

Family Light

EDITORIAL



Migration is basically the story of the human race from its origin. This migration occurs for various reasons. For some migration is a painful separation from their spouse, children and dear and near ones and this is because they go in-search of a job to provide living to the rest of the family. For some others it provides more opportunities for life. Today the effects of migration get the attention of the Church because it affects the society badly. The *Family Light* will be focusing on this issue so that we may together reflect on this grave situation and respond to it in a life giving way. In the recent Extraordinary Synod this topic was raised and discussed with a view to grow in pastoral sensitivity.

Since I had the opportunity to participate in the Synod, I would like to point out what the Synod Fathers from Asia shared on this. They observed how the internal migration, within the country itself, from the rural to the urban areas and some external migration, to the West, the Middle East, Australia and other places affect the family. This causes stress in the family especially when one partner or both are separated from the rest of the family. There is also the inherent danger of marital discord when one spouse is separated from the other for a prolonged period, sometimes for decades. This creates internal problems of disunity, unfaithfulness for couples, the risk of marriages failing due to prolonged absences and inadequate education with little or no scope for faith and human formation.

The story of Rohan clearly shows how his absence led his wife to be unfaithful to him and finally be killed by her enraged husband. Today, he is in a prison cell regretting for his failure and missing his children badly. Jos, in the second story, experiences emptiness and loneliness not having anyone to share his daily happenings, because of a painful separation. On the other hand his wife missed him and found it difficult to handle daily chores. The children, though grown up, found it hard to adjust to the new reality.

The story of Rita is disheartening. Two decades of painful separation with a couple of visits during those years. When her husband finally returns to stay, the doubts, jealousy and gossips separate him emotionally from his wife and children. He could no longer stand this separation and takes the drastic decision to end his life. The story of the empty nest is very much true and the loss felt by parents needs to be handled well. Elsie suggests creative ways to handle this separation and face the loss.

Addressing the participants of the 7th World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Pope Francis said that those who migrate aspire to hope for a better future for their families, "even at the risk of disappointment and failure." Pope Francis narrated the factors that cause the migration, namely, inequality, poverty, overpopulation, wars, persecution, natural disasters and youth unemployment. (Zenit News: Vatican Nov. 21, 2014.) Adapting to the socio-cultural situation of the place becomes a challenge to the migrants. To this end, the Holy Father said that pastoral workers play an important role through dialogue, assistance with legal issues and mediating with the local populations. "In the countries of origin, on the other hand, the closeness of pastoral workers to the families and children of migrant parents can lessen the negative repercussions of the parents' absence," the Pope said. (Zenith News)

In the story of Jos we find how he gets help from the activities that the Church organizes. The Church promotes pastoral plans for the support of migrants throughout their journey from their country of origin, through countries of transit, to the receiving countries. As we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus, I leave you with a question to ponder: "How can we welcome the migrants who are in our neighborhood, during this Christmas time?"

Fr. G.A. Arul Raj, csc
Director.

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That Prays Together
Stays Together™

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WHAT IT COSTS TO BE AWAY FROM HOME

A friend of mine would often pose this riddle – what is the difference between a baby and the captain of the ship? Well did you get it? Neither could we the first time. Then he would give the answer – The captain makes his bed on the ocean, while a baby makes an ocean on the bed. For some reason at some point of time in our life we have to be away from home. This separation has it's effects on the person and the immediate family.



Jos is a good friend of mine. We schooled together. After many years I met him and we sat in one of our favourite places – under this banyan tree in front of the chapel near our homes, and got talking. We were catching up on the years gone by.

Soon after graduation Jos decided to pursue further studies – a professional course in Bombay. This was sometime in the mid 80's. It was the first time he was going to be away from home. He was excited. Ah freedom at last he thought. He landed in Bombay and was staying as a paying guest with a family. He attended classes in the morning up to 9 am and was free for the rest of the day. Initially he felt great. No parental control, no reporting or time disciplines to keep, no need to seek permissions. He was his own boss. But as time went on he met friends, started going around, and began losing focus. He was drifting away. He began feeling a vacuum – no one to confide in, whom to trust, where to seek advice. The food was another issue. And, oh yes, every month the landlord was waiting for the rent. Sometimes the money from his parents reached late. It was a stress.

Realizing this, he started thinking how to get out of this situation. Fortunately the parish he was staying in was run by the Salesians. He got involved with the parish activities and volunteered for the choir, games and other activities. He began to feel at ease and was able to get advice and comfort. After sometime, through the contacts he developed in the parish, he took up a part time job. This helped him come back into focus and he could meet his objectives. After completing the course he returned home.

Over the years he got employment, settled down and had a family. Things were looking good until the

company he was working in decided to sell out. The buying company offered to employ some of them provided they were prepared to relocate to the place of business – Bangalore. It was a trying time to make a decision because the family could not move immediately. His wife was working, the children were in the final stages of their studies. Having no other options, Jos decided to take the offer. He would be away from his family, after more than 20 years of being together. So, Jos moved to Bangalore while his wife and two children remained at home in Goa. The parting was emotional and both sides felt uncomfortable, but the need to survive left no other option.

In Bangalore, Jos reported for work and began to settle in. But the evenings were empty. He had to open the door himself on returning home. Get his dinner ready with no one to talk to. No one to relate to the day's proceedings or listen to the chatter and day reports from the family. It was becoming an empty routine. He had to make friends but the neighbors hardly ventured out or responded to a smile. They were suspicious of this stranger new comer.

At the other end the family was missing that presence and the comfort that a man is around in the house and available in case of any need/emergency. The children missed that support and a shoulder to lean on. Yes the reaction did show in their mannerisms and behavior to a certain extent. They became moody, revolting to a certain extent and felt that parental control was lesser. Jos' wife was finding it difficult at times.

The savior this time was the means of communication. The cell phone and the Internet helped to bridge the gap. Phone calls every night and Internet chats made it possible to talk and keep in touch. But it is not a substitute to a personal chat and talking to one another. Most weekends Jos would travel home to be with the family and catch up on lost moments.

For Jos the Christian Family Movement came to the rescue. He joined the group and through the group meetings got moral and community support to come through the difficult period.

In today's world migration has become very common. As the saying goes – the only thing that is constant is change. Through improved means of communication and other facilities the communications and closeness can be maintained to a certain extent which helps to relieve the situation, but cannot substitute a personal interaction and presence. And I realized how fortunate and blessed we are to be with our families at all times.

Cyril D'Souza
Bangalore

THE RISKS OF GOING ABROAD FOR EMPLOYMENT

TESTIMONY

I am here in this prison cell hopelessly waiting to be freed. I wonder if it will be possible one day. Many times I think of my innocent children who are studying in primary section and how I orphaned them. I just don't know how I committed the crime.

I met Shanti years ago when I was a teenager when both of us were studying in junior college. Courtship followed and when I got a decent job, we decided to settle down and raise a family. God blessed us with two beautiful children – a boy and a girl. As years passed I thought I should give my family better comforts of life. So I applied for a job abroad and luck came my way when I was offered one in the Gulf. Initially I was hesitant to leave my beloved wife and children as everything was smooth sailing. But wanting to fulfill my promises I was pulled out from my loving family and I landed in Dubai to work for a good firm. Since my employers were happy of my services, I soon got a raise in my salary.

After two trips abroad and sufficient money was saved, I discussed with my wife about a new house. She was very happy and agreed to take charge. So the construction was given to a contractor and my wife would pay him the required amount from my NRI account. After about two years, the house was finally ready for occupation and I was happy to shift into the new house with my family as soon as I returned from the Gulf.

As usual I checked my bank balance and found that quite a big amount of my savings (beyond the contractor's quotation) was utilized. When I questioned my wife, she said it was all paid for the construction of the house. I swallowed her reply least suspecting otherwise. Time flew and I had to return to my job. I continued sending money to my account and, when I returned the following year, I paid a visit to the bank to update my pass book. I was shocked to find my balance almost nil. On questioning my wife, she told me the amount was

withdrawn for home expenses. I was perplexed but nevertheless decided to find out myself. Soon I discovered that my wife was uncomfortable with my presence as she was having an extramarital affair. Her paramour started threatening me, if I objected to the affair. I realized he was the cause of the disappearance of my hard earned money. My wife too threatened to leave.

I didn't know what to do, whom to turn to. I was boiling with anger and in a fit of rage one morning I attacked her with a kitchen knife in the kitchen itself. I was oblivious of the fact that neighbors were watching and trying to intervene. The children were packed off to school. I didn't realize what I was doing but I committed the crime, forgetting I would lose my freedom. As soon as I stabbed her I ran away in fear only to be caught and arrested soon after.



Now I am here in this cell serving life sentence wondering what my orphaned children are doing. Where are the comforts and luxuries of my dreams? I've lost everything – my home, family, a place in society and above all respect. Will my children ever respect me or think of me once they come of age?

Rohan Yemkar
Goa

SINGLE PARENTHOOD & MARRIAGE TO NRI SPOUSE

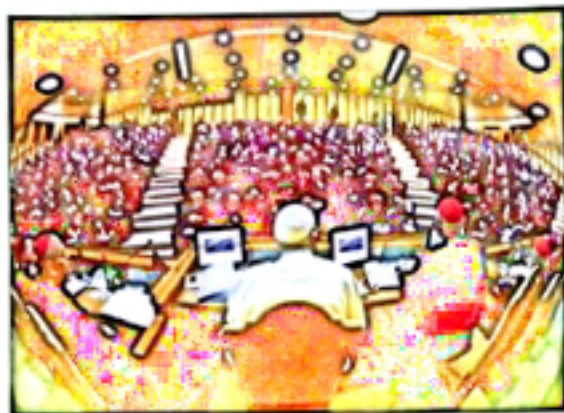
I have been married for over 15 years to an NRI spouse working in the Middle-East in the oil sector. My husband comes home once a year generally around Christmas time. I have got used to living alone as a single parent and the up brining of children is totally a mama's job. There are many disadvantages. I will briefly mention the following points:

- All decisions have to be taken by the wife, to the best of her ability – (you are the best judge), choice of school, choice of residence.
- The wife has to be the man of the house plus housewife. When the husband comes down, then she has to relinquish / cease being the 'Man of the house'

and become the meek, devoted housewife.

- Since she is single and that leaves her with some free time, the wife takes up some meaningful activities e.g. join Sunday School, become a PTA member, which helps to keep her meaningfully occupied (enable her to do something worthwhile for Jesus, go back to society) but the husband is resentful, when he comes down, because these activities do eat into family time.
- Choice of residence – the wife prefers staying somewhere close to her family, as

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The Extraordinary Synod on the Family, which wrapped up in Rome on Sunday, October 19, had 253 total participants, of which 192 were "synod fathers" and thus had voting rights. Most of synod fathers were bishops. The remaining 61 participants, including many lay men and women, were invited to the synod in various capacities due to their expertise. One of those invited was Holy Cross priest Fr. Arul Raj, C.S.C., the Director of Holy Cross Family Ministries in India.



"I was excited to get the invitation to the Extraordinary Synod from the Papal Nuncio to India. I could not believe it," said Fr. Arul. "I was happy to go, especially because I am involved in family ministry. I believed the synod was going to be an extraordinary experience to listen to others about the pressing needs of families today, and it certainly was that extraordinary experience."

Prior to assuming his current role with HCFM, Fr. Arul worked as the Executive Secretary for the Family Commission of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India from 2007-2011. Fr. Arul believes that it is this work with the bishops' conference that put him on the radar of Cardinal Oswald Gracias for the Extraordinary Synod on the Family.

As part of his preparations for the synod, Fr. Arul participated in a consultation that the Catholic Church in India held in Pune in the beginning of September to harvest the input of lay people. This two-day consultation was part of much wider efforts by the Church in the country to gather information and feedback from families to take to the synod in Rome.

"The consultation in Pune was a very good meeting. The families really brought out the need for the Church to listen to the voices of lay people. They also said that the concerns of the Church in India, including the day-to-day problems of families, needed to be expressed to the Holy Church. The lay people were grateful that they were listened to and that the bishops and priests would be willing to share their concerns at the synod," said Fr. Arul.

Fr. Arul mentioned that some of the concerns raised by the lay people in India included:

- the role of women in marriage and family life, especially as both parents begin to work;
- the lack of substantive marriage preparation beyond immediate preparations before the wedding;
- the lack of ongoing formation for couples and families;
- the rising problem of domestic violence, especially tied to substance abuse;
- the difficulties posed by increasing migration and movement of parents and families; and
- the weakening of the extended family.

Needless to say, as Fr. Arul put it, "There are lots of things affecting the family today. Although the time for consultation was short, given the synod's quick time table, it was very good to listen. We need to know the situations, even the hard ones, that families go through."



PARTICIPATION IN THE EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD ON THE FAMILY

During the extraordinary synod itself, which was held in Rome October 5-19, Fr. Arul served as one of the collaborators of the Special Secretary to the Synod. As part of his work, he helped draft the sections on marriage preparation and ongoing formation for married couples—two areas that Fr. Arul identified as key to sharing the Gospel of the Family with the world.



"There is this new emphasis on the Gospel of the Family. It relates to how families, all families, can live out and witness to the Gospel in their lives, including the aspect of mercy, compassion, respect, love, and forgiveness. The Gospel of the Family also means that we must make sure that we find happiness in our families, and the family gives testimony of its happiness," said Fr. Arul.

Read the Message of the Synod

Although some media reports portrayed the Extraordinary Synod on the Family as being contentious or divisive, Fr. Arul described it as a "quite positive experience. The Holy Father set the tone from the beginning in inviting the participants, especially the synod fathers, to listen to each other and to speak openly and honestly. The pope himself would arrive early each day and greet people. He was really sharing directly in what was happening."

"The attitude of the Holy Father was very good," said Fr. Arul. "He spoke of this whole process as a 'journey,' and that there is a real urgency to care for wounded families. While we recognize the beautiful witness provided by many married couples and families, we need to reach to broken families. The whole aspect of the pastoral dimension is essential."

"The Holy Father's observation at the end was good.

He called on us not to give into the temptation to just say nice things. He also told us not to be rigid in our own views and tune out others. We need to listen. There is an urgent need to go in search of wounded families and reach out to them," Fr. Arul said.

In terms of how the Church can accompany families, especially broken families, Fr. Arul said that one of his favorite parts of the synod was the emphasis on Jesus and his journeying with us.

"The Lord walks with the family; the Lord walks with us," said Fr. Arul. "That whole aspect came out very positively in the synod. The family—we all—need to gaze on Christ. That is the root of any spirituality, including the spirituality of the family. We gaze on Christ; we imitate Christ, and then Jesus shines light on our lives as he is the way, the truth, and the life."

The main work of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod was to prepare for the 2015 Ordinary Synod on the Family that will take place October 4-25, 2015. Its theme will be: "The vocation and mission of the family in the church and the modern world." Nevertheless, this extraordinary synod already made Fr. Arul excited to return to India and continue his work among families there through HCFM.



"I am looking forward to going back and meeting with the various family movements that we in Holy Cross Family Ministries work with and seeing how they might also reach out and seek more the families who are broken and wounded. We have much hope to share with others," he said.

From: Updates from Congregation of Holy Cross

during any emergency (health or otherwise) she has a support system to fall back on. This does not go down well with the husband's family – esp. if relationships are not so cordial on either side. This gives rise to marital discord – many unresolved issues.

- **Finances:** The husband may feel that his wife is frittering away his hard-earned money. The wife feels that at least the money is / should compensate for hubby's absence.
- **The children are the most hard hit.** Children miss out on having a father figure around. They miss out on the discipline that only a father can instill. The wife has to be the father and mother – a tight rope walk. She tries to lay down ground rules etc., but when Daddy comes down, he's like Santa who comes laden with gifts, chocolates, clothes, gadgets and what not. So discipline, rules and everything get thrown out of the window as Daddy feels he has to make up for his absence. And so, everything comes back to square one.

- Which school should the children go to? – you decide, you are the best judge.
- If spouses have not sat down and discussed these issues at length, children grow up with half-baked, conflicting values. They are confused.
- **Spiritual life** – sometimes, spouses are on rigs, at sea, in the desert places far away from a church. So, going for Mass on a Sunday, forget about it. Sometimes even on a feast day, is out of the question. And after leading such a non-Christian life for such a long period of time, it becomes very difficult for them to become 'church-going' Christians during the one month vacation that they come on.
- **Husband and wife are on two different tracts.** They are not in sync with one another. Family life goes for a toss. The husband wants to catch up with his friends – night out with the boys. No quality time with the family.

Vallena D
Mumbai

WHAT IS THE WISEST DECISION? TESTIMONY

I was born to very poor parents. We are eight children and I am the third. Soon after I passed my SSLC, I got married. My husband was 36 years and I was only 21 at the time of our marriage. The difference in our age did not bother us in any way. My husband was working in Bahrain at that time. He was with me just for a month and then left to continue his work there. In those days we did not have the telephone in our house or anywhere in our village. We shared our love in our letters. In every letter I used to pester him to take me with him. But his salary was so low that he could not do it. Time went on and he came on holidays after five years. My God! I couldn't recognize my husband. This time he was with me for two months. He asked me to take a course on nursing, so that he could get me a job in Bahrain and we could be together.

After he left for his work I had the happy news of my conception to write in my first letter. I received more letters with all his advice and I felt him close to me though he was far. When I delivered our baby I thought he would come to see it immediately. But he came only for the child's second birthday. With whatever savings we had we started constructing a small house. After two months he left and I completed the construction with the help of my brothers and brothers-in-law. Some of our neighbors envied our progress and started fabricating stories. They wrote anonymous letters to my husband that I was having an affair with the parish priest. However, my husband did not believe it. Soon I got my second child. To stop all such nuisance, I asked my husband to be with me.

He ignored all petty things I referred to him and continued there for twenty more years, coming on holidays once in two years. With his earning we bought some rubber plantation and led a contented life. The situation changed slowly. My cousin happened to be the parish priest of our church. He had some problem with the parish council. He called me often to discuss the issues. Some of my husband's friends, who hated my cousin, started telling filthy stories about me. My husband asked me not to meet my cousin frequently. I couldn't stop, because I thought I had a responsibility to protect him. This strained our family relationship. He came to the conclusion that whatever he heard earlier in anonymous letters was true.

He started quarrelling with me and even staying away from family. He did not take care of our children as he used to. They also remained silent when he occasionally came home. We had to celebrate Christmas and New Year without him. My brothers tried and reconciled him with our family. But this did not last long. One morning, he did not come for coffee. I went to his room to find what was wrong. To my shock I found him motionless. He was dead! After a few days, one of his friends told my brother that my husband's death was not natural and it was suicide. Had I allowed him to work in Bahrain I wouldn't have lost him.

S. Rita
Tamilnadu

WHEN THE CHILDREN LEAVE THE FAMILY "NEST"

In urban India, sooner or later the children leave the home. Their departure marks an important step in the life of the family. The parents have to re-organize their lives without them. Cynthia (1) told me: "I was often upset to see my son's things lying everywhere in the house, but when he left us to go and work in Coimbatore, I felt awfully isolated. I missed his disorder."

Even if the parents expect it to happen one day, it is a shock for them to see their child going away. Because it is an inevitable thing to happen, it affects the parents very deeply, especially when they took care of bringing up their children with great love and care. They feel that their children abandon them. The mother seems to be more deeply distressed than the father, when she sees her children leaving the family "nest." For the parents, it is the end of a cross-section of life.



When, for twenty years, they showered their love and attention to their "little one," they find it difficult to realize that he/she has become a grown-up person. Some even feel guilty to see their child leaving so soon. On the other hand, when a young man is uncommunicative, because of a tense relationship with his parents, his departure is felt as a relief. The reaction of the parents depends to a great extent on the age of the child or his/her personality.



When a child leaves the home to get married or for any other purpose, he/she takes an important part of family life with him/her. Even for his/her brothers and sisters, it is a trial. "When my brother went to work in Dubai, I found myself alone with my parents. I could no more play the fool with him. Of course, now we communicate by e-mail, but it's not the same. I miss him very much," said Johnny (1).

When a child leaves the home, it is but a step in the process of his/her becoming fully autonomous. The

parents were accustomed to see their child every day. Now they don't know what he is doing or who is with him. Some parents – especially the mother – find it difficult to be kept out of the way. They hang on the phone every day to know if their "little one" of 25 years is in good health or had a nice day. They forget that a young adult needs to keep his/her parents at a distance, especially in the beginning of his/her married life. He/she needs some "breathing space."

Once a child left the home to get married or find employment elsewhere, the parents have to develop a new relationship with him/her, without being indifferent, indiscrete or too inquisitive. As the parents and the children don't live under the same roof any more, they have to create occasions to meet again without imposing too rigid constraints on the others. Meeting one another again should remain a pleasure, not a constraint.



If the children live far away, the e-mail can be a good way of communicating with one another. It is faster than the surface mail and less intrusive than the telephone. The essential is to keep in touch. The parents should treat their children as adults and love them as their children. However, as is the case in every balanced relationship, everyone must respect the other's "territory."

When the children leave the home, the parents can become aware that they have fulfilled their task as parents by making them responsible and autonomous adults. Now they have to organize their lives without them and plan the use they make of their time by finding new occupations. It is the occasion for them to undertake projects they could never take up, offer voluntary services to those who need their help or become available to others. What a beautiful perspective for the parents!

Elsie James, Kerala
tr: Varhese C.L.

(1) Name changed for the sake of anonymity.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2015



May Christmas Joy
warm your homes in a special way
And lead you
and all the members of your families into
a New Year
That shines with
God's Wonderful Blessings

The Editorial Board



News Letter

Printed Matter



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ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

Here are the main activities conducted by the Holy Cross Family Ministries in India between September and December 2014

- Fr Arul Raj conducted sessions for lay counsellors in Chennai on a study of marital relationships: September 13.
- Our HCFM-India Website was launched on September 29., at Fr Peyton Centre, Bangalore: www.hcfm.in.
- Fr Arul Raj conducted sessions at the Family Welfare Centre of Bangalore on Sept. 20 for young people preparing for marriage.
- Fr Morissette animated a one-day program on Family Catechesis at the NBCLC, Bangalore.
- "Youth Sammelan," a program on exploring new horizons of faith with young people preparing for marriage was conducted by Fr Agi Paul in Kerala.
- We announced the results of the *Try Prayer* contest on September 8.
- Fr Arul Raj attended the Roman Synod as an *adjutor* from the 2nd to the 25th of October.
- Fr Agi Paul preached a retreat at Nilambur, Kerala, from the 1st to the 5th of October and another one at MCBS House, Kerala, from the 27th to the 31st of October.
- A Rosary Rally was conducted at St. Anthony's School compound in Bangalore on the 13th of October under the leadership of Mr. Mrs Leslie Carvalho and their team of collaborators. Fr Morissette presided over the Eucharist.
- A program on the Family Rosary was conducted for the Deaf Community of Kerala in Chengalnam on the 13th and 14th of October by Fr Biju Moolakara and his team.
- Fr Arul Raj conducted sessions on the Synod for 12 Senate members and 13 Secretaries of arch- diocesan Commissions in Bangalore. He did the same with the seminarians at St. Peter's Seminary and Salesian junior priests.
- On the 29th, he went to Chennai to conduct sessions for 13 family counsellors.
- Fr. Sahaya Lourdu Raj was involved in various designing works like a brochure for HCFM and one for vocation promotion, a pocket calendar for advertising HOPE CENTRE., scripting work for the video CD on *Family Prayer in today's Context* and made PowerPoint. A Facebook with the name *Kutumbha Jyothi Trust* was launched and registered with the new mail id: kjtcsc@gmail.com.
- In the middle of November, Fr. Morissette conducted a one-week course on Family Catechesis in Dhyavanava, Mysore, and another one in Visvadeep, Bangalore.
- The Teachers' Teams of Karaikal and Nagercoil collaborated with us in conducting Rosary Rallies at Agaram and Kottar with the participation of villagers.
- Eight Rosary Rallies were conducted in different villages under the jurisdiction of St. Joseph's parish in Chengalnam, Kerala