

Family Light

EDITORIAL

FORGIVENESS IN THE FAMILY



You may have heard of this saying by Henri Lacordaire: "Do you want to be happy for a moment? Then take revenge. Do you want to be happy forever? Then grant forgiveness." In this issue of the Family Light we reflect with you on forgiveness. We chose this theme since we are going to begin the extraordinary Jubilee year of mercy on December 8, 2015.

It is in the family that we learn to forgive. This learning has consequences in one's relationships. In relationships we need to forgive in order to re-establish peace and live happily. Kathy and Clive share their lived experience of what it involves to forgive. Genuine forgiveness is important in spousal relationship as well as in parenting. It's a beautiful gesture to see Clive seeking forgiveness from their children without fear of losing authority and respect.

The Jubilee Year of Mercy is a great opportunity for us to experience forgiveness and mercy of God. Pope Francis in one of his homilies said: "If you can't forgive, you are not a Christian." "You may be a good man, a good woman.... but you are not doing what our Lord did." The Christian way is compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience. Ultimately, it is the way of Jesus, the way by which Jesus made peace and reconciliation, until the end.

One of the three secrets to a successful marriage given by Pope Francis is saying: "I AM SORRY". Through this you express your regret and this becomes the first language of apology. A simple "I am sorry" can go a long way toward restoring goodwill. In fact Chapman in the five languages of apology writes that these words are "magic words." Pope Francis tells the couples: "Never finish the day without making peace!" This reminds us of the Scripture text: "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry." (Eph 4:26)

We are familiar with stories that Thankamma shares with us. Though a couple lived for twelve years together, they found no joy and peace in their relationships. Finally, it ends up in separation and eventually in civil divorce. Whereas the other couple seems to accept differences and grow in intimacy and understanding. Fr. Morissette writes: "Spouses will be able to forgive each other's offences, if they themselves experience God's merciful love in their lives". It is true that without the grace of God we will not be able to forgive or 'be compassionate as our heavenly Father is compassionate' (Lk 6:36)

Mary Fernandes gives us a list of things to do to deal with family relationship problems and grow in intimacy. Father Willy shares the effect that the visit of Holy Father to the US, and particularly to Philadelphia, had on the people. He writes: "If you want to love, you must learn to forgive and that is the Gospel of the family."

During a Wednesday audience, (04.11.2015) Pope Francis, referring to the recent Synod, said that we should not wait too long to forgive. "If we learn to apologize immediately and to forgive one another, the wounds heal, the marriage is strengthened, and the family becomes an ever more solid home, which resist the knocks of our little and great spiteful acts. The Synod revived our hope also on this: the capacity to forgive and to forgive one another is part of the vocation and mission of the family. The practice of forgiveness not only saves families from division, but renders them capable of helping society to be less evil and less cruel. Yes, every gesture of forgiveness repairs the cracks of the home and consolidates its walls". As families, let us enter this jubilee year with renewed interest and enthusiasm to forgive and be reconciled.

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



Volume 9
Number 4
December - 2015




HOLY CROSS
FAMILY MINISTRIES

"The Family
That Prays Together
Stays Together"™

Published by
Holy Cross Family Ministries - India

294, 3rd Cross,
6th Main Road,
Vivekanagar,
Bangalore - 560 047.
Tel: (080) 25714309.
Email: hcfmin@gmail.com

For Private Circulation.

THE POWER OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN THE LIFE OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

From a human point of view, it is not easy for husband and wife to forgive each other's offences. Certain wounds are so painful that it is almost impossible to forgive the one who has inflicted them. That is why the original character of the Gospel's message is found precisely in Christ's own words: You must forgive the one who wrongs you, "not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times" (Mt. 18: 22). Moreover, we are told to forgive even our enemies: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly" (Lk. 6: 27).



Jesus himself gave us the example of that merciful attitude when he was dying on the cross and prayed: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23: 34). But who can follow such an example when we know that it goes beyond our human abilities? The purpose of this demand is to make us realize that real forgiveness can only be the fruit of an experience: the experience of God's merciful love for us.

The risen Christ gives husband and wife the promise of that love not by solving their problems for them, but by giving them the strength to overcome their weaknesses. Spouses will be able to forgive each other's offences, if they themselves experience God's merciful love in their lives. In other words, they are invited to do what Jesus recommended to his disciples in his Sermon on the Mount: "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" (Lk. 6: 36).

Let's take a few moments to consider the merciful attitude of Jesus towards the Samaritan woman at the well (Ref. Jn 4: 5-26). That woman was deeply wounded in her heart: she had had five husbands and the one she had now was not hers. Jesus did not reproach her nor did he try to solve her problem. He simply wanted to make her aware of his presence and help her realize that she still could find hope and salvation in her life.

The wounds inflicted on that woman are the wounds inflicted on many husbands and wives today. Too often they expect mere human solutions to their problems, while Christ wants them to experience his love and mercy, so that they may be ready to forgive each other. Conjugal love can always remain victorious if it relies on the power of God's forgiveness, in spite of all kinds of defects and weaknesses.

Jesus keeps on reminding husbands and wives: "My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness" (2 Cor. 12: 9). This power of love is that of forgiveness which is never deceived by appearances and is always ready to start anew. When husband and wife are prepared to forgive each other's offences, they come to realize that they can do it not because of their human strength, but because they have experienced God's mercy themselves, sometimes even in the most unforeseen circumstances.

Think of this incident. In the beginning, the newly married couple loved each other. After some time, misunderstandings took place. On one occasion, they had a very heated argument and shouted at each other, each one going to the opposite room. Meanwhile, their child could not bear that shouting and blocked his ears with his hands. Then he went, took the hand of his mother and dragged her to her husband. He took his father's hand and put it in his mother's hand. After a few seconds, they embraced each other. The child was a handicapped child.



The Gospel message on forgiveness in conjugal life is all the more important today when people never cease to claim their rights in regulating their relationships with others. Justice is needed, of course, but it cannot be the ultimate answer to problems of human relationships. A new meaning can be given to married life when it is seen as the experience of God's mercy which can transform any kind of weakness or infidelity into occasions of greater love.

Hervé Morissette, csc



"THE FAMILY IS GOD'S MASTERPIECE"

The Gospel of the family is this: If you want to love, you must learn to forgive. "Then Peter approaching asked him, 'Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus answered him, 'I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.'" (Matthew 18: 21-22)

I would like to use the recent visit of the Holy Father to Philadelphia for the Eighth World Meeting of Families to share some brief reflections on Forgiveness in the family. Pope Francis described the family as "God's Masterpiece." He spoke of the Trinity as a family of love and the human family as the Icon of the Trinity. He also described the sin of Adam and Eve, of Cain, and the response of God that led to his walking with sinful man and woman. He accompanied them until he could break into human history and empower them to love as he loves and to forgive as he forgives.

Pope Francis has been called the Pope of Mercy, the Pope of Hope, the first non-European Pope in 1200 years and the First Pope from the Americas. After his pastoral visit to the USA during the Eighth World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, I would call him the Pope of Families and especially the Pope of Forgiveness in Families.

Saturday night, September 25, 2015, in Philadelphia, at The Celebration of Families, he passionately laid out the role of the family in God's plan of love. People who experienced this event were transfixed and found themselves transported to a new high place of insight into the vocation and mission of the Family and of encounter with the living God. In the context of the love that God has poured into the family, parents, spouses and children have been entrusted with the power to forgive each other and renew the love that exists within the family.

The Holy Father began his reflections on the family in this manner:

"A young person once asked me – you know how young people ask hard questions! – 'Father, what did God do before he created the world?' Believe me, I had a hard time answering that one. I told him what I am going to tell you now. Before he created the world, God was in love, because God is love..."

So, God created the world. ...But the most beautiful thing God made – so the Bible tells us – was the family. He created man and woman. And he gave them everything. He entrusted the world to them: "Grow, multiply, cultivate the earth, make it bear fruit, let it grow". All the love he put into that marvelous creation, he entrusted to a family.

Let's go back a bit. All the love God has in himself, all the beauty God has in himself, all the truth God has in himself, he entrusts to the family. A family is truly a family when it is capable of opening its arms to receive all that love. Of course, the garden of Eden is long gone; life has its problems; men and women – through the wiles of the devil – experienced division. And all that love which God gave us was practically lost. And in no time, the first crime was committed, the first fratricide. Brother kills brother....

But let's go back. When the man and his wife went astray and walked away from God, God did not leave them alone. Such

was his love. So great was his love that he began to walk with mankind, he began to walk alongside his people, until the right time came and then he gave the greatest demonstration of love: his Son. And where did he send his Son? To a palace, to a city, to an office building? He sent him to a family. God came into the world in a family. And he could do this because that family was a family with a heart open to love, a family whose doors were open. God always knocks on the doors of our hearts. He likes to do that. He goes out from within. But do you know what he likes best of all? To knock on the doors of families. And to see families which are united, families which love, families which bring up their children, educating them and helping them to grow.



Certainly, in the family there are difficulties. In families we argue. In families sometimes we throw dishes. In families children cause headaches... Families always, always, have crosses. Always. Because the love of God, the Son of God, also asked us to follow him along this way. But in families also, the cross is followed by resurrection, because there too the Son of God leads us. In families, there are difficulties, but those difficulties are resolved by love. Hatred doesn't resolve any difficulty. Divided hearts do not resolve difficulties. Only love is capable of resolving difficulty. Love is a celebration, love is joy, love is perseverance...

May I offer a bit of advice: never end the day without making peace in the family. In the family the day cannot end in fighting. May God bless you. May God give you strength. May God inspire you to keep moving forward. Let us care for the family. Let us defend the family, because there our future is at stake. Thank you. God bless you, and please pray for me.

He has brought us and our families to a high place by allowing us to encounter God more deeply in our human family, our Church family and our own beloved families and in our own hearts. Every time someone encountered Jesus in the Gospel they came away changed for the better, often transformed by forgiveness and filled with joy. I feel that happened to me in Philadelphia. I cannot think of any higher tribute. Thank you, Pope Francis, Pope of the Family, Pope of Forgiveness.

Fr. Wilfred Raymond, C.S.C.

President of Holy Cross Family Ministries International

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT FORGIVENESS IN FAMILY LIFE

Pope Francis says: "The family is a factory of hope, of life, of resurrection. God was the one who opened that path." He goes on to say: "In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them. That is why it is so important to pray as a family!" There is an important truth most couples/parents don't realise. How we forgive or refuse to forgive, provides the legacy our children will take into their marriages and families.

This is why family life and how we live forgiveness is so crucial. We don't have to listen long to the daily news to hear heart-breaking accounts of acts of unkindness, violence, war, the very opposite of hope, life and resurrection. In our families, we consciously and unconsciously inflict wounds on each other. We offend our spouses, children, other members, through thoughtlessness, lack of listening, anger, and lack of respect, through attitudes of superiority, disappointment, hot words, expectations, sulking and silence. In the family as in the world, we often live the very opposite of hope, life and resurrection. As families we deny or don't know the truth that forgiveness is at the heart of family life at the heart of what helps us function well.

What we have inherited, we bring into our families?

As children we learned about forgiveness and mostly it leaves much misunderstood. However, it's what we have for our own lives and pass on to our children. Reflecting on what we learnt, this is what we recognised,

I, Kathy, learnt that it was unwise to wear my heart on my sleeve, that I needed to toughen up, to hide hurt and vulnerability, to use angry behaviour when I didn't have the words to express my feelings of sadness, hurt and disappointment. I learnt it was not wise to be sorry as it indicated weakness and loss of status. In our marriage, I used the words 'I'm sorry' as another way to continue an argument, to try to win by proving my point.

I, Clive, learnt that silence, avoidance, keeping count, protecting myself, pointing a finger, measuring the degree of sorrow I saw. For example, when our children said 'sorry,' I didn't accept it because I judged they weren't being sincere. Eventually, they stopped saying sorry. My father never asked me for forgiveness, I didn't realise for a long time I needed to ask our sons for forgiveness. It took much soul searching to go to our sons, to say I was wrong and ask their forgiveness. I feared losing face, losing authority, losing respect. Actually, it was a very bonding and freeing experience. We are both products of what we had grown up with, an undeveloped understanding of forgiveness, its benefits and blessings.

What we have learnt the hard way.

Saying a cursory sorry, usually with little reflection, loses us an opportunity to grow and develop as human beings. It blocks us taking responsibility for our behaviour. It's an attempt to smooth things over without ever addressing the underlying issues. These issues can be many and varied, e.g. control or superiority or winning, keeping the power in

our own hands, deciding how far to go, not to go, trying to always come out on top.

Other issues might be a lack of understanding of the danger of accumulated small hurts. Each incident by itself doesn't seem that important. However, unforgiven, it leads to distance, the door closing on relationships, lack of respect, lack of understanding and, ultimately, contempt. Little by little, the relationship with spouse/ child / children is damaged and becomes lifeless. Sometimes fear of engaging with an issue gets us stuck or we think we will lose status or power or respect. Growing up in a home where disrespectful speech was common, could mean it doesn't bother you to hear it or to unleash it on your spouse. Maybe, you don't like the way your spouse is speaking to you *precisely* because it reminds you of your childhood, that you don't have the words even now to express why it bothers you so much. The emotional sickness that comes from misunderstanding the importance of exercising forgiveness is a serious ill in our society.

Growing up as a child without healthy experiences of forgiveness can set the scene for failure in reconciling future relationships through forgiveness. This emotional sickness is handed down through the generations and passed between families via marriage. It spreads just like a virus until you're left with a culture like we have today, in which almost everyone is infected.

The good news is: there is a better way and we can break inherited patterns. It is the way of forgiveness.

Pope Francis says: "In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them." We, couples and parents, don't have to bequeath negative cycles in our families. Through how we forgive and love can set new patterns as our legacy for our children's future. The New Testament spells it out time and again. Reading it and praying will help us begin to make necessary changes and bring new life into our relationships and homes. Practicing forgiveness gets rid of toxic waste, increases love and understanding and brings freedom and peace.



So, how can we practice forgiveness in a way that gives healing and hope?

It will help to change our language and reduce the use of the word sorry. Instead ask: "Please forgive me for" Then be specific about what it is you need forgiveness for. For example, "Forgive me for the shouting?... Forgive me

for misjudging you... Forgive me for the hurtful words I said in anger... Forgive me for being more interested in being right than in listening to you... Forgive me for being thoughtless... Forgive me for not realising you were hurt by my words... Forgive me for my silence and shutting you out... Forgive me for sulking and blaming you..."

Be precise, be humble and above all be open to **NOT** being forgiven then and there! Being this specific is healing in itself to everyone involved. Accept that asking for forgiveness means it's now up to your spouse/ child/other person to respond. It may take some time. You have to wait. Keep fast to your commitment of asking for forgiveness. This change in how we behave takes courage and can be very unnerving. Mahatma Gandhi said: "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. Forgiving doesn't mean we forget the hurt. It **does** mean we have decided to go beyond the hurt. Prayer and studying the New Testament help when we find asking for or giving forgiveness difficult. Forgiveness doesn't depend on how we feel (otherwise we might never forgive!). It is a conscious act of the will, a decision, a choice we make.

Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person, regardless of whether you think they actually deserve your forgiveness. For couples, forgiveness is the responsibility of both. Either can take the first step. Forgiving like this is like learning a foreign language. It takes time and needs perseverance. We relinquish power, leave ourselves open to being healed, to being forgiven, to becoming more fully human and alive. Over time, living forgiveness like this will bring new life and peace in your relationships and home. That will be the legacy your children will take into their future and into the world. Pope Francis recently said: "If you can't forgive, you are not a Christian. You may be a good man, a good woman... but you are not doing what our Lord said. What's more, if you can't forgive, you cannot receive the peace of the Lord."

Kathy & Clive Jones

Kathy and Clive are from Ireland. They have been married 49 years. They have 4 children and 11 grandchildren. They are currently responsible for coordinating the expansion and development of the Retrouvaille movement in the world outside the USA and Canada.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

The 8th World Meeting of Families (Sept. 22-25, 2015) was a great event in the history of Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection. While walking on the streets of Philadelphia on the first day, I found people were so friendly and courteous in giving direction to the one visiting the city. Every three years since 1994 the pontifical council for families organizes the meeting in one of the countries of the world. This time it was held at Philadelphia in the United States and previously in Italy (Rome, Milan), Rio de Janeiro, Manila, Valencia and Mexico City. The World Meeting of Families is an international event of prayer, catechesis, and celebration that draws participants from around the globe. It seeks to strengthen the bonds between families and to witness to the crucial importance of marriage and family to all of society.

The theme chosen for the meeting was: "Love is our Mission: The Family Fully Alive." A preparatory catechesis for the world meeting of families was done well in advance. The ten

themes in preparatory catechesis emphasized that it is by loving God and one another that we will be fully alive. There were 140 Keynote and Breakout sessions organized and the speakers focused on family issues and wellbeing. One of the Keynote addresses was given by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle from Manila. He described the family as "a home for the wounded heart." After speaking about different types of wounds that we experience and encounter, he invited us to "turn to Jesus, the Wounded One, whose preaching of the Kingdom of God included the ministry of healing. As wounded men and women, we are called to share in the redemptive mission of our Lord and our Head, Jesus Christ". So if we are serious about healing, "we must keep in touch with Jesus, the chief physician. We should be humble. We cannot heal simply by our human efforts, even our psychological counseling skills. We all turn to Jesus."

Pope Francis arrived in Philadelphia on 26th Sept. 2015. It was a festive celebration of family life from around the world. Several families shared their stories of faith and family with Pope Francis. What captured my attention was a person on the road side holding a placard with hand written message: "Holy Father, thank you for giving me Hope". She was waiting to get to see the Pope when he passes that way. The visit of Pope Francis has brought new hope to people.

On Saturday, at the festive event, Pope Francis pointed out that "the most beautiful thing God made was the family. All the love God has in himself, all the beauty God has in himself, all the truth God has in himself, he entrusts to the family. A family is truly a family when it is capable of opening its arms to receive all that love." He further added: "God gave the family an identity card, so that families could be places in our world where his truth, love and beauty could continue to take root and grow."

On Sunday at the Papal Mass, Pope Francis, in his homily reflecting on the readings of the Mass, emphasized that "We Christians, the Lord's disciples, ask the families of the world to help us!" We should not stop people who do good to families. "How many of us are here at this celebration! This is itself something prophetic, a kind of miracle in today's world. Would that we could all be prophets! Would that all of us could be open to miracles of love for the sake of all the families of the world, and thus overcome the scandal of a narrow, petty love, closed in on itself, impatient of others!"

Anyone who wants to bring into this world a family which teaches children to be excited by every gesture aimed at overcoming evil - a family which shows that the Spirit is alive and at work - will encounter our gratitude and our appreciation. Whatever the family, people, region, or religion to which they belong!

The World Meeting of Families culminated with the two day visit of Pope Francis. His visit brought a new hope to the families of those who were present and those who watched the events through media. As the theme suggested let our families recognize: "Love is our Vocation: Family fully Alive".

Fr. G.A. Arul Raj, csc

THREE SECRETS TO A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE GIVEN BY POPE FRANCIS

One couple sent a question to the Pope, which he addressed during an audience: "Many feel that the challenge of living together forever is beautiful, enchanting, but very demanding, almost impossible. We ask your word to enlighten us on this."



The Holy Father advised the couples that the secret for a successful marriage can be boiled down to three simple concepts: permission, thanks and forgiveness.



PLEASE.

"Please – May I? We must learn to ask: May I do this? Would you like that we do this? We take this initiative, and that we bring up our children like this. Would you like to go out tonight? ... In short, to ask for agreement is to enter the lives of others with courtesy. But keep this in mind: to be able to enter into the lives of others with courtesy. It is not easy, it is not easy. Sometimes instead, the manners can be a bit heavy, like hiking boots!" Quoting St. Francis, the Pope said, "Know that courtesy is one of the properties of God ... and courtesy is the sister of charity, which extinguishes hate and protects love." Yes, courtesy protects love. And today in our families, in our world, which is often violent and arrogant, we need much more courtesy. And this can begin at home."



THANK YOU.

"It seems easy to say the word, but we know that is not always so ... But it's important! We teach it to the children, but then we forget it ourselves! Gratitude is an important quality. An old woman once said to me in Buenos Aires: 'Gratitude is a flower that grows in the noble land.' Nobility of the soul is necessary to grow this flower. "Remember the Gospel of Luke?" He continued. "Jesus heals ten who are sick with leprosy, and then only one returns to say thanks to Jesus. The Lord says, and the other nine, where are they? This is also true for us: do we know how to say thanks? In your relationship, and then tomorrow in married life, it is important to keep alive the awareness that the other person is a gift of God, and for the gifts of God to say thank you! And in this inner attitude say thanks to each other for everything. It is not a kind word to use just with strangers, to show you are educated. It is necessary to know how to say thank you, in order to get along well together in married life."



I AM SORRY, or excuse me.

"In life we make so many errors, many mistakes. ... We learn to recognize our mistakes and apologize. 'Sorry if I raised my voice today,' 'I'm sorry if I went without saying goodbye,' 'I'm sorry if I'm late,' 'If I have been so unresponsive this week,' 'If I talked too much without ever listening,' 'Excuse me, I forgot,' 'I was angry and I'm sorry I've taken it out on you' ... This is how a Christian family grows." "Jesus, who knows us well, teaches us a secret: never end a day without asking for forgiveness, without peace coming back to our house, to our family," the pope advised. "It is normal that there be a quarrel between husband and wife, but there's always something to do about it. We had a fight ... Maybe you're angry, maybe a plate flew, but please remember this: never finish the day without making peace! Never, never, never! This is a secret, a secret to protect love and to make peace."

Pope Francis reminded couples that marriage must be refined and worked over daily, like "craftwork, a goldsmith's work ... Always act so that the other person will grow. Work for this." The pope concluded this advice by painting a beautiful picture for each of the couples gathered with him, a vision of strong marriage: "And so, maybe, I think that one day you will go through the streets of your country and people will say: 'Just look at that woman, so beautiful, so strong! ... It's the husband she has, you know.' And to you, too: 'Look at him, what he is like! ... It's the wife he has, you know.'"

THE FAMILY, SCHOOL OF FORGIVENESS

All married men and women know from experience that it is not easy to be true to their marital commitment throughout their lives and to forgive each other when offences occur. Only God's grace can keep them bound to each other. Moreover, they need a lot of patience, mutual understanding, perseverance and self-giving love. In order to live in true love, husband and wife should be ready to give themselves completely to each other without seeking any compensation or reward. In my opinion, married life is more difficult than the life of a priest, a religious or a single person. In spite of all the joy and pleasure of married life, the pain that one has to bear in order to make one's married life successful is very great.



Till recent years, society always safeguarded the indissolubility of marriage. The example of parents and elders motivated youngsters to remain united in their married life, even though in some instances they had to suffer a lot. But now things have changed drastically. Couples go for divorce for very flimsy reasons. No one seems to care about the family wellbeing and the harm that divorce does to the children. Something drastic has to be done to save the family. In recent months, we have seen how Pope Francis stresses the beauty and value of family life, when he addresses people. He shows us how to keep family relations between husband and wife, parents and children, grandparents and other family members warm and grace-filled. In families where proper education is given to the children, it is possible to develop mutual understanding. When family members are ready to forgive one another, many problems can be gradually solved and divorce can be avoided. The Pope says that the grammar of love and forgiveness should be taught in the family, adding that the family is the first school, the first church and the first hospital where all wounds can be healed with love.

Every human being longs to be appreciated by others. That is especially true in the family. Husband and wife should admire each other even for the smallest things done by the other. This type of appreciation brings warmth and happiness to the family. Errors and offences should be forgiven. Moreover, a couple should not complain against each other in the presence of other people. If they do complain against each other, it will create chaos in the family. In my contacts with relatives and friends, I have come to know two instances of couples who responded very differently to offences.

Sabu and Selvi were two talented, good looking, healthy and intelligent persons. They were also loved and appreciated by their friends. They fell in love with each other in their early teen age. The girl was studious. She graduated in her studies and

became a lecturer in a famous college. The boy, on his part, had to stop his studies when he was in High School. When they wanted to get married, the girl's parents were not in favor of this marriage. However, the girl was adamant and, in order to avoid problems, the parents gave their consent. Finally, the marriage was celebrated in great pomp and splendor.

Both Sabu and Selvi lived together for twelve years with a sweet, beautiful and intelligent daughter. They were very happy in the family until one fine day Selvi came home with bruises on her body. She stopped going to her husband's family. Relatives intervened, but it was of no use. The couple pretended that they had been suffering in their relationship for the last 12 years. Now they don't want to live together any more. They are not ready to humble themselves before each other and to forgive each other.

They have been living separately for the last three years. The wife stays in a hostel for girls and the husband lives in his own house with his daughter. They neither want to live together nor do they want to divorce. They have ruined their lives and rejected the grace bestowed upon them through the sacrament of marriage.

Joy and Jane are a married couple in welcomed contrast to Sabu and Selvi. Joy married the girl whom his mother found for him, but Jane did not like that young man. However, both of them had faith in their parents and started their family life trusting in God's grace. They often differ in their views, but they know how to go beyond these differences of opinions. They understand very well that they are different in character and that each one of them has to adjust to the other with humility and forgive the hurts that occur occasionally. In spite of their differences, their faith in Jesus and their readiness to forgive each other help them to see how each one can complement the other.



For example, Jane often liked to be alone and do some hobby, while Joy wanted to visit friends and relatives. But they soon understood that, if everyone went his/her own way, it would be detrimental to their family life. So, they found out something interesting they could do together with their children. They decided to visit places and enjoy the beauty of nature during holidays or weekends. Thus they could get rejuvenated for the hectic work awaiting them during weekdays. They still quarrel from time to time but, as they never go to bed without forgiving each other, they lead a happy married and family life.

Thankamma K.S., Kerala

THE LOVE OF A FAMILY IS LIFE'S GREATEST BLESSING

There are many kinds of families. Some have two parents, while others have a single parent. Sometimes there is no parent and the grandparents raise the grandchildren. Some children live in foster families, adoptive families, or in stepfamilies. Families are much more than groups of people who share the same genes or the same address. They should be a source of love and support. This does not mean that everyone gets along all the time. Conflicts are a part of family life. Listening to each other, working to resolve conflicts and **being ready to forgive** are important in strengthening the family.

Our families provide a setting for much of the growth we experience in life. In our families we love, serve, teach, and learn from each other. We share our joys and our sorrows. Family ties may bring us difficult challenges, but they also give us strength and some of our greatest happiness.

The family as the first learning place

The family is the first learning place of an individual in this world. Starting from childhood until old age, he learns everything from his family. He sees his family members walking and starts trying that. He sees them speaking and he tries to copy them. Gradually, he learns the basic communication among individuals in the family. He also learns how to love, how to behave, how to come along in life: all from his family. This develops a sort of affection among all family members. They are always there to help each other.

So, let's list down the signs of family and relationship problems. Frequent arguing, disagreements, breakdown in communication, angry outbursts, avoidance, physical conflict. Anything rings a bell. These are early signs of family problems. As in any therapy session, the first step is to accept that you have a problem. Does your family have one?

Let's look at the Triggers for family and relationship problems: difference in opinions, personalities, beliefs, values or goals, a change in family circumstances (e.g. new baby, divorce/separation, blending families), financial problems, stress, issues relating to sexuality, alcohol or drug use, gambling problems, the onset of mental health problems, bullying/harassment, natural disasters, lack of trust/respect in a relationship.

The impact of family and relationship problems

Often, the family members are the most important people to you. So, relationship problems can be considerably distressing and can lead to negative emotions like anger, sadness, anxiety. It can also increase stress, exhaustion, confusion, with the feeling

News Letter

Book Post



Holy Cross Family Ministries

294, 3rd Cross, 6th Main Road
Vivekanagar, Bangalore - 560 047
Karnataka, India.

of being isolated, alone or withdrawn. There can be lack of concentration, difficulty in eating or sleeping, problems with friends, colleagues or your children. May also lead to abuse of alcohol or drugs to cope or escape from situations.

Here I list some things you can do if you are having family/relationship problems. It is not rocket science and you will be surprised with the results.

- ① **Talk** - communication is the key and often the first step to finding solutions. Be calm and honest about your concerns when discussing your problems with a loved one. **Be ready to forgive.**
- ② **Accept your differences** - it can help avoid unnecessary conflict if you can recognise that people have different ideas, opinions and beliefs and you may not always be in agreement.
- ③ **Have fun together** - even when things are tough, it's important to find the time to have fun with your loved ones. Come on - everybody is always excited to go on a picnic.
- ④ **Make a plan** - it can help reduce stress and give common goals to work towards. For example, if you are having financial problems, it can help to create a budget.
- ⑤ **Get help** - you may not always be able to solve your problems yourself so you may need some external help.

So, be assured, nothing is lost forever. All you need is to begin the journey and, one by one, everyone will join you. Good luck!

Mary Fernandes, Goa