SEDOS

BULLETIN

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Two deep crises of family life today are emerging at the Synod, - the problems posed by inculturation and those posed by population growth concomitant with poverty and injustice and demands for contraception.

An example of the first is seen in the African Bishops' view of the necessity for further clarification of the connection between customary marriage and Christian marriage. When Christ made marriage a sacrament for those who believed in him, what he purified and perfected was precisely marriage as lived in a given culture. Interpersonal aspects of marriage are always communitarian, hence marriage can never be isolated from the community as a whole in the African context.

Regarding birth control a significant intervention was made by Archbishop Jean Margeot of Mauritius who has the collaboration of his government in promoting one of the most successful Natural Family Planning campaigns in the world, although as he pointed out, it touches less than one-sixth of Mauritian women who are following some method of birth-control. He concluded his address on the following pastoral note: "Being supportive does not mean supporting everything, tolerating everything, blessing everything. For the pastor it means being firm in his convictions and being free to let them prevail without giving in to human respect.

"But it also means not trampling on the convictions of others, it means taking the couple where it is and walking with it patiently, never condemning it, but helping and encouraging it trustingly. Isn't this what we do in other areas, such as Christian charity for example, without posing a problem?" His words recall the comments of Sr. Cécile Sauvé of France in our last Sedos Bulletin. (Oct.1st, p.256).

In this issue: Ambrose D'Mello recalls with his fellow Provincial Superiors of India the basic call to preach Jesus Christ while maintaining a profound respect for the genuine values and cultures of peoples.

Some of the complexities of inculturation are assessed in contributions on the 'extended' and 'nuclear' family in Africa by Mike Singleton, and on the values of Indian family life by Thomas Mampra.

Finally, there are reflections of Brian Hearne on the Working Document prepared for the Synod.

Contents

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SEDOS - SERVIZIO DI DOCUMENTAZIONE E STUDI

EVANGELISATION

A Letter from the Provincials to Missionaries of the Society of Jesus in India

(The following letter was written by Fr. Ambrose D'Mello, S.J. and circulated to the Jesuits working in India in February, 1980. It followed the meeting held with Father Arrupe, S.J. and draws attention to the basic task of evangelization by the direct preaching of Jesus. Ed.).

Dear Fathers & Brothers, Pax Christi.

At the close of the Hyderabad meeting with Father General, the Provincials requested me to address each one of you on the issues we discussed. This I do now most willingly in their name as well as my own.

Scope of Evangelization

Evangelization was the theme of the meeting. We were aware that evangelization covers a very broad field. In fact, in the words of Evangelii Nuntiandi, it aims at the renewal of the whole of mankind by bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity transforming it from within and making it new (EN 18).

In our meeting, however, we restricted ourselves to the field to which you have been 'sent' by the Society with the specific mission of preaching the Gospel to set up and foster new christian communities (32nd General Congregation, N.73), destined to be signs of God's liberating Word.

Reasons for this theme

The task of evangelization by direct preaching of Jesus Christ remains essential today and must be continued more than ever before (GC 73). This directive of the General Congregation - echoing recent Church documents - the Provincials wanted to make their own, thereby committing themselves anew to a work which has ever been and remains a privileged expression of our commitment to the service of faith. This was the main reason which moved us to spend time in prayer and reflection.

There was yet another factor. In the efforts at renewal over the last decade, and even more so after 32 GC, an impression may have been created that priorities in the Society have totally changed. The Post-Vatican II theology of salvation, we know, has disturbed some among you. Younger men are said-we do not hold this view-to be less committed to evangelization by direct preaching. So much emphasis is placed today on the promotion of justice, adult education, involvement in people's movements that the missionary sometimes feels relegated to a second class apostolate. We wanted to state unambiguously the importance and relevance of your apostolate.

The Provincials in their meeting considered the basic attitudes required of the evangelizer today, they discussed approaches and methodologies, the challenge thrown at us in the call to promotion of justice, now more than ever an integral dimension of our service of faith. Practical administrative policies for a better service to local churches were discussed. Finally certain decisions were taken to update the formation of the evangelizer and the necessary structures of implementation and support.

Basic Perspectives of Evangelization

As in all other apostolates, so too in the field of evangelization, there is need of constant reflection over the work we do. We must first humbly acknowledge that we are but a handful, that we do not possess the key to every problem, that evangelization is eminently God's work and that God's plan and pace are inscrutable to us.

But this should all the more spur us into questioning ourselves on the basic perspectives which should guide planning and implementation of diocesan and province policies.

We stand for: mission above maintenance; witnessing to the coming of the kingdom, of which the Church is the external sign, and proclaiming its values of freedom, fellowship and justice, rather than setting out on a conquest; seeing ourselves as servants of the kingdom rather than dispensers of light to those in a situation of sin and darkness; inserting our proclamation into the context of the Indian reality: its cultures, its living faiths and its widespread poverty and injustice, rather than imposing a way of life alien to the needs and aspirations of the Indian people.

Attitudes and Orientations

And so we realize that the first in need of being evangelized are we ourselves. Deep within us we know we can never really do without:

1. A deep experience of God, born out of daily contacts with him in prayer, an experience which urges us to share it with our fellow men.

'The content of our prayer, both personal and communitarian, ought to relate to the real needs (spiritual and material) of the people and of the country. The mission team itself (priests, brothers, sisters, and catechists) should grow as a praying community of believers. The liturgy (Eucharist, Sacraments, etc.) should be celebrated as an event, and, in the measure approved by the local Bishop, using the idioms and symbols through which the people express their deepest aspirations.

2. An Emptying of self (Phil 2:7) which allows Christ to take possession of us, and warns us against the temptations of paternalism, desire for power and security and the mirage of immediate or merely quantitative results.

It is necessary to question ourselves again and again on the entry point of our missionary activity: on this depends the quality of the new convert and the evangelizing thrust that each christian community can take in its turn: is it an answer to a spiritual quest, to a desire for overall human development, or merely the result of our routine educational, developmental, and caritative activities? A criterion may well be the measure of time we daily spend with the people and their deeper needs, and that given to administration of parish activities, tasks which often could be more efficiently handled by others.

Our mission residences ought to be 'open houses', ashrams where spiritual help and comfort is always readily available. It would not be correct if the image which our centres project is only one of intense activity, bee-hives of developmental projects and relief. Socio-economic development has a place in the life of the christian community. But here too, many now question themselves on the aim, the methodology and the actual result of such activity. Considering the complexity of the socio-economic structure in which we work, it is important

to evaluate regularly what we do, and see to what extent specific projects actually benefit the poor, or whether the end result goes to the better-offs, the christian community only, or the mission centre itself.

It is of the nature of mission to constantly search for newer ways to allow Gospel seeds to flower into ever new forms of commitments. The contemplative touch of the ashram, so deeply rooted in the Indian tradition, may not have been sufficiently made available to the people of India. The way of the sannyasi, to whom people flock for spiritual guidance, the adoption of bhajans and kirtans as a catechesis adapted to the genius of village folk, a radical insertion into a village community and its life-style dissociated from the support of a large institutional set-up, all these are ways adopted by some missionaries and which deserve attention and support. The enquiry centre, for a more sophisticated audience, allows the educated to get acquainted with the Gospel, free from any inducement or external pressure. Conscientization of village communities englobing faith-that-does-justice is a more recent form of Gospel proclamation, of which mention is made again later in this letter.

Provincials have agreed to foster new approaches in missionary methods, more radically evangelical in detachment and insertion into the daily lives of the people and their needs.

3. A profound respect for the genuine values and cultures of the people in continuation of God's plan of Incarnation (GC 103); a respect which expresses itself in a deep love for people, a love which is patient and detached, which guides rather than dictates, understands rather than judges.

As it is, conversion too often amounts to passing over from one socio-cultural group to another with consequent isolation and alienation. As a result mission work takes on a political colour, is branded as communal aggression. This problem is not new. Efforts in the past in India tell us of the many who have pioneered and paved a way. Names like De Nobili, Beschi, Stephen stand as landmarks. They indicate that this complex problem must be tackled by men in the field, even more than by theoretical experts. The solution will be found in praxis. We cannot but commend and give full support to those who today in several regions in India school themselves in the religious and cultural aspirations of the people, in order to help them to express anew Christ's message.

4. The Spirit of the Beatitudes which fills us with a deep love for the kingdom and those to whom the kingdom is given: the poor, the humble, the pure in heart, those persecuted because they do what God requires (Mt. 5:3-10); a spirit which spurs us to a preferential option for the poor and the oppressed because they are the anawim of today.

In particular, the justice dimension in the proclamation of the Gospel ought to be a matter of special concern. Praiseworthy initiatives are taken in several parts of India, but we must acknowledge that there is still a long way to go to 'interiorize' the message of the Congregation and move on 'totally' and 'corporately' (GC 53) to a genuine witnessing to faith and justice.

Till recently the christian response has been largely institutional, in the form of services rendered through large establishments, which themselves are part of a particular socio-economic-political system. Neither has the social legislation over the last thirty years been of much help to the larger section of the people. Today, a major element of solution seems to emerge in the efforts at conscientizing the masses, and at training and animating local leadership at grassroots. The process involves a change in self-image, awareness of one's dignity, of power in unity. Results obtained in several centres in India reveal the 'humanization' aspect of the method, and therefore its Gospel dimension.

We could ask ourselves: which efforts and initiatives are taken in mission centres to introduce the justice dimension in the concern and works of the centre? Our catechesis (religious formation, liturgy, prayer) ought to include education to respect of human dignity and concern for the rights of others.

A bold approach to issues of justice often brings in its wake conflict situations. These should not deter us from moving ahead. But we must learn from such new experiences. The Provincials feel the need of formulating certain guidelines, in consultation with men in the field, which would help them offer at this juncture the leadership required.

5. Willingness to work with others, Christians, men of other faiths and all people of good will; willing to play a subordinate, anonymous role (GC 39).

For instance, the catechist plays such an important role in the formation of new christian communities and in their growth to adulthood. His influence will be in proportion to the ongoing training given him and the status he holds in the mission team: a trusted collaborator or a paid employee. In too many instances and on too many issues still, we hold the key and the answer to problems related to the community we serve. It is imperative that increasingly, responsibilities be laid on the laity, keeping to ourselves tasks that are more directly of a priestly character.

6. And last but not least, a joyful acceptance of the Mission: the Jesuit evangelizer is 'sent' by the Church through the Society to proclaim 'the Good News about Jesus Christ' (Mk 1:1), and he does so in the first place through the testimony of his own life.

There are in India large areas where the presence of the Church is well nigh non-existent, or where personnel is insufficient. Barring two or three Jesuit provinces, such areas exist in nearly every diocese where the Society works. In India several States are not included in Jesuit provinces while requests have been received from Bishops in these regions for specific works. This is chiefly the case in North-West India. Aspects of these questions have been considered and it was decided that the Provincial of India should initiate adequate responses, within resources available, to calls from Bishops in dioceses of the North, leading eventually to the formation of a regional unit covering the North and North-West.

Yet our answer to calls and needs should not just be in regard to geographical areas: our vision and commitment ought to be primarily people-oriented and move to 'responsive' groups. Tribals have traditionally been responsive to the values of the Gospel, so too certain caste groups. Another category that we may tend to bypass is the youth of India, especially college and university students. Their aspirations may not necessarily move them to commit themselves explicitly to Christ and the Church, but as a group their vision and aspirations are often akin to the Gospel values of generosity and selfless dedication, especially on issues involving the rights of the poor and the oppressed. To them we owe special attention.

The horizon should not be limited to India's own boundaries. Some 60 Jesuits work in foreign lands, of whom 25 in Nepal. These are a handful compared to the 3,000 Jesuits of the Assistancy. Is the international dimension of the Society 'alive' among us in India? A greater readiness to answer needs beyond our own frontiers will be a challenge and a reminder that 'availability' is an essential trait of the Society.

The work we do in mission centres gives us the opportunity of working in close collaboration with the Bishops and the diocesan clergy. Our specific mission, however, calls for the establishment and the strengthening of the local clergy, where this does not obtain, and gradual withdrawal where church personnel is in sufficient number, so that we can be made available for other regions or newer forms of apostolate. Creation of favourable conditions for such withdrawal is as much the responsibility of individual missionaries as that of Superiors.

Formation of the Evangelizer

The formation of the evangelizer also drew the attention of the Provincials. Insistence was on selection and training of competent personnel, Recent studies in anthropology, the social sciences, psychology, new theological insights born out of a closer identity with the material and religious aspirations of the millions that make India exercise a deep influence on how to approach the mission of evangelization in the India of today. It is necessary that the worker in the field constantly updates himself to answer ever new challenges.

The responsibility for programmes of on-going formation has been accepted by the respective Regional Chairmen of the Provincials' Conference (N-E, South and West). Concretely, the North-East proposes to make a start with a six-week programme of renewal for missionaries, priests and brothers.

It is proposed to strengthen the pastoral formation of the young Jesuits in the course of their theological training: a six-month guided pastoral programme will be launched from next academic year. Finally we have accepted to establish a secretariat which would function as a structure of support to the men in the field of direct evangelization and provide for exchange of ideas and experience in view of a renewal of the apostolate.

Conclusion

It is not our intention to offer an exhaustive survey of our mission work in India. The thoughts suggested in this letter are meant primarily as a token of our great appreciation of and support for your work. We welcome your reactions and invite you to a dialogue.

We have addressed ourselves in the first place to you, men in the field. But we wish to include our younger men as well. To them we offer the challenge of this specific apostolate, in the best of the Society's tradition, an apostolate, which we know, calls for great sacrifice and detachment, but demands no less enthusiasm and creativity. We encourage them to embrace this form of apostolate in greater numbers and thus we wish to foster all forms of contacts between experienced missionaries and the younger men in the Society through informal meetings or sharing of experiences. We are all learners in the Lord's Vineyard, and the measure of our companionship in Jesus will be gauged by our readiness to listen to and learn from one another.

Finally, let us remember that the work of evangelization is not the private enclave of a specific group. The proclamation of the Good News is embedded in every mission given to every Jesuit in whatever position or status. 'The call to the apostolate is one, though shared in manifold ways.....each member contributing to the common task of continuing Christ's saving work in the world, which is to reconcile men to God and men among themselves, so that by the gift of his love and grace they may build a peace based on justice.' (32 GC 31).

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FAMILY LIFE AND CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

- Mike Singleton

(In this contribution the meaning of 'nuclear' and 'extended' family is examined by Mike Singleton. Neither term is self-evident in the context of Africa today. A too facile use of the terms can confuse issues and do little justice to the varied and changing experience of family life as it is evolving in the countries of Africa. The article is reproduced here without the informative footnotes and bibliography which accompanied the original.)

Precious space is often wasted by protestations about having precious little space in which to deal with a topic requiring book-length treatment. But with two recent bibliographies (Pigault/Rwegera 1975 - Shorter 1977) listing over 2000 contributions on marriage alone in sub-Saharan Africa, it would seem pretentious to synthesize family studies in less than 20 paragraphs. Indeed, when so much has been published about marriage and the family in Africa, the AMECEA's July 1978 request for "further research" before continent-wide, "common pastoral solutions" (ADS 8/78/150) be reached, might seem surprising. It is a fact, however, that much of the material consists EITHER of inconclusively concrete case-studies, more often than not about what family life was traditionally like amongst the X, Y or Z, OR highly speculative considerations on what it could be like theologically.

There are very few sociological studies or statistical surveys about present patterns and trends in African marriage and family life. Shorter, having attempted an all-African synthesis of statistical data, civil and ecclesiastical, concluded that "very little useful information on the subject of marriage and family life can be drawn from this type of material". Rather than speculate about the incidence of polygamy or the increase of divorce it is perhaps more instructive to examine critically a conviction shared by religious and lay leaders alike: the passing of the extended and the emergence of the nuclear family.

Tell-Tale Terminology

Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the terms "nuclear" and "extended" family are far from self-evident; if anything, indeed, they are evidence for prejudicial assumptions which bias the definitional debate from the outset. That type of family formed by husband and wife and their children is far less fundamental than at first historical, sociological, philosophical or theological sight might seem. If retrospective extrapolations can be made from ethological and ethnological studies, the earliest men are as unlikely to have been conjugally monogamous as to have been committedly monotheistic. One thing is certain: they were not ruled by women: matri-focal they might have been but not matriarchal.

The biological unit of mother and child is not only more basic than the supposedly elementary family of husband, wife and children but sociologically has existed and does exist. If a nucleus is needed in the field of family studies then the former rather than the latter provides a more universally convincing candidate. Even more important than clearing "nuclear" of its chronological and elementary implications, is getting rid of its ontological overtones.

Seminary training tends, or at least tended, to implant thought patterns centred on defining the essential, normative nature of X, Y or Z. No matter how

described, the nuclear family must not be "ontologized", must not be (mis)taken for The Natural Family ut sic, even less as that sociological entity most "naturally Christian" or Christianizable. From a moral, let alone evangelical point of view, the extended family is just as natural, sociologically speaking, as any of the so-called elementary families. Moreover, one no more reaches the extended family by the mere addition of nuclear families than one comes to monogamy by the simple subtraction of wives. The transformations in question are qualitative as well as quantitative. We are dealing with two different species of families and not variations on substantially the same genus.

Having, we hope, clarified what nuclear and extended are not, let us suggest what they might, for the sake of argument, be.

The Extended Family

Though there is much talk of the extended family in ecclesiastical circles, it is rarely described in detail which is perhaps as well since a Ghanaian bishop speaking of the matrilineal Ashanti would soon realize his extended family was quite other than that of a colleague from the patrilineal Wanyamwezi of Tanzania. The model created here of the extended family is based on my own experience of one, as well as on my readings about others. Like all models, it is bound to be static and selective, but it is better for discussion's sake to be subjectively specific then nominalistically vague.

In the village societies which characterized much of Africa, the family "traditionally" fulfilled most of the functions which elsewhere have been detached from the context of kinship. Family heads were politicians and priests. Work and play took place within the family. To be cut off from one's family was not simply to be deprived of affection, it was to lose one's livelihood, one's social identity and legal rights. From cradle to the grave the family took care of everything and everyone. In a society where there are no priests, no churches, no teachers, no schools, no doctors, no hospitals, no capitalists, no factories, no judges, no goals, no politicians, no parliaments, no soldiers, no barracks, the family's role is of necessity extensive.

The Nuclear Family

The nuclear family could be seen as the extended family stripped of most functions and reduced to bare essentials. It is a unit of consumption rather than production; its political, legal and even educative roles have become residual; it is religiously passive, especially in a Church where the permanent professionals of both sexes are overwhelmingly celibate. Its principal if not only remaining role would seem to consist in creating a haven of restorative peace and supportive affection.

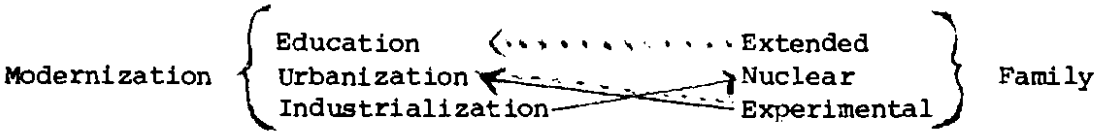
This peeling-away approach has two drawbacks. If we have an onion in mind, it can give the impression of ending up with little of substance; whereas, with a banana in mind, the impression can be the opposite: that of having hit finally upon a core of vital, inalienable importance. It is more rewarding to see the nuclear family as having a positive identity of its own and to describe it. Quantitatively, it is relatively easy to describe the model which people seem to have in mind when speaking about the nuclear family. It will consist of a father and mother with a culturally-conditioned average number of children. Qualitatively, the description of the nuclear family is far more arduous. The model made here is based on my early life in one nuclear family, my experience of others, and what most moral theologians appear to have (had?) in mind when waxing eloquent about the naturally sound and supernaturally suitable family.

The couple will have come together by their own free choice. Their love might become less romantic, which is not to say less real, as time goes on but it will not have been preceded by pre-nor will it be paralleled by para-marital sex. They will have their own house where the wife, not being obliged to go out and work, will spend most of her time tending to her husband's and her children's needs. The State will do all in its power to promote and protect this family's rights in such fields as health or education, since it is the foundation of society itself.

From the Extended to the Nuclear

The shape and size of the family in Africa have been shrinking in recent times. There are exceptions to this process, whose rhythm varies from place to place, from people to people, but overall there would seem to be numerically less individuals involved in forming a family than previously. We will examine tentative explanations of this phenomenon apart from pastoral evaluations of it.

1) A sociological account of the shift: explanations should combine a posteriori and a priori approaches. Impressionistic and idealistic accounts are respective distortions of the two. An impression, for instance, that Modernization has had an effect upon the Family is too general to be of much theoretical value let alone of practical use, since these two face each other not directly but only through more concrete and complexly interrelated factors.



(The arrows indicate different strengths and directions of influence).

Idealists on the other hand tend to have so clear and distinct an idea of what The Family theologically or philosophically is that they have difficulty in heeding the suggestiveness of fresh data. Impressionists are impatient of sociological subtleties and idealists are convinced that data can never subvert their doctrines. The former are not likely to be impressed by the restricted scope of the following account, while the latter will find it falls short of the philosophical idea of the natural family, not to say wide of the theological ideal of the supernatural family.

It is as well to insist, then, that this explanation of the shift from the extended to the nuclear family is no more than the fleshing-out of a hunch inspired by limited data. It is simply explored as a via media between the superficial subjectivity of the impressionist and the ontological objectivism of the idealist.

There is at least one society which, to all intents and purposes, has dispensed with the family. Forced to give up hunting and gathering, the Ik of northern Uganda fell below subsistence level. In this fall they shed most of the values and institutions which the idealist deems not simply indispensable but intrinsic to human nature. Love--even that between mother and child--and family life became luxuries the Ik could no longer afford. The struggle for individual survival led the healthy to snatch food literally from the mouths of the weak. Ik individualism was so in keeping with their changed circumstances that it is not even possible to dub it immoral.

The existence of admittedly extreme cases such as the Ik does none the less lend credibility to centring the analysis of kinship on the individual actor's egocentric negotiations aimed at fulfilling his goals. Data demands that one dispense with such romantic, a priori notions as man's innate sociability or his

instinctive drive to form a family. Changes in kinship patterns and especially the quasi-elimination of the family can more readily be understood if we start our analysis with the hypothesis of the individual actor trading his resources against those of others for the solving of material, psychological and social problems.

One analytical pole would thus be constituted by a completely self-reliant actor. Able to satisfy all his needs from his own resources, he would tend not to entertain any relationship, let alone maintain relationships of kin. Actors enter into relationships when they have moral and material services they are able and need to exchange. Socio-economic stability will facilitate the trust between individuals and will enable more time to elapse before the benefits accruing from services rendered are claimed.

Thus it was in the interest of parents in the extended family to have and care for as many children as possible, since in the absence of state pensions a numerous progeny was a guarantee of a relatively happy old age. The Ik neither care for children nor for the old, since the time in which they can reasonably trust someone to reciprocate is limited to the here and now.

Sociologically speaking, the family and kinship are neither God-given absolutes nor essential features of human nature. They are means to achieving an actor's ends. They will be employed there where they happen to prove (the) most convenient and (the) least costly. But when their costs outweigh by far their benefits, alternatives to kin such as friends, neighbours or welfare agencies will be preferred.

This might seem a singularly mercenary and surely unchristian approach to the family. It does, however, allow us to understand the evanescence of kin in extreme cases such as those of the Ik or industrial Lancashire. It could, moreover enable us to envisage the evolution of the family more realistically and less romantically, to sort out what is "really" revealed" from what is not, to establish what is "essentially human" and what is not. At the very least, it could enlighten us as to the emergence of the nuclear family in modern Africa.

Before being lamented as the breakdown of an authentic African past or lauded as a move towards a more couple-centred Christian future, the shift from the extended to the nuclear family should perhaps be looked upon as largely answering to the efficiency of the latter and reflecting the redundancy of the former in contributing to the actor's aims.

If there is an element of truth in this tentative explanation, an important corollary should be noted. "The values of the African extended family must be promoted and preserved" say the AMECEA bishops. But can spiritual values be readily extracted from one type of social setting and shipped to another without undergoing transformation?

Take a value like respect; in the context of the extended family I knew, this meant daughters-in-law not speaking to their fathers-in-law until they had produced a first child for the group; it demanded that husband and wife not eat together, that children be disciplined rather severely and so on. Without these formal patterns of respect the extended family would (and does) cease to exist.

That kind of informal, easygoing, egalitarian respect which is naturally commensurate to the conjugal family is considered by at least the elder members of an extended family no respect at all. Since to X social shape and size there is a congruent set of more spiritual dispositions x^1, just as to Y there is Y^1, the sociologist cannot help wondering whether the sincere desire to export X^1 to Y is not partly wishful thinking.

2) Ethical and evangelical evaluations of the shift: if the Africans are moving towards a family unit materially similar in shape and size to the nuclear, it seems to be significantly different from the conjugal form the nuclear family is (fondly?) imagined to have taken in the West. Several authors have noticed that the separation of the sexes which was a feature of the extended family in the countryside is reproduced and even strengthened in the modern, urban family.

Pooling incomes, going to church and taking recreation together, eschewing para-marital sex, collaborating in housework--these are but some of the signs of the conjugal family. Surveys show them to be conspicuously absent from the nuclear families of modern Africa.

This could be a case of "things having to get worse before they get better" in that, African women not being as yet economically, educationally and otherwise the equivalent of men, the enabling conditions for the emergence of the conjugal (Christian) family have still to materialize. Having been exacerbated as a result of rapid social change, the detrimental division between the sexes will disappear, leaving a happily harmonized couple, imaging the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Another and perhaps more plausible interpretation of the phenomenon could be that modern Africans, rather than falling short of the ideal conjugal kind of nuclear family, are feeling their way towards another type--that of "companionship, where each of the spouses seeks to lead a complementary but autonomous life". As in so many other fields, African cultures seem to be more down to earth than others which act as if impossibly high ideals were not only widely realizable but widely realized. Sociological studies resumed by Packard suggest that in many American marriages the husband-wife relationship was more coolly utilitarian than sentimentally affectionate. Sharing was more material than moral; the climate more contractual than companionable.

Between Africans and Americans, however, (in so far as "they" exist!) there lies a significant difference. The latter have been conditioned to guiltily feel that this emotionally low-key and rather calculating partnership is somehow unnatural, not to say unchristian, whereas the former will be pleasantly surprised if they come to intensely enjoy living and sharing together unconditionally.

Again, should there be an element of truth in this interpretation of the shift from extended to nuclear family life, two corollaries are worth detailing. First, "trial marriage" is a misnomer for the pre-marital cohabitation becoming characteristic of young African couples. It is a term coined by those for whom marriage naturally and supernaturally suddenly starts with an unconditional surrender for life. Given their definition of marriage they rightly conclude that those who come together from the outset on a merely conditioned understanding are unlikely to end up "genuinely" married. But could not this mating pattern be an attempt to activate an alternative to marriage as traditionally or theologically conceived rather than as a trial run for it?

Secondly, the African material could bring out the utopian ambiguity of the conjugal ideal. Is the above delineated conjugal kind of family compatible with the egalitarianism envisaged by emancipationists? The famous six-times-divorced film star, Heddy Lamar, wrote in her autobiography: "perhaps my problem in marriage--and it is the problem of many women--was to want both intimacy and independence"(p.246).

In the kind of family (the one called here for convenience's sake "conjugal") idealized by many Christian writers, the woman was powerless, entirely dependent economically on her husband (far more than ever before in the history of the

family) and completely homebound, with many children to bring up and few of the modern mechanical aids to reduce time-consuming domestic activities, plus isolation--misconstrued as independence--from kin and neighbours .

The emerging nuclear family of Africa might be less "cosy" than its conjugal counterpart which coloured Christian thinking about the family, but it could be more in keeping with that form of personal freedom which women everywhere seek to forge. What the family of tomorrow loses in terms of hierarchical harmony could be gained in the shape of companionable complementarity.

Reference: PRO MUNDI VITA BULLETIN, January 1980.

Note: Reference is made in the above text to three works listed in the bibliography. They are:

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FAMILY IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

- Th. Mampra

(The current issue of the Bulletin of the Secretariat for Non-Christians from which this article is taken, contains five studies of the family in different religious traditions: Islam, African Traditional Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.

As they consider the crisis of Christian family life and marriage in many parts of the world today the attention of the Synod Members is drawn to the rich variety of religions and cultures which go to form the patrimony of traditional wisdom of different peoples in their understanding of family. Many of these values are profoundly human and are thus, not destroyed by the Gospel but assumed and transformed from within. Ed.)

Introduction: In this short essay on Family in the Indian context a modest attempt is made to present the main features of the Indian family and its role in the larger society. Without being exhaustive, it tries to depict the important aspects of the life of the family both in the ancient Indian society, and to some extent, in the changed circumstances of contemporary India. Indian society has not presented and does not present now a monolithic picture. Unity in diversity has been its characteristic from time immemorial, whether in race or religion, language or philosophy, customs or practices. Although the two main cultural groups namely, the Dravidians and the Aryans had their independent growth and development, there has been a cross-fertilization between the two, and hence one may reasonably speak of certain common factors which form the basis of Indian culture and civilization. Most of our knowledge of the past and to a certain extent, of the present, is based on the beliefs and practices of the upper classes.

a) Traditional Patterns of Indian Family

i) Four Ashramas: The ancient law books of India begin to speak of the family in the context of the four stages of life (varnashrama dharma): brahmacarya or the student, grihastha or the house-holder, vanaprastha or life in the forest, and sannyasa or religious--usually mendicant. Thus married life and family is generally considered to be one of the integral stages of a normal human life span, although one is not necessarily bound by law to embrace this stage. For the law books give ample room for those young men or women who do not want to marry but choose instead to remain life-long celibates (cf. DHARMASASTRA, Yajnavalkya samhita, I, 49).

ii) Family: The Indian family was, in classical times, and to some extent even today, a joint one--that is to say, a close link was maintained between the brothers, uncles, cousins and nephews, who often lived under one roof or group of roofs, and owned the immovable property of the line in common. (Here we do not underestimate the inroads which an emerging industrial society are in the process of making into the pattern of joint family).

Like the semitic and European family, it was patriarchal and patrilinear. The father was the head of the house and administrator of the joint property, and except in Kerala, the headship descended in the male line. (In Kerala, till recently, the Marumakathayam (matrilinear) system was followed, by which the mother was considered the head of the family and the children took the name of the mother's family and not of the father's).

The ancient Indian family included parents, children, grand children, uncles and their descendants, and various collaterals on the male side. It might include adopted children, and unless poor it would also possess a varying number of servants, domestic serfs and clients; a brahmin family might in addition find room for a number of students, who were engaged in a lengthy course of training under the head of the house and were treated as members of the family.

Thus in a polygamous society (where and when the custom existed) where girls were married young, it formed a very large group.

It was and still is customary to look upon the family rather than the individuals as the unit of the social system; thus the population of a region was generally estimated in families rather than in heads. The bonds of family were such that the exact relationship within the group were in a sense blurred or lost sight of; for instance, a son might commonly refer to his father's several wives indiscriminately as his mothers, and the distinction between brother and paternal cousin was not always made clearly.

It was characteristic of the joint family that the group was bound together by sraddha, the rite of commemorating the ancestors, at which balls of rice called pindas were offered to the dead. Sons, grandsons and great grandsons of the deceased were joined together in sraddha, and three generations of the dead were believed to participate in the benefits of the ceremony. Thus the dead and the living were linked together by this rite, which, like the ancestor worship of the Chinese, was a most powerful source in consolidating the family.

One may say that sraddha defined the family; those who were entitled to participate in the ceremony were sapindas (co-pindas) members of the family group. This rite which is still practised, goes back to the Vedic times. This deep sense of family solidarity, in spite of its possible abuses, gave a measure of social security to its members.

The paterfamilias, though a powerful and awe-inspiring figure, was not usually an arbitrary tyrant; his power, like that of the king was somewhat limited by sacred law and customs. Although jurists differed on the question of his rights over the family property, the two schools of jurisprudence (Mitaksara and Dayabhaga) agree that he is more a steward for his descendants rather than an outright owner of the family property.

The partition of a large joint family was favoured by the lawyers, since thus more domestic religious rites will be performed, and the gods receive more honour and in turn will bless the land more abundantly. Commonly partition took place on the death of the paterfamilias, when the property was divided among the sons. The eldest son did not receive any special inheritance, except sometimes a very small weightage amounting to five percent of a share. The partition was not necessarily postponed until the father's death. It regularly occurred if the father renounced the world to become an ascetic.

Most authorities rejected the right of women to inherit, although Yajnavalkya placed the wife followed by the daughters, immediately after the sons to inherit the property.

iii) The role of the child (esp. male child) in the family: The proportionately large number of religious ceremonies (samskaras) performed for the child shows the importance of the child in the life of his parents and in the family as a whole. From the time of the earliest hymns of the Rig Veda, sons were looked upon as great blessings. At least one son was almost essential to perform funeral rites for his father, and thus ensure his safe transit to the other world. Adopted sons were but poor substitutes for true sons, and their efficiency in sraddha ceremonies was dubious.

Thus there were strong religious reasons for the procreation of children, especially for at least one male child. The intense family feeling of Hindu India enhanced the desire for sons, without whom the line would disappear. The fact that in the struggle for existence against physical forces, men were more useful than women, might also have contributed to favouring the birth of a male rather than female child. In patriarchal societies, and in primitive conditions, a son was economically more valuable than a daughter.

Girls were incapable of helping their parents in the other world, or of perpetuating the line (because at marriage they became members of their husband's family). The necessity of providing them with dowries also lessened their desirability. There were thus very practical reasons why girls should be unwelcomed. However it is only true to say that in good Indian families daughters were cared for and petted just as sons were. An educated daughter was the pride of the family.

The happy and often care-free life of the child did not last for very long. For the poor child there was work to do when he was able and for the wealthier there were lessons. Normally, a boy began to learn the alphabet in his fourth or fifth year. In richer homes tutors were maintained for the children of the family, but in the middle ages education was also given at village schools attached to temples. Though women's education was never looked upon as essential, girls were by no means neglected, and well-bred women were usually literate.

b) Marriage: A Sacred Institution

i) Ideals of marriage: Ideally young men were taught for about twelve years after initiation, although studies could be terminated when he had mastered the vedas. A few earnest students took vows of perpetual celibacy, and continued religious studies throughout their whole life. Normally, however,

the young man in his early twenties would return home, to resume the every day life of his class.

It was generally thought advisable for such young men to marry as soon as possible, for unless he had taken a vow of religious celibacy, marriage and procreation of children were considered a positive duty. (cf. DHARMASASTRA, Yajnavalkya samhita, I, 63-64). In general marriage had three main purposes: the promotion of religion by the performance of household sacrifices; progeny, whereby the father and his ancestors were assured of a happy after-life, and the line was continued; and rati or sexual pleasure.

The normal religious marriage was and still is arranged by the parents of the couples, after much consultations and the study of omens, horescopes and auspicious physical characteristics (cf. DHARMASASTRA, Yajnavalkya samhita I, 52-53). The couple were usually of the same class and caste, but of different gotras and pravaras if they were of higher class. Although marriage was forbidden between persons with a common paternal ancestor within seven generations or a maternal ancestor within five, this rule does not seem to have been followed very strictly in certain parts of the country.

Though in early times it was usual for girls to be fully adult before marriage, the Smritis recommend that while a husband should be at least twenty, a girl should be married immediately before puberty. Child marriage of both parties, which became common in later times seems to have no basis in the sacred literature. Ancient Indian medical authorities state that the best children are born from mothers over sixteen.

The Hindu ideal of marriage is essentially a fellowship between a man and a woman who seek to live creatively in a partnership for the pursuit of the four great objects of life: dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Its purpose includes the generation of children, their care and nurture, and co-operation in a better social order; enrichment of the personality of husband and wife, through the fulfilment of their needs for a permanent comradeship, in which each may supplement the life of the other and both may achieve completeness.

The ideal has come down from vedic times and is preserved in the elaborate ritual which is in force even today. As part of the ceremonies, the bride's father formally gave her to the groom, who promised that he would not behave falsely to her in respect of the three traditional aims of life, namely piety, wealth and pleasure. Next, offerings of ghee and rice were made in the sacred fire, around which he led her, usually with their garments knotted together. Finally they were sprinkled with holy water. These ceremonies were always performed with the recitation of vedic and other verses believed to have spiritual efficacy.

The newly married then turned to the groom's house, where another sacrifice to the domestic fire was performed. In the evening it was encumbent upon them to look at the Pole star, a symbol of faithfulness. For three nights the couple were expected to remain continent; in some texts they are allowed to sleep together with a staff between them, but others instruct them to sleep apart on the ground. On the fourth night the husband performed a rite to promote conception and the marriage was consummated. The secular kamasutra even advises the postponement of consummation for ten days.

The length and solemnity of the ceremonies will give some idea of the importance and sanctity of marriage in the eyes of ancient Indian law-givers. Though this form of marriage was the normal one, there were other forms too, all of which were not generally approved. A marriage was considered binding even when the religious ceremony had not been performed.

Once the long marriage ceremony was completed the house-holder was free to devote himself to the three ends of life namely, dharma, gaining religious merit through following the sacred law; artha, gaining wealth by honest means; and kama, pleasure of all kinds. The three were of descending order of importance, and it was thought that where the interests of one end conflicted with those of another, the higher should have priority. The first one involved numerous religious duties, notably ceremonies at birth, funeral etc, and the regular carrying out of the five daily sacrifices which stressed regular periods of prayer and worship at sunrise, noon and sunset.

ii) Sexuality: In discussing the relations between men and women, Hindu legislators avoid the extremes of prudery and prurience. According to Havelock Ellis, in India sexual life has been sanctified and divinised to a greater extent than in any other part of the world. It seems never to have entered into the heads of the Hindu legislators that anything natural could be offensively obscene, a singularity which pervades all their writings, but is no proof of the depravity of their morals.

Love in India, both as regards theory and practice, possesses an importance which it is impossible for us even to conceive. According to those ancient lawgivers, to look upon sex as something unclean is a sign of moral perversion. The Hindu looks upon sex not as inherently disgraceful, but as sacred. Hence in Hindu practice, marriage is not only tolerated, but extolled. As all living beings depend on the support of the mother, so do all the stages of life depend on the support of the householder.

Of the three ends of life, the third one, pleasure includes desire of every kind and its fulfilment but it has often a sexual connotation. Sexual activity was considered indeed a positive religious duty, for the husband was told to have intercourse with his wife within a period of eight days at the close of menstruation.(DHARMASASTRA, Yajnavalkya samhita I, 79). Sexuality was not looked upon as mere vent for the animal passions of the male, but as a refined mutual relationship for the satisfaction of both partners.

iii) Divorce: In this connection, one may have to see also certain problems related to marriage such as divorce and polygamy. From the point of view of the sacred law, a marriage was indissoluble once the seven steps had been taken together. Even if not consummated, it could not be annulled, and divorce was quite impossible. An errant wife lost most of her rights, but her husband was still responsible for her bare maintenance if it was demanded, and she was not entitled to remarry.

However, the Arthasastra hints at the possibility of divorce, at least in marriages not solemnized by religious rites. In such cases divorce was allowed by mutual consent on grounds of incompatibility, and one party might obtain divorce without the consent of the other if apprehensive of actual physical danger from his or her partner. The Arthasastra would allow divorce even after religious marriage if a wife had been deserted by her husband, and lay down waiting periods of from one to twelve years, which varied according to circumstances and class.

These provisions, however, do not appear in later lawbooks, and gradually divorce became virtually impossible for people of the higher classes. Among many lower classes however, divorce is still permitted by custom, and this may also have been the case in earlier days.

iv) Polygamy: The ordinary people of India were generally monogamous, although even in the time of Rig veda polygamy was not totally unknown. Kings and chiefs were almost invariably polygamous, as were many brahmins and

wealthier members of the lower orders. In ordinary circumstances polygamy was not encouraged by the earlier legal literature. One Dharmasastra even forbids a man to take a second wife if his first is of good character and has borne him sons (cf. Yajnavalkya samhita, I, 73 ff.). Another later source states that a polygamist is unfit to testify in a court of law.

The Arthasastra lays down various rules which discourage wanton polygamy, including the payment of compensation to the first wife. The idea models of Hindu marriage are the hero Rama and his faithful wife Sita, whose mutual love was never broken by the rivalry of a co-wife; however, there is frequent mention of polygamous marriages in the sacred literature itself, so that it is unreasonable to think that it was totally unknown or was not in practice.

One of the things that strikes us in the ancient Hindu customs is that, in his efforts to produce a son a man might without slur on his character take a second wife, if his first was barren, and so on. Indeed in these circumstances, polygamy was a religious duty.

If the husband was sterile or impotent, he had to take further measures. In the last resort he would appoint a close relative, usually a brother, to produce offspring on his behalf. From several stories in the epics and elsewhere it appears that holy men of special sanctity were also in demand for this purpose, and practices of this kind were not considered unusual.

Similarly if the husband died without producing a male child, his brother might act on his behalf. Although this seems to have been an ancient practice, it appears that before the beginning of the Christian era, it began to be disapproved of, and medieval writers include it among the forbidden customs which were not to be continued, even if permitted in earlier days.

Conclusion

The limited space allotted to the essay does not permit us to deal with the other points in detail. We can only say that the stress and strain of an emerging industrial society, the displacement of young men and women to unfamiliar surroundings and circumstances, their marginal and often anonymous existence in the new situation and so on, make heavy inroads into the time-honoured customs and traditions.

Liberal education, higher education for girls, onslaught of certain 'modern ideologies' and freak groups, are all creating ripples, especially among the culturally uprooted youth groups who are not infrequently torn between faithfulness to the ancient ideals and attraction to the apparent promises of the new fashions. Only a transformation of society, firmly rooted in the healthy ideals of the past but at the same time open to the spirit of the times with a critical mind, can help the creation of a sound basis for spiritually healthy and socially constructive norms of family life.

Our short description and analysis of family life in ancient Indian society has shown abundantly some of these factors the society held fast: the mutuality and complementarity of sexes, the sacred character of sexuality and marriage, indissolubility and to a great extent the monogomous character of marriage, the role of prayer, love and the sacramental nature of family life are some of these characteristics which held good then, and which should find an honourable place also in today's society.

Reference: BULLETIN Secretariatus pro non Christianis, 1980-XV/2, 44.

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SYNOD 1980 ON FAMILY LIFE

SELECTED POINTS AND SOME INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS ON THE 'INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS'

- Brian Hearne, cssp

(In the following reflections the problems of inculturation in Africa are given special attention. Fr. Brian Hearne is accompanying the AMECEA Bishops - delegate to the Synod. Ed).

The following reflections are simply intended as guides to the understanding and discussion of the main issues presented in the document, and have no official status. They have been presented orally to the Plenary Conference of the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC), Dar-es-Salaam, 17th July 1980.

Introductory General Points

Instrument for meditation: (a) The document is meant to be an instrument for meditation and discussion, and is not a schema to be followed, completed or approved by the Synod--it is a starting point, as an attempted synthesis of reactions from Episcopal Conferences, Roman Dicasteries, and Superior Generals, presumably to the first working paper published last year (Gaba Reprint no. 197).

Credibility of the Church: (b) The vital importance of this Synod is stressed: to a large extent the credibility of the Church in today's world will depend on the teaching presented by the Synod on family life. The document stresses the ideal of Christian marriage, making great use of Gaudium et Spes, nos 47-52, which mark a new departure for Catholic theology of marriage, and which have provided Pope John Paul with the major ideas he has been communicating about married life. As Fr. Denis O'Callaghan writes: "Without doubt, the synthesis of love, sexuality, partnership and parenthood in the context of Christian marriage set out by Vatican II is unprecedented" (ITQ, vol 46, no.4, p.235). The Synod must be able to communicate this message positively, without over-emphasis on negative features, if its message is to be credible.

High ideal of marriage: (c) The document sets forth a high ideal of marriage along the lines of Gaudium et Spes, emphasizing the beauty and holiness of the interpersonal relationship. It also takes what may be called a 'hard line' towards anything that either contradicts or diminishes this ideal. Here the question of theological truth and pastoral reality has to be faced (cf. editorial in Clergy Review, May 1980).

Pluralism and diversity in cultures: (d) There is a lot more space given in this document than in the previous one to pluralism and diversity in cultures. Some of the Pope's words in his address to married people in Kinshasa last May might be quoted:

"African traditions, judiciously utilised, may have their place in the construction of Christian homes in Africa. I am thinking in particular of all the positive values of the family feeling so deeply rooted in the African soul and which takes on multiple aspects, which can certainly give so-called advanced civilisations food for thought; the seriousness of the matrimonial commitment at the end of a long process; priority given to the transmission of life and therefore the

importance attached to the mother and children; the law of solidarity among families related by marriage, which is exercised especially in favour of old persons, widows and orphans; a kind of co-responsibility in taking charge of and bringing up the children (which is capable of relieving many psychological tensions); the cult of ancestors and of the dead, which promotes faithfulness to traditions. Certainly the delicate problem is to assume all this family dynamism, inherited from ancestral customs, while transforming it and purifying it in the perspective of the society which is springing up in Africa" (AFER, 1980 no.4, p.200).

It is surely in this context that specific African pastoral problems in the area of family life have to be approached: polygamy, levirate, marriage catechumenate etc. Here also the need for a less centralised approach to these and similar issues must be stressed. Local churches, aware of the Church's official magisterium, and also of their own cultures and traditions, must be able to make their own decisions.

Global injustice: (e) A surprisingly strong line is taken in the document with regard to global injustice. It is seen that many of the problems facing families and family values are the result of an unjust system of world trade, of the influence of the profit motive (multi-national corporations and elites), of the exploitation of "cheap labour" in the third world, and of the growing inequalities of the 'consumer society'. For example, 20% of the world's population use 80% of the world's resources, which makes the attempts of the West to control the birth rate in poor countries a mockery...

Sexual morality: (d) Despite the document's 'hard-line' approach to questions of sexual morality, there are also indications of a certain openness, e.g., polygamy is not mentioned among the abuses of family life (as it is in Gaudium et Spes) and it is stated that research must continue into acceptable methods of family planning that are at once authentically human and really effective.

The text is not something final: (g) The document states that the bishops must not see the text as something final, but must rather focus on what is for the good of the family in today's world. Its spirit is that of communicating the good news of and to the family, based on the joy and newness of the pasch of Christ for every aspect of human existence: therefore, a 'positive pastoral approach' must be taken. The heart of the document lies in the concept of marriage as an 'inter-personal covenant'...

'Nuclear family': (h) In the final part of the introduction, the family is defined in the strict sense as the 'nuclear family', but it is allowed that, in a wider sense, the family may also mean the extended family as a network of relationships.

Part I: The Family In Today's World

Actual life experience of people: This part illustrates the concern of the Church today to begin with the actual life experience of people, not with abstract formulas, and as such has great methodological importance. It may be asked to what extent married people have actually contributed to this description, and to what extent it remains a merely theoretical account of some contemporary realities, 'from the outside'.

The enormous pace and degree of change is described, with reference to technology, and the questions this poses for human ethics: the relation between ethics and techniques for human growth. Among the many points referred to are: the unjust distribution of earthly goods; medical developments (e.g., the discovery of anti-biotics, increased maternal and natal care...); urbanisation; inflation;

consumerism; emigration for work. Basic human dignity is seen as a fundamental value in today's world, with the right to education, and to equal rights for women; the 'women's liberation movement' is given positive mention (perhaps a point to be developed in the African context at the Synod)...

Problems relevant to Africa: In No. 16, some problems relevant to Africa are referred to: extra-marital relations, polygamy. Polygamy is seen as a result (at least in some cases) of undue separation between husband and wife (for purposes of work etc), or to widowhood or the desertion of women by their husbands, so that they are left without support (No.16). Special mention is made of the marriage 'shauri' (translaticium) in African custom, with its process of gradual preparation, and the involvement of the whole community. The question is raised about how this tradition can be related to canonical norms for catholic people--a question that must surely be tackled by the African delegates to the Synod.

Bishop John Njenga's suggestion at the AMECEA plenary, 1973, may be recalled: he said: "There is no convincing reason to argue that those who marry according to traditional customs do not duly fulfill the sacrament of matrimony...Once these conditions of self-giving and popular approval are fulfilled, the integrating of the Church blessing and the local customary rites into one marriage celebration should be considered...."(AFER 1974, nos 1&2, p.121).

Birth rate: Questions about the birth rate, and government control of this, are then considered, and it is stressed that it is only the parents who can decide on the number of children they should have. Responsible parenthood--a quite new concept in Catholic teaching on marriage--is stressed...

Pluralist world: A short section deals with the Catholic family in the pluralist world of today, with its positive and negative factors (these need to be specified in Africa); Catholic identity must be preserved, together with an ecumenical openness...No. 23 points to some new ideas in Catholic theology that have great pastoral importance: notably, the understanding of the family as a school of love, of inter-personal growth (and not a "remedium concupiscentiae"!), and a phrase from Gaudium et Spes is used for the first of several times in the document: "the family is a school for human enrichment" (G et S 52). In no.25, various movements aimed at helping family life are referred to, and the idea of the family as the 'domestic church' is brought out...

Part II: God's Plan For Families Today

Signs of the times: The title of this part shows a concern to scrutinise the signs of the times for God's purpose in the life of people today. God's providence is at work in the sense of greater freedom and responsibility, and in the search for equality and deeper personal relationships. There are negative aspects too, in the abuse of sex for personal pleasure only and in permissive hedonism.

Marriage as a covenant is the key concept here, with stress on communion of life. This is placed in the wider context of the human need to relate to others, to grow as persons through love and self-giving; marriage is seen as the clearest expression ('sacrament') of this--a self-giving love that leads to new life, for the building of a more human world. The covenant is described in biblical terms (God and his people), and the Holy Trinity is seen as the fount of all family life: "God, in his innermost mystery, is not a solitude, but a family" (John Paul II, Puebla, 1979). The mystery of communion and participation that dwells in God is expressed in family life. This leads to a very fine exposition of the 'sacramentality' of marriage, in no.32, a section that is the heart of the entire document and that needs much discussion and practical application.

Sacramentality of marriage: The sacramentality of marriage is seen in the perspective of the Church as the basic sacrament of human communion with God and of human unity (Lumen Gentium 4). Marriage 'in Christ' is a great mystery, and shares in the fecundity of divine love. This sacramentality is not something 'added' to marriage but 'is' marriage itself as such (No. 32). "Christ did not institute a new rite, but made marriage itself a sacrament for baptised people" (id). This has important implications for ceremonies, rites, ministers, etc (see Bishop Njenga's remark quoted above). A practical question would be how this sacramental reality is to be actually experienced by African Christians in their own cultural background. The document reminds us of the sacrificial nature of all conjugal love, and of all true love, exemplified in Christ's "giving himself up for his Church".

Need for faith: No. 34 stresses the need for faith on the part of the marriage partners if they are to truly celebrate the sacrament: it is their faith and their interpersonal relationship of mutual self-giving that 'make' the sacrament. Here again, a new pastoral emphasis can be detected: how to help young people to grow in their faith-awareness of the meaning of marriage in the Lord. The document goes on to show that married love is not a merely 'private' affair, but concerns society and the whole community--marriage is personal but also social, an 'event', but also an 'institution'. The duty of responsible parenthood is again adverted to, and it is said that there is widespread ignorance of the proper methods of fulfilling this duty. Abortion is once again roundly condemned, and no. 39 comes back to the idea of the family as the basic cell of society, creating community as it reaches out to other families.

No. 40 spells out some of the implications of 'the sacramentality of the marriage relationship': the covenant reality runs through all of the life of the family, including all aspects (reconciliation, upbringing of children...) in its sacramental grace. This is the basis of the spiritual fecundity of the family, and of the various gifts of the Spirit that develop in it, as 'domestic church', and as a sacrament of unity, sharing in the mission that belongs to the Church as a whole. The need for chastity and conjugal ascesis in marriage is stressed, as one aspect of the paschal self-giving of Christ, and the indissolubility of marriage is insisted on, in the same context of total and self-giving commitment.

Dignity of women: No. 47 speaks of the authentic dignity of women, and the positive values of the movement for 'women's liberation'. Part II ends with a call for more dialogue between church pastors and families, with a reminder of the special importance of the 'sensus fidelium' for family matters. This section certainly needs to be expanded and made more practical, so that there is a real exchange between magisterium and people concerning family questions.

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(The next issue of Sedos, on November 1st will contain Brian Hearne's reflections on Part III of the 'Instrumentum Laboris' dealing with Pastoral Problems.)
Reference: AFER, Volume 22, No. 5 - October 1980.

"Extended Family" (An African participant at the Melbourne Conference).

We did not call them refugees, when they came over our borders. We live in extended families,. and so we simply received them into our family. To call some one a refugee is to separate and degrade that person. It is to point at him and say, "There is a refugee".

Reference: INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION, Vol.LXIX No.275, July 1980.