



CHRISTIAN
FAMILY
MOVEMENT
- INDIA



STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN FAMILIES



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FOREWORD

I appreciate that the Christian Family Movement has come up with an inquiry book titled "Strengthening Christian Families". It is encouraging to know that the Christian Family Movement groups gather regularly to discuss on themes that are relevant to families. The topics that you have dealt with in the book are encouraging and much needed themes to reflect upon. As the first topic reflects on *Welcoming Christ*, the family gets strengthened by welcoming Christ in their homes. The Word of God throws light in all your inquiries. The various approaches that you have adopted are interesting to deepen the topics.

The Holy Father has been encouraging families to give their best and do their best in living their Christian vocation. Pope Francis is encouraging various family groups to play a significant role in strengthening families and reaching out to those at the periphery. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis points out the role of ecclesial movements in a parish:

The parish is a place where such experienced couples can help younger couples, with the eventual cooperation of associations, ecclesial movements and new communities. (223)

The Conference of Catholic Bishops of India in the beginning of this year reflected on the theme "*Promoting the Joy of Love in our Families*" and made the following statement:

The Apostolic Exhortation reviews the current situation of families in the light of the Church's perennial teaching on marriage and family especially, with regard to unity and indissolubility of marriage (cf. Mt. 19:3-6; Eph. 5: 22-31) with a view to building up stable, fruitful and joyful families and offering help to those who do not fully meet the Christian ideal of marriage and the family. Our Lord Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd always remains as a model of our ministry to the family. Indeed the family is God's precious gift to human society and to the Church.

Members of the Christian Family Movement must draw inspiration from Mother Mary who is interested in families. "In thee we Hope, Mary Our Mother" – these words are special to me personally. May you learn from Mother Mary to respond to the invitation of God our Father in building vibrant and joyful families. I wish your groups to be light to the Church in India and particularly in your respective parish communities. May this book be a great instrument for families to strengthen their bonds and live their Christian vocation fully.

With blessings,

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PREFACE

In the very first page of the Bible we observe that it speaks about the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God, with gender differences and the complementarity of the sexes. And on closer examination of the text in Gen. 1:26-28 we notice that the very purpose for which God has created us is to live and fulfill our responsibilities as a family when God says, "Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it". Through these words God brings into existence the very institution of marriage and the family. As the words of an old hymn that we often sing at weddings reads:

"The voice that breathed over Eden
that earliest wedding day
the primal marriage blessing
it hath not passed away."

And in a similar way the last pages of the Bible also speak about marriage. And this time it is the description of the marriage of the Lamb with His bride the Church, as is shown in the Book of Revelation, "And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). In other words, one of the images through which God communicates the state of happiness intended for us at the end of time, is through the image of 'marriage'. Hence in our Scriptures marriage and family are not only given importance, but are divine institutions of which God is the author and founder.

However, today we live in a world where we are confronted with conflicting opinions about marriage and the family, and of-

tentimes, we are left in a confused state as to how we need to live as Christian families in the present set up. Hence we need to reflect on our Scriptures frequently not only as individuals but also in groups and allow God to speak to us and guide us as to how we will be His witnesses as Christian families in our society today.

It is with this intention of strengthening the family in the Church and in society that the Christian Family Movement in India has brought out a third publication of topics that can be discussed at our monthly CFM meetings. For this book we fell back upon an Inquiry Book which has already been published by the Christian Family Movement in Evansville, U.S.A., named "Intentional Christian Families", and have adapted those topics to suit the Indian situation and the present context in our country.

Our great desire is that through these topics presented in this book, those who take part in the monthly CFM discussions will not only come to know and express their Christian faith better, but will also be people who will 'walk the talk' in their own lives as Christian families. We constantly need the support and encouragement of one another to continuously strive to make our families Christ-centered, to be constant about our Christian faith in our own individual lives and through our actions of love and service to build up the Christian community.

Our earnest prayer and wish is that this book will help us as members of the Christian Family Movement to reflect on our faith more meaningfully and enable us to become people who will be "doers of the Word, and not just hearers" (Jam. 1: 22).

Fr. Xavier Sanjivi, CSsR

National Chaplain, CFM India

