompanying them to the hospital and admitting them etc. We organized a

Christmas event for them at the seaside, ensured that the house bound had transport and volunteers to look after them. Most of the elders looked forward to our visits and were grateful for the services we offered them. Unfortunately, with the Covid pandemic and the lockdown, the visits were stopped and we now can only keep in touch by phone. Hopefully we can restart once the situation improves.

Care and respect for the elders is also part of our Christian upbringing. It helps develop a Pro-life attitude and ensures that the elderly is well and happy. We need to get together, organize our communities, and neighbourhoods, and collectively touch the lives of our elderly brethren by assessing their needs, providing resources, and be life-giving. The world will be a better place when we show compassionate caring for our elders and extend it to the other members of society.



Adoption is a Gift.

By Lenny Soares

"If you want to change the world, go home and love your family". These provoking words by Saint Mother Theresa couldn't be truer for our modern world today; a world where millions of children live deranged and displaced, without an opportunity live in a home.

More than two decades ago, struck by an inspirational sentence, to ***'do small things with great love'*** the **Love-Joy-Hope (LJH) Foundation** was founded. It is a non-profit organization, works to help the marginalized, those stricken under the tyranny of poverty and injustice and those who've lost hope for a better world. A large part of our portfolio, and one closest to our heart involves caring for children, offering them the security of a home and ensuring that their full potential is reached via education and values. LJH strongly believes that the change we desire for this world begins at home; where the intrinsic value of each child is welcomed, fostered and nurtured.

Adoption – A Gift.

For many hopeful parents, facing the cavernous ache of infertility or miscarriage can be very crippling. Statistics continue to reveal perils like divorce and separation, depression and disintegration resulting from broken dreams. Yet very few take a step forward towards a wonderful solution called **Adoption**.

On the other hand, it is no secret that adoption has completely escaped the attention of our educators. It is not part of any curriculum. There are no festivals dedicated to it nor is it

enshrined in any political party's manifesto. The very little we know is superficially fed through mainstream entertainment and media.

Adoption is so much more than moving a child out of poverty. It is giving a child a home and a purpose in life. When handled with diligence, adoption can become an opportunity for empowerment for both child and family and ultimately the world. As Mother Theresa pointed out, "***The ocean would be less of one drop, without our involvement***".

The Five Key Benefits of Adoption

Love: When you adopt, you open your arms and a home to a child creating an emotional bond. Research proves that children grow more confidently in homes that offer emotional and mental stability.

Resources: Underprivileged children do not have access to resources, threatening their future. As an adoptive parent, you are investing into everything that will enable them to positively thrive.

Education: Every child deserves the right to education to reach their potential. Adoption offers children the opportunity to dream and accomplish their goals

Social Relationships: Children learn to communicate better and establish stable relationships when they know they are valued and loved. This will reverse societal norms of abuse and ensure safer societies.

Growth: A child who is welcomed into a family where love, joy and hope are nurtured creates room and opportunity for the entire family to grow and unify.

Genuine faith works through love (Gal. 5:6) and faith is always orphan-protecting. Jesus himself—adopted by the righteous Joseph—identifies himself with the "least of these my brothers" (Matt. 25:40) We are called to do the same. As we welcome children into our homes, we can show them what it means to belong to a God who welcomes the fatherless.

So, let's be ambassadors of the One who loves little children. Let's imitate His kindness. Let's plug into His vision. Remember, our greatest joy may be realized not by something we did but by who we offered the opportunity ***'to change the world'***.



Our Responsibilities in Climate Change.

Desiree Lobo

It is indeed heartening to know that Pope Francis has often emphasized on the Church's responsibility towards **Climate Change**. How can we as individuals and families of the Catholic Church contribute in saving our planet and its environment, and thereby slow down the process of Global Warming? What are our family responsibilities?

John Paul II sounded the alarm bell that an ecological crisis was on the cusp of engulfing the world. He lamented that there was widespread destruction of the environment. He said that world peace can be reached not by arms, conflict and injustice but by respect for the environment and nature. Although he did not mention Climate Change, it was clear viz: Industrial waste, burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, use of certain types of herbicides and coolants, all of which are harmful to the atmosphere and climate. The Catholic Church today is working to increase this awareness; it strives to educate individuals, schools, colleges, universities and other Catholic institutions on how to reduce energy, live more sustainably and support the government on curbing carbon emission.

The Church has focused on four principles regarding climate change.

1. Catholics have the duty and responsibility to prevent potential dangers in the face of scientific evidence.
2. We should realize that inaction and inadequate response to climate change will place an even greater burden on the poor people.
3. All countries should be responsible for the future of our planet which encompasses all peoples, habitats, the melting of ice glaciers, destruction of rain forests, and pollution of water. This wonton destruction can impact places elsewhere causing a domino effect.
4. We should maintain solidarity with the poor who do not have the resources to handle these problems.

Pope Francis has often spoken of various crises namely the Covid 19 pandemic, Climate Change and economic difficulties. Each one of us should play an important part in our collective response to the threat of climate change and the degradation of our common home. The Papal document called "Laudato si" focuses on this issue namely on "Care for our common home". He decried environmental destruction and stressed the need to take measures. He also stated that climate change was largely man made. This letter was issued in the Climate conference in Paris.

Summarily, these are the main messages of Laudato si? It stresses on the poor who are disproportionately affected by the climate change. Less is more! Catholic social teaching should now include teaching on the Environment. Discussions on ecology can now be grounded in the Bible and Church tradition. Everything is connected including the economy. Scientific research on environment is to be praised. There should be Global dialogue and solidarity for 'A change of heart is needed'.

Can we as members of society and our community play an important part in conserving the environment and preventing global warming? Yes, we can. How? We can plant vegetables and herbs in our kitchen garden, be it a small patch. Care for birds and animals by keeping food and water for them. We can clean the street or footpaths surrounding our homes or undertake a beach cleaning campaign, cut down on packaged foods and bottled water by carrying our own flasks and food containers.

We can start an indoor compost pit where we gather wet waste; eat local produce thereby helping local farmers. Replace plastic bags and containers with cloth bags and use our stainless-steel containers. Use, family sized packs to avoid using extra packs. For travel, opt for a car pool, use public transport, cycle or walk. Save water by using a bucket instead of the shower, do not let the water run from taps, repair leaks. Switch off all electronic devices from the mains, promote organizations which follow eco-friendly practices. Select more plant-based food and diets.

Connect main devices in the home to energy efficient ones. Use the same decorations for the Christmas tree instead of buying new ones and avoid plastic decorations. Use eco-friendly elements for the crib. Wrap gifts with recycled paper or avoid wrapping gifts. Fix things instead of replacing them with new ones. Avoid receipts and bills and go for e-statements and bills. Look after the poor by giving generously. Try using cloth napkins instead of paper tissues.

As Catholics we are duty bound to preserve God's creation and our planet. Let us therefore be pro-active and contribute in whatever way we can to preserve our beautiful God given home.



A Pro-Life Testimony : Prolife Families become stronger in Crisis

Melissa Cardoz

In today's times being prolife is a very big challenge. We from the beginning of our marriage decided that we would keep ourselves open to God's will for our family and accept the children the Lord blessed us with. We are indeed blessed with five wonderful children.

Our strength to follow God's will and our calling comes from our daily prayer time as a family when all of us despite our busy schedules recite the rosary together on our bended knees. We also have a time of discussing our daily experiences of Our Lord. This time of family prayer vitalizes us to do all we have to do during the day.

When our first son was born I had to give up my promising school job as a teacher which I enjoyed so much as our son would not consume anything but wait for me to nurse him when I returned home from school. Thus I gladly gave up my job as we trusted wholly in God's plan for us.

When we were expecting our fifth child we got to know that there was a problem with our baby's legs. Doctor advised us to go in for an abortion. We decided strongly against it and with total faith visited Our Lady at the Mount and prayed fervently. Our daughter had to wear the brace shoes for some time and today walks perfectly and is happily running all over the place. She is a live wire and very intelligent.

We have a decoration business which was doing very well till the pandemic hit us all. At this time we with the help of mummy began supplying food as a small business venture to help us manage our household expenses and it has grown leaps and bounds with God's grace. We know that when we trust in Him, He never fails us.

We as a family rather than face the pandemic with fear looked at it as an opportunity to reach out to others. We did reach out to people who had Covid in our small simple way to give them relief at such a trying time. We placed ourselves and our family in the Lord's hand and prayed daily for the Lord to cover us with his protection as we continued to do his will.

Each time we got the news that we had a baby on the way we were overjoyed as we know that the Lord has a plan for each and every child he has blessed us with. Our good God has a plan for every child conceived in his or her mother's womb and no parents should ever disrupt this plan of our creator. We are only stewards in his divine plan. Our children are Gods gifts to us and we pray to bring them up in the Lord's ways so that they themselves do the Will of GOD in their lives. That is our hope and dream as parents.

Anderson is a decorator and caterer and Melissa taught with Villa Teresa School and is presently running Home food and goodies from home.

*The Archdiocesan Human Life Committee Wishes you a Very Happy Christmas
and a Healthy, Bright and Lively 2022 !!*

