



Newsletter – Jan 2010

CFSM Singapore

2 Highland Road, #03-12

Singapore 549102

Website: <http://www.c fsm.org.sg/>

Email: c fsmsg@gmail.com

Choosing Family

In the past, being rulers and masters were birthrights. Today we still look enviously at some lucky people born with silver spoons in their mouths and inheriting position, wealth, or power. It has been said wistfully that if we want to have a comfortable life, choose our parents carefully. The reality is – none of us chose the family we born into.

No one, that is except for Jesus Christ. He had “chosen his parents”, the channel for his incarnation and therefore the only man to have “chosen” his family in which to live his childhood and youth. There were 2 other boys living at about the same period who would eventually play major roles in the unfolding of the earthly life of Jesus. The first was Pilate and the second was Herod. We could say both were born into position. Tradition has it that Pilate was descended from a family of military officers from a region in northern Italy. Herod was born into a royal family, one of those in line for the throne.

We can choose our friends, our spouse but we do not have a choice of parents. Who have never even once wished that they were born into a better, more comfortable family, or perhaps one that we imagine would provide us with more, better opportunities to realize our potential?

Most of us would have to admit that we are not so “fortunate”. The members of the CFSM came from families across the social and economic spectrum. Heads-of households range from businessmen, professionals, to blue collar workers. There are managers, site-supervisors, customer-service staff, deliverymen, teachers, homemakers, etc. We all came into the world through a family and now we in turn, have answered the calling to start our families. In the midst of this imperfect setting, did we not sometimes wish for a different family? Perhaps we have wished for more understanding parents, a more loving spouse, less difficult siblings, more filial children.

Family relationship (kinship) is very strange by today’s values. In a world of dominated by the concept of “trade”, our sense of fairness tells us that in an exchange there has to be mutual benefits to both parties. Yet, this ‘trade’ is absent in all family relationship in all cultures. Instead, the one distinct characteristic of family relationship is the emphasis placed

on roles and responsibilities over the concept of a “fair exchange”. In the family one gives without expectation of reward or return. The strong are supposed take care of the weak and starting with the wedding vows, we commit ourselves to an unconditional “give-and give” relationship, not an exchange of benefits

A similar relationship is found in parent-children relationship. Family love is to love each other as husbands/ wives and parents/children... even if there are no benefits in ‘return’.

The implication is that each party is ready to give, unconditionally, and may I dare say: one-way. Fortunately we do not usually face such an extreme demand in our daily lives. We do usually derive some mutual ‘utility’ in our family relationship. We do enjoy that bonus of having our loved ones reciprocating love and affection in return. Tradition and community helps by setting some expectations and rules, eg filial piety is valued in all societies. On the whole, the community encourages the more matured form of love, one that is based not just on emotions and trade exchange, but duties and responsibilities as well.

For us, being born to a “less-than-ideal” family may bring about inconveniences, trials, suffering, or even tragedy (from human’s perspective). In the midst of this, we should have faith in a greater good. Perhaps there is some learning gained from it, life-lessons:

First of all, who we are is very much formed by our family. I have often wondered if I will still be “me” had I been born into a different family. Obviously not... it follows then God has a plan in molding who I am through the family I was born into.

No family is perfect. If we are who we are, despite of, or because of these imperfections, we too can learn to accept and love ourselves and family members despite and because of our imperfections. If the family is a mirror of God’s love for us, then the experience of loving the imperfect member, or experiencing unreciprocated love is one way small step in sharing the passion of Christ.

The family relationship, based on unconditional love rather than an exchange for mutual benefits has become (what the Church teaches and affirms) the cradle of formation of society **members “a school of deeper humanity”...where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service everyday; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys, and of sorrows.”**

For Christians this form of relationship becomes the basis for building the Kingdom of God, here on earth. For the unconditional family love supplements or complements what Jesus teaches us - that we must love our neighbors like our brothers and sisters. Family love can then be a formula that enriches humanity if it is carried beyond the family to society at large, across borders, race and cultures. When man is able to love his fellow-man as God has loved us, peace and justice will prevail. It follows then that the family (for all its imperfections) is an essential part of God’s plan, a foundation for building the Kingdom of God.

For us Catholics, this lesson is seen in the flesh. God did not just issue an edict from His heavenly throne. The incarnation of the Word took place through the family and ultimately forms the means for man's salvation. Christ was born into a human family. The human family is said to be an image of the Holy Trinity in a way, the One God we profess to follow.

As we celebrate the New Year with our respective extended families, let us give thanks for our family.

article by.....Andrew

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1655 Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than "the family of God." From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers "together with all [their] household."¹⁶⁴ When they were converted, they desired that "their whole household" should also be saved.¹⁶⁵ These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

1657 It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way "by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity."¹⁶⁸ Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and "a school for human enrichment."¹⁶⁹ Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life.

A CFMSM Prayer of the Extended Family

(first published in 1993)

Dear God,

You have always loved and protected the family.

We thank you for the countless blessings you have showered on each of the families gathered here today.

As one big extended family we are trying to live Your way by coming together, by living the selfless love of mutual giving, that is normally found in nuclear families.

In our society today where small families are the norm, we thank You for giving our children so many uncles, aunts and cousins with whom they can share their Christian love and life.

Teach all of us to help one another without expectation of reward or return.

Keep us close, minimize our differences,

Remind us that we do not have to agree on everything in order to show love for one another.

Teach us to recognize that although each of us may have different opinions and viewpoints, this diversity is an asset for building your kingdom.

Help our families achieve interdependence in our autonomy.

Finally help us multiply this, Your love beyond this large extended family.

Amen