

SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN IMMIGRANT AND NON-IMMIGRANT FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

The Asia-Pacific Christian immigrants and non-immigrants have a huge impact on Western Christianity. Therefore, special pastoral care, faith, and spiritual formation should be given to immigrant families so that they can become efficient lay missionaries. Unfortunately, proper faith formation of the lay faithful is lacking in the Church, while by virtue of their baptism, they are also called to witness Christ in the world. The formation and training of Christians in the faith is essential so that as Christ's disciples, they may become his efficient witnesses in the world. For this reason, Jesus took three years in training and forming his apostles to evangelize the nations (Mark 16:18–19; Matt 10; 28:18–20). Jesus' formation of the apostles is a paradigm for us. Faith and spiritual formation imply *journeying with* a disciple along the path of righteousness and way of life of Christ. Every Christian should be properly schooled in the faith and Christ's way of life to be useful for God's work of salvation.

Introduction

It is uncommon or unheard of when immigrants and non-immigrants who seek a greater chance of economic subsistence or survival in a foreign country should preoccupy themselves with spiritual and religious activities of their new relocation. Logically, will they not be hell-bent on exploring economic gains instead? This is exactly the description of the faith life situation of many Asia-Pacific immigrants from Philippines, South Korea, Japan, India, and China who are living in Europe, the US, and Canada. They do not only strive for economic survival or gains but, practically, they are lay Christian missionaries too. Indubitably, these faithful Christian witnesses from Asia-Pacific regions have contributed a great deal to the development of Christianity in the US, Canada, and Europe. Without any exaggeration, these Christian immigrants are the real agents and representatives of Asia-Pacific Christian culture. They are simple, lay missionaries, but saintly people whose indefatigable faith has inspired many laissez-faire believers and non-believers to turn to Jesus. Their exemplary mythical life provides us with more information and evidence about the important role that the family can play in the world evangelism. They show that it is possible for a Christian to live a balanced life – to combine economic life with spiritual life. While people usually compromise their cherished values or faith and corrupt themselves because of dire needs with distrustful economic systems, this is not so with these immigrants – they will not compromise their faith with any awkward and sordid gains. Their enthusiasm and selfless spirit are the beacon of Christian hope that stimulate confidence in the future of Christianity. The Asia-Pacific Church must be proud of the caliber of Christians it grooms and nurtures that showcase its rich Christian cultural heritage abroad. Nevertheless, it must do more to safeguard and protect this Christian heritage. At its cutting edge, the Church must continue to rejuvenate the enthusiasm of faith and to support, train, and form her subjects to contribute more to the Church's missionary work both locally and internationally.

It is obvious that not all Christian immigrants are committed to their religious tradition, but only those whose faith is well formed, strong, and firmly rooted in the Lord. Some Christians may turn their back on their faith tradition while abroad for exploration of economic fortunes. To such people, if faith in God does not satisfy them, then nothing will ever satisfy their quests for worldly

desires. This calls to mind the nature of faith formation that people receive, as well as the influence the family has on faith formation and praxis. Generally, some Christians are passive in their faith confession, practices, testimony, and witnessing (Rev 3:15). Sometimes, people's motivation for faith is wrong or inadequate, or they are more likely to succumb to natural things than eternal reality, so all Christians are urged to form faith correctly. To forestall this lack of motivation for faith among Christians and enhance a vibrant faith-witnessing, the Church must draw rigorous faith formation programs for the family besides the CCD¹ lessons, which prepare candidates for the reception of the various sacraments. If the foundation of faith in the family is weak, certainly it will affect the life of the Church and society as well. The reason is that the family is the basic unit of society.² It contributes to the common good: it brings forth new lives into the world; makes society stronger by raising strong, virtuous, and good people to further help the world; makes solid bonds between different classes or races of people, thereby making our communities become sturdier and remain woke.

Asia-Pacific Christian immigrants and the immigrants of other nationalities living in the US, Canada, and Europe have shown through their dedication and pious religious activities that the Church cannot rely solely on the ordained missionaries in this task – every Christian must complement the missionary zeal and work of the Church. These immigrants are the icons of hope, vitality of faith, and force in re-evangelization and revamping the Christian faith in Europe, Canada, and the US. Christianity in the US, Canada, and Europe would have been empty and perhaps collapsed without the contributions of these immigrants. If the ordained and appointed missionary can do a lot in spreading the Christian faith, then many families in the Church can even do much more in spreading the gospel and transforming the world as quickly as possible. Indeed, these Christian immigrants' tapestry of faith

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1. CCD is an acronym for Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, an association established in Rome in 1562 for the purpose of giving religious education. Now, CCD is a Catholic religious education program designed for children.
 2. Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 2nd edition (Washington DC: USCCB, 2018), #2207.

eclectically combines their ordinary work, experience, spirituality, and faith life as proof of St. Benedict's vision for his religious communities and a way of witnessing to Christ in the world. Thus, we can make St. Benedict of Nursia's spiritual heritage, "ora et labora," the way of life of the Church today, as an art of Christian discipleship and evangelization of all cultures and societies.

I was one of the 200 participants from different Christian denominations who, during the 2017 Summer Theology School at Christ Church, Oxford University, discussed the spiritual traditions of Christianity and its contribution to the Western Enlightenment. The seminar on the "school for souls" focused attention on religious communities during the Medieval period. Emphasis was on the practical rules of St. Benedict of Nursia for his monks and religious communities. When discussing the impact of modern society on Christian testimony or faith-witnessing, participants pointed out the following: lack of motivation, empiricism, materialism, secularism, individualism, lukewarm attitude, immorality, marriage breakdown, family, and kinship. My colleagues thought that we could reconstruct modern Christian spirituality with St. Benedict's rules and ideals to restore Christian witnessing from declining. Their argument was that from the time of St. Benedict of Nursia in the 5th century until now, human character and spiritual needs remained the same. Certainly, my view is that these religious rules can work, but only temporarily, if people are not directly bonded to Christ. The reason why medieval religious groups flourished at that time was not because of the religious rules per se, but because believers were docile to the Holy Spirit and encountered the Lord Jesus in their daily lives.

I think that faith formation should emerge out of love, a free act of the will, a disposition of the heart, an encounter with the Sacred, rather than isolationism from society, austerity of life, or following some rigid rules. The religious instructions that we receive prior to the reception of the sacraments is inadequate. There should be an ongoing faith formation in the family to enrich a personal encounter with Jesus. Nowadays, people receive Christian religious instructions and perform the sacramental rituals without understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives; they have no personal encounter with Jesus and do not know why they wish to follow him. During his ministry, Jesus touched many people's life because he mingled with them (Mark 1:18–20; 2:7). In this

article, I will provide a basic *guide for the family's spiritual life and faith formation* as a supplement to the religious education plan of the Church, as this will promote a lasting Christian culture. Trusting in Jesus, amidst the burden of family life, the family will bring faith and hope to others and will serve as effective witnesses of Christ in the modern world – a way of actively participating in the mission of the Church.

Evidence of Pastoral Zeal of Asia-Pacific Christian Immigrants Abroad

The Christian Church is vibrant in the US, Canada, and Europe because of the diverse contributions of Christian immigrants and non-immigrants. I have met many Christians from all walks of life, especially those who live in the Asia-Pacific region but have settled in the US, Canada, and Europe. Many of these people do not just migrate to these greener pastures of the developed countries looking for their daily bread or livelihood, but they are great “missionaries” too. As they seek better economic opportunities abroad, they also move along with their Christian faith and cultural values. Consider, for example, the tremendous religious works and evangelism that many Asian-Pacific Christians undertake in the US, Canada, and Europe in their faith-witnessing and participation in ranges of pastoral activities. I can attest to the exemplary faith-witnessing of many Asians that I have met in New York and their contribution and support of the Church both abroad and in their respective home countries. I have been ministering to a group of Asian women in the immigrant hostels of St. Joseph and St. Agnes in Manhattan, NY, for nearly 8 years and have learnt a lot from their missionary zeal. Their pastoral charity is exceptionally extraordinary and recommendable. These saintly women make a lot of sacrifices to cope with life in the US, yet their devotion to their faith and religious life is highly admirable and inspirational to many people, including non-Catholics. Their devotion reflects their good Christian virtues and family upbringing, training, and education.

Many of these men and women from the Asia-Pacific, who emigrated to the US, Canada, and Europe are not religious nuns and priests or friars. These are lay people who champion the course of missionary work in different forms and ways that are helpful to the Church's general outlook, mission, and faith-

witnessing. They offer themselves fully to the service of the Church in every way and serve as agents of the new evangelization of the Church in many of these countries. In many ways their pastoral, liturgical, and charitable activities contribute immensely to the spiritual life of their Church communities and neighborhood. They promote prayer and devotions, Bible sharing, social and outreach programs, outdoor or street preaching, care of the sick, homeless, and vulnerable, and other benevolent works in the Church. These men and women demonstrate that the missionary efforts of the church must be the collective effort and work of all Christians, and that it is possible to combine daily work and life with religious tasks in order to dedicate human labor to God.³ It is by this means that all creation will constantly be renewed and that life in general becomes pleasing to God. These immigrants in the US, Canada, and Europe prove their faith in Christ, just like the way the early Church spread the good news. Although that era was one of persecution, the disciples carried with them the gospel of Christ wherever they fled. Apparently, economic reasons might have taken these Asia-Pacific immigrants out of their countries, but what they have in common with the early Christian Church is obvious: No matter where they go, they cherish their faith and spread the gospel so that people can begin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1; 11:19). As these immigrants move for greener pastures in Europe, the US, and Canada, they take with them good Christian values, the cultural values of Asia-Pacific region, and their faith, thereby acting as ambassadors of the Asian-Pacific people. All these efforts are revamping Christianity in the countries abroad.

As we can sing the praises of some of these exemplary immigrants who live up to the tasks of their Christian calling, we should urge the lukewarm Christians and help them to wake up and take up the mantle of the faith (Roman 13:12). We acknowledge that there is a wide gap between modern-day Christian millennials and pre-Vatican II Catholics. The challenge to the Church in modern days is that many Catholics have no strong motivation for faith. This weakness is transferred to the upbringing of children in many Christian families. In matters of faith, such parents think that children should

3. John Paul II, apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio: On the Role of the Christian Family in Modern World* (Washington, DC: USCCBC Publishers, 1982), #4.

decide for themselves whatever to believe.⁴ If these Asian ladies did not grow up from good Christian homes and families with good Christian backgrounds and values, would they be useful as witnesses of Christ abroad? Christians who cannot direct the spiritual life of their children lack the moral integrity as parents, for this is irresponsibility and failure.

On the other hand, the need to train Christian families, especially the current generation of Christians, is crucial, or else after our death we may not even have posterity to pray for us or to propagate the faith and values of Christianity. Many Catholic Christians from the Asia-Pacific, Africa, and South America that I know, their children are cold toward the Christian faith, especially those born in the US, Canada, and Europe. These children of the immigrant parents oftentimes behave like the children and folks of the “civilized” cultures who anticipate the demise of the Christian culture completely. All these necessitate the drawing up of a simple but useful faith formation program for Christians in the diaspora and elsewhere to properly school the family in the Christian culture and way of life. It is reasonable to lead families out of religious indifference and to help them become messengers of Christ, so that wherever they go they may be loyal to their Christian tradition. Another reason is that our Catholic faith formation should be more thorough than the CCD instructions that we undertake in preparation for the reception of the sacraments, so that people become more active in the Church. For example, the Church stipulates lengthy years of training for ministers of the gospel, preachers, missionaries, priests, and pastors, yet they struggle to become credible witnesses of the Lord in the faith journey. So how much more those who have no thorough training or formation? The lay formation program is necessary for it will produce good disciples and faithful witnesses for the Lord. Such a program should be elaborate, practical, a journey of faith, and an encounter with Jesus throughout life. Thus, a proper faith formation is needed because the Christian world is infested with all sorts of ideological faith, laxity, or indifference which impede the growth of faith, human fecundity, and Christian ideals. In fact, unless a Christian believer allows his or

4. Ironically, such parents can freely decide academic and career goals for their children but have no guts to turn them to God or their religious upliftment.

her belief in God to satisfy him or her, there is nothing in this world which can satisfy that person.

According to Pew Research Center, Hindus were the largest religious group in the Asia-Pacific region in 2010, with about 1 billion adherents, and this number is expected to grow to nearly 1.4 billion by 2050. Muslims are projected to grow faster to about 1.5 billion by 2050. The Christian population in the region is expected to grow by 33%, that is, increasing from 287 million in 2010 to 381 million in 2050.⁵ The statistics show a positive trend in the growth rate of the Christian faith, which the Church must strive to retain or possibly increase.

Thus, Christians must explore the depth of their faith and make it a personal relationship and a culture of life with Jesus. If people show no commitment to their belief system (without intrinsic motivation from the source of the faith itself), then no amount of extrinsic motivation can perpetuate lasting faith-witnessing. The scientific and high-tech world poses strong challenges to believers today, so Christian faith formation at all levels must weather this storm. Above all, Christian faith-witnessing must be a *real or a living encounter* with the Lord. The family must be a school of the soul and its faith must be practical and pastorally oriented, rather than ritualistic and theoretic or academic, more than a mere acquisition of knowledge. For the Church and its evangelism to flourish in today's world, Christ's faithful believers must be active witnesses and not only lukewarm believers and churchgoers nor those who narrowly believe in the eternal Lord and his presence in the Church.

Saint Benedict's Ideals for Western Monasticism and Its Influence

Saint Benedict (480–550), an Italian religious reformer, gained admiration as the “father of Western monasticism” through his practical religious rules.⁶ He wrote the detailed rules about prayer and community life, study, work, virtues,

5. Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/asia-pacific/> (2015), accessed 16 July 2020.

6. Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1998), xii. He is the patron saint of Europe.

and morality, and established his first monastery in Monte Casino, Italy.⁷ These rules serve as a kind of wisdom tradition and norm which are useful for every generation of Christian monks, friars, and nuns. Benedict's spirituality is characterized by striving towards Christian perfection in community, liturgical prayer, and separation from worldly concerns. The witnessing borne by these religious communities brought about faith growth, spiritual development, intellectual formation, and spread of the gospel. His spirituality also served as the backbone of Western enlightenment and civilization.⁸

Benedict's rules allow monks to elect an abbot, the leader, whose office is for life. In all normal circumstances the abbot maintains supreme power and is accountable to no one, except to God. The abbot could seek counsel of the senior monks or of the monastic society, but their advice does not bind him, save for only the law of God and the rules that bind him.⁹ The abbot appoints his own officials: prior, cellarer (steward), novice master, guest master, and the rest. He controls all the activities of individuals and the organizations of the common life. The monks were prohibited from personally owning even the smallest property.¹⁰

The ordering of the offices for the canonical hours (daily official set of prayers) is laid down with precision.¹¹ Novices, guests, the sick, readers, cooks, servers, and porters all receive attention, and punishments for faults are set out in detail. Benedict gave remarkable spiritual and human advice to the abbot and to the cellarer. His instructions on humility, silence, and obedience have become

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7. Ibid., xv, xx. Saint Benedict provides a concise and clear directory for directing the spiritual and material wellbeing of the monastery. His rules carefully integrated prayer, manual labor, and study into a well-rounded daily routine that has shaped Christianity since the 6th century. The rules have concern for a life spent in a community, a year of probation, a solemn vow of obedience to the rules of the monastery under the abbot, where the monk vowed a lifelong residence.
 8. Ibid., xiv.
 9. The rule reminds the abbot not to abuse his power, because at the judgment seat of God, he must answer for his monks, and himself.
 10. Chittister, xiv.
 11. Ibid., 119. Canonical hours are also called "offices" because they refer to the official set of prayers of the church, officially known as *officium divinum* ("divine office" or "divine duty") and the *opus Dei* ("the work of God").

part of the spiritual treasury of the church, from which not only monastic bodies but also legislators of various institutions have drawn inspiration.¹²

Benedict's spirit of moderation allowed monks to use clothes suitable to the climate and to have sufficient food¹³ and sufficient sleep (7 to 8 hours). The working day is divided into three portions: 5 to 6 hours of liturgical and other prayers; 5 hours of manual work; and 5 hours reading of the Scriptures and spiritual writings. By this, Benedict gave a balance to the monastic life of prayer, work, and study.

The purpose of work in the monastery is to make it self-sufficient and independent. Rigorous intellectual, literary, and artistic pursuits were not envisaged, but boys were taught to read the prayer books, Bibles, and the writings of the Church Fathers and to copy manuscripts. Eventually, Benedict's plan for an idealistic abbey became the standard for many religious orders and monasteries throughout Europe.¹⁴

Because of Benedict's compassion for the physically weak, he avoided the rigidity of rules and regulations.¹⁵ On the contrary, personal judgment must consider differences in age, ability, character, needs, psychological maturity, and weaknesses of others. One notable feature of Benedict's rules was that he made room for practical wisdom, counsel, discernment, and discretion to guide monastic spirituality. In effect, we must admit that people misused the rule's allowance of discretion in the defense of comfort and self-indulgence.

Theological Analysis of Spiritual and Religious Life in Faith-Witnessing

Theology seeks to understand faith and belief. This search for understanding is an activity of the heart and mind or intellect. Theology embraces, informs, and sustains spirituality. The most important role of theology is to establish a framework for spiritual development and growth and

12. The rules obviously observe the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

13. Apart from the fasting period observed by the Roman Church, Benedict did not impose fasting on the monks.

14. Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*, 118–19.

15. *Ibid.*, 119.

for a relationship with God.¹⁶ The Christian's encounter with God is a transformative experience, like St. Paul's (Gal 2:20). True knowledge of God leads to prayer, worship, and witnessing, as the believer is caught up in a transforming and renewing encounter with the living God. Knowing God relates to both *fides quae creditur*, the objective content of faith, and *fides qua creditur*, the subjective act of trusting.¹⁷ With this understanding, seeing the family as a school of spirituality simply emphasizes that knowing God is a relationship of trust, experience, and encounter.

Christian spirituality is based on the belief that human achievement can only be fully realized through a deepened relationship with God. Thus, Christian spirituality is grounded in theology and is inseparable from it. Theology has a major effect on the way in which Christians live and behave. Theological differences between different types of Christians are reflected in their styles of spirituality.¹⁸ To understand the importance of theology to spirituality, we need to ask the question: How does accepting one of the Christian beliefs affect one's way of life?

Faith in God is a culture of life, an encounter, and a community of persons in relationship. God needs us to relate with Him, and we too ought to be witnesses of God's goodness. By embodying God's goodness, we serve like light to others (Matt 5:14, 16), thus drawing them closer to God that they may live a fulfilled life.

St. Benedict's Impact: A Reconstruction of Christian Family Spirituality, a School of Souls

The impact of St. Benedict's spirituality on Western Europe prompted me to reflect and design a spiritual *guide* for the Christian family. My vision for the family is that people will bring their faith in Jesus to bear on every human activity and occupation in secular society to transform and consecrate it, and

16. Alister Edgar McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 27-31.

17. *Ibid.*, 28.

18. Michael Dodd, "Spirituality," in *The Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, edited by Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), xx.

thus sanctify the culture of life. The sanctification of work would consist in offering all works and services, however ordinary, to glorify God.¹⁹ This implies that one always does one's best service to society as if it were directed to God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17). Every member of the family would strive to integrate a life of service in faithfulness to this family community and in solidarity with all those with whom one comes into contact, living a life of faith in all circumstances. It is by these means that human society and the world would be transformed. By being close to God, the family members would commit themselves to convert their daily work and difficulties into prayer. All these would make the family more vibrant and holy, reflecting the image of Christ in the world. This short spiritual program for the family will reintegrate correct Christian virtues and values so that Christian families may be agents of change, faith renewal, aimed at contributing to the growth of Christianity.

A Guide for Family Spiritual Life, Faith Growth, and Renewal

This guide presents faith in God as a culture of life inseparable from ordinary life. It proposes that the faith life is not a virtual one and combines a real encounter with the Lord with a trusting, interpersonal relationship between family members. Faith in Jesus should permeate every aspect of a Christian's life, transform, and shape it, and save souls.²⁰ Human reason should be at the service of faith.

The guide covers the entire gamut of Christian life and includes teaching and studying the word of God, discipleship, prayer, discernment, work, entertainment, leadership, discipline, witness to faith in Christ, morality, and good citizenship informed by Christian values (2 Cor 5:20). It encourages in the family the life of praise, the virtues of gentleness, humility, honesty, joy, cheerfulness, and service in action and of love (Gal 5:22–25). Families would use the principle of equity in their service to Jesus and in their interpersonal relationship.

19. *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), 46.

20. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, #4.

The Word of God

The lips of a Christian should preserve knowledge and instruction of the Lord through his words. Thus, the love of God's word should be the life, food, and strength of the family life (2 Tim 3:16–17). At mealtimes and daily family prayer meetings, the word of God should be shared. Any member could be called upon to lead prayers before and after meals, or to share the word of God through selected portions of the Bible to read during mealtimes. Knowledge of the word of God is the basis of wisdom, life, and peace. Individuals are encouraged to read the Bible and inspirational books daily and share what they learn with others. Spiritual readings and daily study of the Bible are essential to nourish the prayer life of the family.²¹ The word of God must lead to prayer, virtuous living, and faith-witnessing.

Prayer

Daily prayer is recommended for the family community, morning, evening, examination of conscience, and night. People may be encouraged to observe prayer and prayer times as the greatest moments to renew one's commitment and life to God (1 Thess 5:16–28). Prayer should take precedence over any other business in the life of the family and must be translated into action. People should be taught how to pray and cherish prayer above everything. By consecrating itself to God, the family sanctifies its daily activities in the world.²² Although the family community prayer reinforces communion with God and with the entire family, personal prayerful relationship with God is important for faith growth. During communal prayers, roles would be assigned to members, and their commitment and preparations are appreciated. They must joyfully fulfill these roles in love and devotion to the glory of God.

The church's liturgy and life should be extended to the family as a way of making society more sacred, for Christ's presence in the family brings joy, sanctifies family life, and takes care of its plight and difficulties. Furthermore,

21. Ibid., ##52–54.

22. Ibid., #55.

this domestic church also increases members' conscious, active, and joyful participation in the liturgical life of the parish community.²³

Ongoing Formation and Catechesis

Formation and ongoing formation in the Christian faith would be nursed in the home and parents should bear the principal responsibilities as the primary teachers and overseers of the family's faith and moral development, of their religious and spiritual life.²⁴ The homes should be a school of faith formation and a place for nurturing virtues in witnessing Christ to others. Through teaching and learning, Christian beliefs and values would be encouraged and propagated, so that believers may grow to the desired stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). Teachings on the family and marriage, and many social issues, from the Christian viewpoint, would be encouraged in the family for its spiritual growth. By their commitment to living the faith, parents provide testimony and serve as models of virtue and good disciples to the family.

In the family, equal opportunity and encouragement should be given to all to study, teach, and learn about the Christian faith. Every member of the family should try to excel in virtue and the life of perfection, bearing good testimonies, and faith-sharing which may draw others to Christ. The only source of competition between family members should be to see who best could live a virtuous life.

Spiritual Direction, Counseling, Discernment, and Retreat

Family life rests on trust in every member in relation to one another. There is a need for members of the family to choose prayer partners, spiritual directors, counselors for their spiritual growth, because spiritual life requires solidarity and guidance from those who have already distinguished themselves in the religious life. Confidentiality and respect of one another should be encouraged. Group and individual retreats would be encouraged (at least twice

23. Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Washington, DC: USCCBC Publishers, 1963), #14.

24. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, ## 36, 39.

annually) with the aim of the renewal of faith and growth in sanctity and holiness of life in the Lord (1 Thess 4:3). Spiritual counseling is recommended, so that any tensions and unrest that might erupt in the family would be forestall.

Pastoral Charity

The Christian home must be a place where every guest would be welcome. Remember that virtuous people in the Bible who welcomed strangers welcomed angels of God and received blessings (Gen 18; 2 Kings 4; Matt 25:31–46). Members should visit other families, share with them, and show support and solidarity. They should reach out to other neighbors or provide means of survival to the underprivileged or culinary assistance in times of need such as festivities, mourning, or bereavement. Note that hospitality and compassion would authenticate mutual tolerance and love. Families should participate in spiritual and preaching crusades, revival, conventions, outreach, and programs. They should participate in the social activities, development, welfare, charitable issues, or activities organized in their locality (and would include outreach to schools, nursing homes, orphanages, people with special needs). Christian families must let their presence and influence be felt by all in their neighborhood.

Christian Morality and Conduct

The family life and moral issues would be sincerely carried out based on Christian principles informed by faith in Christ. The wellbeing of the family shall override any individual interest or right. Whatever “we do must be to the glory of Christ” (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17). In other words, family members should “stand and fall together” (Gen 4:9; Luke 10:36–37). In everything, Christ should be the center of the family life; all other personal interests must be secondary and should not override faith in Christ and the good of the Church.

At home, workplaces, or elsewhere, there should be proper etiquette: decency in dress, conduct and speech, moderation in food and drink; there should also be a guide against sexual misconduct (1 Cor 6:18; Gal 5:19; 1 Tim 4:12). People should guard against the destructive influence of the internet and social media. In the Christian family, the love of life, the maintenance culture of life, and respect for the young and old people should take precedence over individual rights. In this way, people should cherish obedience, humility, and

mutual respect for family ties. The family's good name and dignity should be preserved in the heart of all. Virtues should be rewarded while vices are condemned and discouraged. Most importantly, members should sincerely welcome constructive criticisms that build relationships.

Members are expected to use kind and helpful words (Prov 15:4; 16:24; Col 4:6) which would build up fraternity and promote peace and love (Sir 17:18). Selfless and communal spirit should be seen in the initiatives that members live out and take to work in and out of the community. Dedication to service should be seen in a spirit of charity for the good of all.

Christian Discipline and Reconciliation

Each family member should try to be each other's keeper; show love and accept mutual correction, and affirm one another's potentials, talents, and gifts. Peace and justice should characterize all dealings in the name of Christ and for the good of the family fraternity and of the Christian faith. The family should be a place of character formation, a school of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Members of the family should learn to grow in freedom and integrate well with others and all who may visit them, including strangers. People should always carefully weigh the consequences of their actions and their impact on the entire family before acting (Phil 4:8).

There is no need for family members to resort to court litigation in cases of conflict and misunderstanding. They should be people of wisdom and integrity to amicably settle all discord in the family (1 Cor 6:5–7). Problems arising would be resolved amicably by Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mediation (Matt 18:15–17). The essence of ADR is to bring healing and unity between members but not division, unlike anger and segregation which characterize law courts' adjudication of disputes and settlements of litigations.

Celebrations and Faith Renewal

Families should periodically celebrate their successes and even losses. Special occasions and times for celebration include birthdays, anniversaries of marriage, and Christian Initiation such as baptism, confirmation, Holy Eucharist. Families would renew their faith and commitment to God in solidarity with one another in these commemorations and appreciate God's

blessings and their dependence on Him (Eph 5:19–20; Col 3:17). Families which stay together, bearing one another's pains and burden with trust, can always rejoice in the Lord and by this they instill hope in the world (Phil 4:4–5).

In all these respects, this proposed guide for family life will make the family more religious and cultivate a deeply spiritual relationship with Jesus. The family's faith-witnessing will be stronger, more impactful, and more appealing to many people than the strict rules in monastic and religious communities.

Conclusion

Throughout the paper, I argue that faith in Jesus Christ is a culture of life, a living relationship and encounter with Jesus. I also dwell on the faith and exemplary missionary activities of the lay Christian immigrants and non-immigrants from the Asia-Pacific regions in the US, Canada, and Europe. Many citizens of these nations have turned their back on the Christian religion. In these countries, Christian missionary activities and faith testimony of immigrants are the catalyst for the revival of Christianity. Like Jesus, they freely interact with society, thereby transforming and sanctifying society. The family is the best incubator for faith-witnessing and evangelization of the gospel. Christian witnessing should begin from the family, to change the course of the history of the world and direct it to a better sphere of life conformable to the vision of Christ (John 10:10; 20:31). By this the Christian family may become a miniature church and a school for souls constituting a vibrant faith community of Christ's witnesses in the world.

Furthermore, I argue that the religious instructions that every Catholic receives prior to the reception of the sacraments are inadequate, for:

1. After the reception of the sacraments of initiation, witnessing to the way of life in Christ becomes a problem.
2. Either people are wrongfully motivated, or they develop no faith at all.
3. Many people do not consider faith as a way of life and an encounter with the Lord.

Abraham and Paul are good examples faith as a living reality. Thus, faith is way of life, an encounter with God and Jesus (Gen 12 see Phil 1:21; Gal 2:20). Faith in Christ calls forth the evidence of faith and testimony in the world to authenticate Christian witnessing, else faith may be likened to seeing one's face in a mirror only but is impalpable (Jas 1:17).

For these reasons, Christian families must be well trained as schools of the soul, because as a basic unit of every society, families would adequately spread the gospel faster by their life of faith-witness in Christ better than any religious groups in the Church. Thus, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of faith would revamp the family and the Church in its missionary works. Finally, this spiritual directory or guide may not an ideal catalogue of spiritual perfection and piety but is a means to attaining godliness and holiness of life intended for any Christian family.

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