

Family Light

EDITORIAL



In the present issue of Family Light we would like to focus on one of the major social problems that our families face today that is violence in the family. Our hope is that this letter may enlighten the readers to understand the ill effects of this behavior. Most of us have been affected by this in one way or the other since we come from dysfunctional families.

Domestic violence badly affects the marriage and family. It is alarming to

note that two third of married women in India are victims of domestic violence. *"The National Crime Records Bureau Reports of 1991 reveals that in every 33 minutes one Indian woman is being abused by her husband."* Domestic Violence is affecting women, children and the elderly as well. *The battered women suffer from low self-esteem, tending to minimize the violence and often are unaware of their own needs and physical reactions (Walker).* It is a fact that to a greater extent the society is generally tolerant of violence in the family.

Sr. Hilda observes that the domestic violence spares no class, gender, ethnic or age group. The violence takes different forms - physical violence, threats and intimidation, verbal, emotional, and psychological, entitlement behaviors (slave treatment, gender roles), cyber violence, sexual tactics, economic coercion. It is more frequent in the young, the poor, the minority, the unemployed husbands and the urban families.

Irene shares with a heavy heart how domestic violence and ill treatment of her father caused the death of her mother and the addictive behavior of her father enslaved him to the extent of losing his sanity. They lived in a house that was never a home.

Mary shares how the tragic death of her husband made people to talk ill of her. She experienced humiliation and hurts from her own husband and mother-in-law. Findings on domestic violence show the gravity of the issue, the violence is within the family where peace and harmony, love and joy, understanding and support are to be nurtured.

Pope Francis tells us how important the family is for the Church. When the family is healthy then society is healthy. He gives us a glimpse of a praying family which turns to be loving, forgiving, generous, open, compassionate, and supportive.

The Bible provides us with a rich family spirituality to make any home a happy home. When we allow the Word of God to influence the members of the family then it leads to conversion and transformation. Important scripture passages open our hearts to become true disciples of Jesus in order to quit domestic violence. It is an invitation for us to find ways and means in healing the family. One of the challenges we have to face is to reduce social stresses such as sexism, racism and poverty. We need to network with others in preventing this pastoral challenge.

May the season of Lent be a time of grace to adopt nonviolent ways of treating our family members as well as the family of God.

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Director.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

When we hear about the problem of domestic violence prevailing in so many homes and we wish to offer help to the perpetrators as well as to the victims of that violence, we may ask ourselves what God wants us to do in such situations.

When we read the Bible, we come to realize that the Word of God does not approve of domestic violence in any way and that God even "hates (the person) that loves violence" (Psalm 11: 5), for a person's "anger does not achieve God's righteous purpose" (James 1: 20). Sometimes, the angry words spoken by husband and wife can also be considered a form of violence. That is what the author of the book of Proverbs underlines when he says, "a wicked (person's) words hide a violent nature" (Prov. 10: 11). That is why Saint Paul expects all the followers of Christ – especially married couples – to avoid verbal abuse when he writes: "Get rid of all bitterness, passion and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ" (Eph. 4: 31-32).

The Bible depicts married life as an intimate relationship that unites two human beings in a life of love. In the New Testament, Peter and Paul describe that relationship in terms of mutual submission of love between husband and wife: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave his life for it" (Eph. 5: 22, 25. Ref. also to 1 Pet. 3: 1-7). The two are called to love each other. Moreover, their mutual love is even seen as an image of Christ's love for his Church (Ref. Eph. 5: 32). In other words, no married person can justify, in the light of God's Word, his/her abusive behavior or the violence that he/she inflicts on his/her partner.



Saint Paul is even more explicit when he refers to the violence exerted by parents on their children. He writes: "Parents, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead, bring them up with Christian discipline and instruction" (Eph. 6: 4). When husband and wife pretend that the only way to assert their authority over their children – or over each

other – is to have recourse to violence, they would do well to recollect the words of Jesus: "If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people" (Mt. 20: 26-27).

Those who have been victims of domestic violence know from experience that, even though they do not have to suffer any more physical blows, they often remain emotionally and psychologically wounded for a long time. That experience of theirs can even affect their spiritual life. They may be led to lose faith in God, thinking "why did He allow me to be beaten up like that?"

As followers of Christ, we all have a responsibility to question the abusers and comfort the victims of domestic violence in whatever way we can. "Keep in mind... those who are being badly treated, since you too are in the one body. Marriage is to be honored by all" (Hebr. 13: 3-4). If we truly wish to offer help to victims of domestic violence, we have to be ready to walk besides them with compassion, as Jesus did with the disciples of Emmaus, without imposing moralizing duties on them, but giving them the time to forgive the way Christ did.

It always takes time to be healed of these wounds. The victims must have the courage to let their emotional reactions come out first, especially the reaction of anger, and become aware that often, in the eyes of God, they are innocent. Otherwise, they will not heal. It is only forgiveness – and forgiveness with the spirit of Christ – that will make the victims experience inner freedom, without being judgmental towards the abusers or perpetrators of domestic violence. Thus they will follow the advice of Saint Paul: "Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you" (Col. 3: 13).

However, husband and wife will not be in a position to forgive from the heart, if the scars are not acknowledged first. In order to achieve that healing, they will often need the help of a counselor, because the victims of domestic violence must go through a grieving process in order to be able to grant forgiveness to their abusers.

Whenever there is violence in a family, it is the heart of Christ that is pierced again. He always identifies with the victims and never abandons them. He died on the cross so that both, abusers and victims, may experience inner healing.

Hervé Morissette, csc

STATISTICS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN INDIA

Here are the statistics we gathered on Domestic Violence in India from four recent publications

- 1- From Waghamode R. H., Desai Bhavana and Kalyan J. L. *Domestic violence against women: an analysis*. Published in the "International Research Journal of Social Science", 2013. This paper is an overview about domestic violence.

Statistics	Findings
Number of cases related to type of violence listed in decreasing order of registrations	Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men superior to women
1- Torture. 2- Molestation. 3- Rape, kidnapping, abduction. 4- Sexual harassment. 5- Dowry death. 6- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. 7- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956. 8- Indecent Representation of women prohibition Act, 1986. 9- Sati Prevention Act, 1987.	1- Violence committed by family members within the family is the most serious of all types of violence. 2- More than 20% of women in South Asian countries have reported of being abused by the man with whom they live 3- Lack of education and awareness are the most common reasons for violence against women.



- 2- From Harihar Sahoo and Manas Ranjan Pradhan, *Domestic Violence in India: an Empirical Analysis*, published in JNU and IIPS, 2008. The focus of this research was to study the regional variations of women's view about wife beating as justified, with specific reasons and by background characteristics, and to investigate the determinants of women's view about wife beating as justified and also the determinants of prevalence of beatings or physical mistreatment since age 15 and in the last one year. The data collected for the present analysis are from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-II) conducted during 1998-99.

Statistics	Findings
25% of ever-married women in Tamilnadu and at least one quarter of ever-married women in Meghalaya, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh and Bihar have been physically mistreated since age 15. - About 15% of ever-married women in India are beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. - Among the women who agree that wife beating is justified, the main reason was that wife neglects house or children (40%); wife goes out without telling husband (37%); wife shows disrespect for in-laws (34%) and husband suspects wife is unfaithful (33%). - The percentage of women beaten in the 12 months preceding the survey varies from less than 5% in Himachal Pradesh & Kerala to more than 15% in Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Nagaland.	- Illiterate women experience violence more than three times compared to women who are educated in higher secondary or above. - Age, education of women, age at first marriage, ethnic and religious categories, women's autonomy, exposure to mass media, work status of women and standard of living besides place of residence contribute significantly to the prevalence of domestic violence. - Women from scheduled caste, Muslim community are more likely to be beaten than their respective counterparts.

- 3- From Ms Sudha Chaudary, *Domestic Violence in India*, published in the "Journal of Indian Research", 2013.

Statistics	Findings
- The National Crime Records Bureau Report of 1991 reveals that in every 33 minutes 1 Indian woman is being abused by her husband. - It also reveals that in 1989 one dowry death occurred in almost every two hours	- India's National Family Health Survey III (2005-06) reveals that nationwide 37.2% of women experienced violence after marriage. Bihar was found to be the most violent, with the abuse rate against married women being as high as 59%. - It was followed by Madhya Pradesh (45.8%), Rajasthan (46.3%), Manipur (43.9%), Uttar Pradesh (42.4%), Tamilnadu (41.9%) and West Bengal (40.3%). - Of these incidences, 63% were reported from urban families

- 4- From Mukesh Eswaran and Nisha Malhotra, *Domestic Violence and Women's Autonomy: Evidence from India*, 2009. Using the National Family Health Survey data of India for 1998-99, the authors isolate the effects of domestic violence on female autonomy, taking into account the possible two-way causality.

Statistics	Findings
	Women who work away from home are seen to face more spousal violence.

HOW I SUFFERED BUT ENDURED

It's seven months since my husband expired under tragic circumstances. His body was found floating in the village stream. I feel very sad and disheartened not at the loss of my husband but because of the wagging tongues who blame me for his death. How am I responsible for all this?

It was 27 years ago when I was pushed into marriage through the systematic bullying of my mother-in-law who was then a very active woman and saw that I suffered the maximum. Soon I learnt that she herself was a butterfly and was not able to educate her children as a mother ought to do. Finding them a burden when they grew up, she decided to get prize catches for her sons as their wives. I was working as a nurse in a private hospital when I got this proposal. After seeing the eligible bachelor, I refused to accept him as my life partner for which I was slapped by my aunt who financed us. She forced me to accept and I reluctantly obeyed least realizing what was in store for me.



Within a month we were married and I was asked to give up my job and be a total housewife. This was the beginning of my tragic life story. God gifted us with two children but my marital life further became a mess. My husband had a very weak eyesight and all types of vices like drinking, smoking and womanizing. My husband was anything but a family man. My cunning mother-in-law added fuel to the fire because I learnt later that it was she who instigated her son into ill treating me for no reason. One late evening I was pushed out of the house totally naked and dragged on the ground to my neighbour's gate who saved me from public shame. My children were too small to realize what was happening and had become silent spectators. They had become used to seeing me being beaten up by their father everyday and my mom-in-law supporting and encouraging her son.

Somehow I managed to take my husband into confidence for the sake of my children and confessed to him about my wish to go abroad. He agreed to permit me as it would improve our financial condition.

His mother intervened and under her direction he tore my passports twice. The third time my good neighbour mediated and put some sense into his head making him realize that what he was doing was wrong and to look for the betterment of his family. So I was lucky to get the permission to go abroad. I managed to educate my children and do some savings. By the grace of God both are graduates and am happy that my son is not in the footsteps of his father. Both of them are working.

I always trusted in Jesus and bore all the sufferings patiently. My mother-in-law has completely sobered down and has become prayerful. I have forgiven her. I now try to keep myself busy at home trying to get income and I pray more often. It hurts when I am blamed for my husband's death. May God forgive them.

Mary Rodrigues

A perfect family does not exist

"More than anywhere else, the family is where we daily experience our own limits and those of others, the problems great and small entailed in living peacefully with others. A perfect family does not exist. We should not be fearful of imperfections, weakness or even conflict, but rather learn how to deal with them constructively. The family, where we keep loving one another despite our limits and sins, thus becomes a school of forgiveness. Forgiveness is itself a process of communication. When contrition is expressed and accepted, it becomes possible to restore and rebuild the communication which broke down. A child who



has learned in the family to listen to others, to speak respectfully and to express his or her view without negating that of others, will be a force for dialogue and reconciliation in society"

- Extract from the Pope's Message for the 49th World Communications Day.

MY EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

I am a Post Graduate in Business Administration and I am working for a small firm now. My salary is not very attractive, but I am happy to work because I am able to be away from home and my father's anger. I belong to a middle class family. We are two children and I am the elder. My father worked for a reputed private company. My mother was a good wife to him and a good mother to us. My father takes care of us very well, but wastes a lot on drinking. My mother used to say that my father was very good to her and to me, but became frustrated after the birth of my sister because he wanted a boy. Sometimes, when he is drunk he would lose equilibrium and do all inhuman things at home, like throwing away the food cooked by my mother, tearing my mother's dresses and so on. Once he is normal he will buy food for us from the restaurant and promise to get nice dresses for us.



Gradually, his violence continued in his office. The manager tolerated it for a long time, as my father was a good worker and a good companion to everyone. But he became uncontrollable and a nuisance and spoiled the working atmosphere. So the company gave him compulsory retirement. He became more and more intolerable and my mother fell a victim in his hands. He started beating my mother. My mother managed to build a house with the gratuity he got and rented it out. That was the only revenue. My mother was very clever to collect the rent from the tenant. As my father worked for a private company he doesn't get pension. When there was need for money he used to pledge my mother's jewels and take loans. So, she left all her jewels in her sister's custody.

One day, my mother fell ill due to food poisoning. My father did not take her to the hospital in time. So, she died of dehydration. My father was shocked. Our neighbors and relatives blamed it on his carelessness. After my mother's death, my sister and I used to cry and ask my father not to drink any more. He stopped for a short period, but problems arose in different ways. Once my sister was down with viral fever and became juvenile diabetic. When she gets angry with my father she will eat too much of sugar saying, "I don't want to live with you; I want to die". My father will say, "I want to die first" and drink too much without eating any food. He will be

unconscious and stripped for long. Despite these problems, he educated us. I got a job and my sister is now doing her M.A. in English.

I started sharing all my problems with a colleague of mine. He felt sympathetic and married me. He was a Hindu, but converted to Christianity for my sake. He is a good Christian now. Soon after my marriage my sister felt insecure at home. She told me that she is in love with a Hindu and she wanted to marry him immediately. He owns a tea stall and has a good business. But my father did not like it, because the boy had not completed even his school education. So, my husband and I approached him. He refused to accept Christianity. My sister was firm in her decision and married him in the Hindu way. My father did not attend the ceremony. My husband and I attended, because we did not want her to be alone.

My father is now very angry with my husband and me. We want to help him. When we went to meet him for the first time after my sister's marriage, he shut the door and shouted at us. My sister went once to take her books and certificates. He cursed her for not being faithful to him and refused to give her anything. I hear from my neighbors that he drinks too much and spends his time with many drunkards. I understand our home has become a bar.

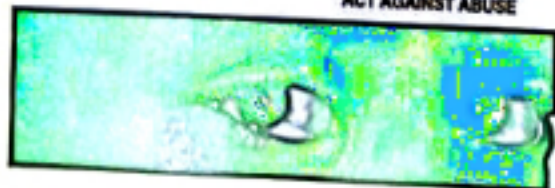


I don't know whom to blame. I pray to God that my sister should have a happy married life and my father should forgive and reconcile with us. He should realize that whatever happened was due to his habit of drinking and violent behavior at home.

Irene

DON'T LOOK AWAY

ACT AGAINST ABUSE



THE CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In our society, violence is bursting. It is present almost everywhere and nowhere is this eruption more intense than right behind the doors of our homes. Behind closed doors of homes all across our country, people are being tortured, beaten and killed. It is happening in rural areas, towns, cities and in metropolitans as well. It is crossing all social classes, genders, racial lines and age groups. It is becoming a legacy being passed on from one generation to another.

The term used to describe this exploding problem of violence within our homes is Domestic Violence. This violence is towards someone who we are in a relationship with, be it a wife, husband, son, daughter, mother, father, grandparent or any other family member. It can be a male's or a female's atrocities towards another male or a female. Anyone can be a victim and a victimizer. This violence has a tendency to explode in various forms such as physical, sexual or emotional. Since times immemorial, domestic violence has been an intrinsic part of the society we are living in. The contributing factors could be the desire to gain control over another family member, the desire to exploit someone for personal benefits, the flare to be in a commanding position all the time showcasing one's supremacy so on and so forth. On various occasions, psychological problems and social influence also add to the vehemence.

Domestic Violence against Women is most common of all. One of the reasons for it being so prevalent is the orthodox and idiotic mindset of the society that women are physically and emotionally weaker than the males. Though women today have proved themselves in almost every field of life affirming that they are no less than men, the reports of violence against them are much larger in number than against men. The possible reasons are many and are diversified over the length and breadth of the country. According to United Nation Population Fund Report, around two-third of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of married women in India between the age of 15 and 49 are victims of beating, rape or forced sex. In India, more than 55 percent of the women suffer from domestic violence, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P., M.P. and other northern states.

The most common causes for women stalking and battering include dissatisfaction with the dowry and exploiting women for more of it, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with him, neglecting children, going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking properly or on time, indulging in extra marital affairs, not looking after in-laws etc. In some cases infertility in females also leads to their assault by the family members. The greed for dowry, desire for a male child and alcoholism of the spouse are major factors of domestic violence against women in rural areas.

Women in India also admit to hitting or beating because of their suspicion about the husband's sexual involvement with other women.

In urban areas there are many more factors which lead to differences in the beginning and later take the shape of domestic violence. These include - more income of a working woman than her partner, her absence in the house till late night, abusing and neglecting in-laws, being more forward socially etc. Working women are quite often subjected to assaults and coercion sex by employees of the organization. At times, it could be voluntary for a better pay and designation in the office.

Violence against young widows has also been on a rise in India. Most often they are cursed for their husband's death and are deprived of proper food and clothing. They are not allowed or encouraged for remarriage in most of the homes, especially in rural areas. There have been cases of molestation and rape attempts of women by other family members in nuclear families or someone in the neighborhood. At times, women are even sexually coerced by their partner themselves against their will. They are brutally beaten and tortured for not conceiving a male child. Incidents like, ripping off a woman's womb for killing the female foetus when she disagrees for abortion have also come to light especially in rural areas. Female foeticide and female infanticide continue to be a rising concern.

Also as expressed by Rebecca J. Burns in the following lines, "When I am asked why a woman doesn't leave her abuser I say: Women stay because the fear of leaving is greater than the fear of staying. They will leave when the fear of staying is greater than the fear of leaving." A common Indian house wife has a tendency to bear the harassment she is subjected to by her husband and the family. One reason could be to prevent the children from undergoing the hardships if she separates from the spouse. Also the traditional and orthodox mindset makes them bear the sufferings without any protest.

Other forms of physical abuse against women include slapping, punching, grabbing, burdening them with drudgery, public humiliation and the neglect of their health problems. Some of the other forms of psychological torment against them could be curtailment of their rights to self-expression and curbing the freedom to associate with the natal family and friends. These are all what we come to know through different forms of media. There are more such cases which go unreported every day. In fact, include the cases which we ourselves indulge in, or the ones which we witness in the neighborhood but are hesitant in taking even a single step to reduce their occurrences.

Sr. Hilda, SG

Sr. Hilda is Director of Abala Ashraya Sangha (Crisis Intervention Centre for Women in Distress) Shivajinagar, Bangalore.

PROBLEMS LEADING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"The love of a family is life's greatest blessings"

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 and working to resolve conflicts 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 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 ring 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 a problem?

Let's look at the Triggers for family and relationship problems. When there is a difference in opinions, personalities, beliefs, values or goals or when there is 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 are the most important people to you. Relationship problems can be considerably distressing and can lead to negative emotions like anger, sadness, anxiety. It can also increase stress, exhaustion, confusion, with feeling isolated, alone or withdrawn. There can be lack of concentration, difficulty eating or sleeping, problems with friends, colleagues or your children. That 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.

- **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.
- **Accept your differences** - it can help avoid unnecessary conflict if you can recognize that people have different ideas, opinions and beliefs and you may not always be in agreement.
- **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 to a picnic.
- **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.
- **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



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Book Post

News Letter



ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

- Fr Agi Paul animated two Marian retreats from December 1 to 11 in Kerala, and one-day program in the Marriage Preparation Course at the Family Welfare Centre of Bangalore.
- On the 13th and 14th of December, we conducted workshops on the Holy Cross Family Ministries in India for the Superiors, Parish Priests and Principals of Holy Cross parishes and schools of the Southern Province of priests, the Vicariate of the priests in Tamilnadu and the Vicariate of the Brothers.
- A COMPAS program was led by Fr Abraham M.C. on December 20th and 21st at the Brothers' House in Bangalore.
- One program was conducted in the North East entitled "To live a holy life, follow the Holy Family," and 4 Rosary Rallies.
- Two programs took place in the South on "Deepening the faith journey," and "The Rosary for Family Units."
- Two other programs were attended by the Priests' Vicariate of Tamilnadu: one on "The Rosary Meditation based on Yoga" and another one on "Motivations for teachers."
- We brought out a wall calendar and a mini-calendar that was distributed to our collaborators, friends and families.
- From the 20th to the 27th of January, Fr Arul Raj attended the meeting of the International Conference of 80 Movements and Associations on Family & Life, in Rome.
- From January 19 to 21, Fr Morissette went to Visvadeep, Bangalore, to complete the course he had started in November on Family Catechesis.
- Two family retreats and one for the youth were conducted in Katalcheria and Kumarghat.
- One seminar on the Bible and one on the faith formation of leaders was held in Katalcheria.
- In February 3, at the beginning of the 27th Plenary Assembly of the CCBI, Fr. Morissette, csc was presented a Memento by cardinal Oswald Gracias for his contribution to the writing of the National Catechetical Directory.
- The World Marriage Day was celebrated in St. Louis parish, Dahisar, Mumbai, on the 9th of February.
- Fr Lourdu Raj is busy with D.T.P. works and P.P.T. presentations.
- Fr. Arul Raj continues to give counseling to individuals or married couples who come to Fr. Peyton Centre or the Hope Centre for consultation.
- On 16th of February, Fr Arul Raj gave a presentation on the Synod at the CRI (Conference of Religious in India) Institute.
- On the 23rd and 24th, he animated the regional (Northern) Meeting of the Secretaries of Family Movements in Delhi on the next Synod.
- From the 25th to the 27th, he animated the meeting of the CDPI (Conference of Diocesan Priests in India) in Nagpur on the next Synod.