PROCLAIM

A Magazine for Missionary Animation

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Families as Subjects & Recipients of Mission

VOL 49. NO. 3

10 Years of Amoris Laetitia

100 Years of World Mission Day



10 Takeaways from Amoris Laetitia

Pope Francis on Love, Family, and Pastoral Care

1



The Joy of Love

Family love is a gift from God and a source of joy for the Church and the world.

2



Family Is a Domestic Church

The home is a place of prayer, faith formation, forgiveness, and daily holiness.

3



Love Grows Gradually

Marriage and family life mature through patience, sacrifice, and everyday acts of love.

4



Mercy Before Judgment

The Church is called to welcome, accompany, and heal rather than merely condemn.

5



Discernment Matters

Pastoral care must consider each person's concrete situation with wisdom and compassion.

6



No Family Is Perfect

Every family has struggles, yet grace is at work even in fragile and wounded realities.

7



Children Are a Blessing

Children are precious gifts who need love, protection, formation, and witness.

8



Communication Builds Communion

Listening, dialogue, and tenderness strengthen unity within marriage and family.

9



Families Are Missionary

Families evangelize through hospitality, service, fidelity, and joyful witness.

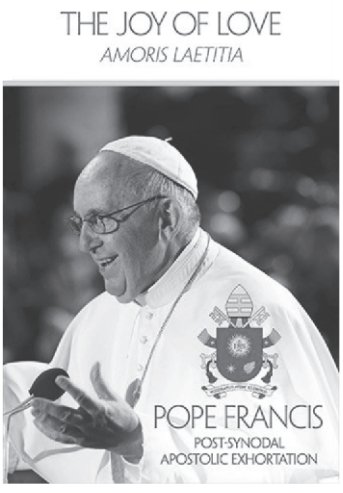
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Hope for Every Family

No family is beyond God's mercy; the Church must always offer hope and accompaniment.

Inspired by Amoris Laetitia (2016)



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Editor & Publisher
Rt Rev Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director
Pontifical Mission Organizations

Editorial Board
Dr Thomas J DSouza
Mahesh Lobo

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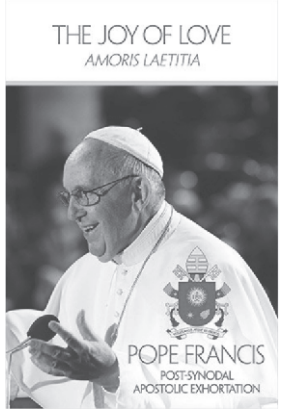
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PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS
PB 4216, No. 10, 3rd Cross,
Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru – 560042,
Karnataka, INDIA.
Tel: +91 79758 31942
Email: secretariat@indiapms.com
Website: www.pmoinindia.org

The Joy of Love in Mission

Families as Homes of the Gospel, Hope and Communion



Celebrating Ten Years of Amoris Laetitia: Family at the Service of Mission and Mission at the Service of Families

The year 2026 brings together two significant ecclesial celebrations. The Church marks ten years since the publication of Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia ("The Joy of Love") and celebrates the centenary of World Mission Day, instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1926. These anniversaries invite us to contemplate a profound relationship: the relationship between family and mission.

The family is not situated at the margins of the Church's missionary life. It stands at its heart. It is both a subject of mission and a recipient of mission. Families proclaim the Gospel through their daily witness, while they also need the Church's closeness, formation, protection, and compassionate accompaniment.



The theme of this issue of Proclaim—"The Joy of Love in Mission: Families as Homes of the Gospel, Hope, and Communion"—reminds us that the missionary renewal of the Church must begin in homes and must also return to homes.

The Family: A Home of the Gospel

The first place in which most people encounter love, trust, prayer, forgiveness, and belonging is the family. Long before children understand theological language, they learn the meaning of faith through the gestures they witness at home.

A child sees the Gospel when parents forgive one another, when grandparents transmit faith through stories and prayers, when a family welcomes a stranger, cares for an elderly member, shares food with the poor, or remains united during suffering. Such ordinary actions become a living catechism.

Christian families evangelize not primarily by preaching sermons but by embodying the Gospel. Their fidelity proclaims that lasting love is possible. Their hospitality reveals the welcoming heart of God. Their care for children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable members reflects the compassion of Christ. Their willingness to reconcile bears witness to the power of grace.

A home does not have to be perfect to become missionary. Indeed, no family is without limitations, misunderstandings, or wounds. Mission begins not with perfection but with a sincere willingness to allow Christ to dwell within the realities of everyday life.

The kitchen table, the family meal, the bedside of a sick person, and evening prayer can all become sacred missionary spaces. Within them, faith is received, tested, purified, and transmitted.

Families as Missionary Subjects

For too long, families have sometimes been treated only as beneficiaries of pastoral programmes. Amoris Laetitia invites the Church to recognize that families themselves are active agents of evangelization.

Married couples can accompany engaged couples. Parents can support other parents facing difficulties. Elderly persons can transmit memory and wisdom. Families who have passed through crises can offer hope to those who are presently struggling. Intercultural and

interfaith families can become schools of dialogue. Families of migrants can bear witness to courage, sacrifice, and trust in God.

Every Christian family possesses missionary gifts. These gifts may appear small, but the Kingdom of God frequently grows through what is small: a word of encouragement, a shared meal, a visit to a lonely neighbour, assistance offered to a struggling family, or a prayer taught to a child.

This is particularly important in the Indian context. Our families are rich in bonds, traditions, religious practices, and intergenerational relationships. At the same time, they face pressures arising from migration, unemployment, poverty, caste, dowry, domestic violence, consumerism, digital dependence, and changing cultural expectations.

In these circumstances, missionary families can become communities of resistance against everything that diminishes human dignity. They can challenge discrimination, protect women and children, honour the elderly, welcome persons of different backgrounds, and form young people in freedom, responsibility, and faith.



The future of mission will depend significantly on whether homes become places where the Gospel is not only spoken but practised.

Families as Recipients of Mission

While families evangelize, they must also be evangelized, strengthened, and accompanied. Mission at the service of families means that the Church goes out to meet families where they actually live, rather than waiting for them to conform to an imagined pastoral model.

Many families carry wounds that are not immediately visible. Some struggle with marital conflict or separation. Some experience infertility, illness, addiction, violence, or financial insecurity. Migrant families endure prolonged separation. Interfaith and interchurch couples negotiate complex religious and cultural questions. Single parents often carry responsibilities without adequate support. Widows, abandoned spouses, and divorced persons may experience loneliness and exclusion.



There are also families displaced by conflict, affected by ecological disasters, or trapped in cycles of poverty. Children suffer when parents are absent, when relationships become violent, or when digital culture replaces personal presence. Elderly persons can feel neglected even while living within the family home.

The Church cannot approach these realities merely with regulations or ready-made answers. She must approach them with the gaze of Jesus.

Pastoral accompaniment does not mean weakening the Christian vision of marriage and family. It means helping people move towards its fullness through patience, truth, mercy, and discernment. The Church teaches most convincingly when she first listens, understands, and walks alongside those who suffer.

A missionary parish must therefore be a home for families: a place where engaged couples are properly prepared, newly married couples are supported, parents receive formation, children are protected, young people are heard, and wounded families discover that they have not been abandoned.

The Missionary Conversion of Amoris Laetitia

Ten years after its publication, Amoris Laetitia continues to call the Church to pastoral conversion. It does not present the family as an

abstract ideal detached from human experience. It speaks of real families with their joys and burdens, their faithfulness and failures, their hopes and vulnerabilities.

Its missionary significance lies in the movement it asks of the Church: from distant judgment to compassionate accompaniment; from abstract idealism to pastoral realism; from uniform responses to responsible discernment; and from speaking about families to listening and speaking with them.

This does not lead to moral confusion. On the contrary, it follows the method of Jesus, who proclaimed the truth while drawing near to fragile persons. He did not extinguish the faintly burning wick. He awakened hope, restored dignity, and opened paths of conversion.

The Church's mission to families must therefore communicate both the beauty of God's plan and the tenderness of God's mercy. Truth without love can become a burden; love without truth can lose direction. In Christ, truth and mercy meet.

Pastoral discernment asks not simply, "What rule applies?" but also, "What is God doing in this person's life? What step towards healing, responsibility, and holiness is now possible? How can the Christian community accompany this journey?"

One in Christ, United in Mission

The centenary of World Mission Day offers a wider horizon for this reflection. The theme chosen for 2026, "One in Christ, United in Mission," reminds us that mission flows from communion with Christ and communion with one another.

The family is one of the first schools of such communion. Within family life, individuals learn that unity does not eliminate difference. They learn to share, wait, sacrifice, listen, and begin again. When family communion is nourished by Christ, it becomes a sign of the communion to which the whole human family is called.

World Mission Day also reminds every baptized person that mission belongs to the entire Church. It is not entrusted only to priests, religious, or those who travel to distant lands. Parents raising children in faith, grandparents praying for missionaries, young people using digital media responsibly, and families supporting missionary vocations and projects all participate in the Church's universal mission.

The missionary movement is therefore twofold. The Gospel travels from homes to the ends of the earth, and the concerns of the universal Church enter our homes through prayer, sacrifice, and solidarity.

During this centenary, we gratefully remember generations of missionaries who left their families and homelands to proclaim Christ. We also honour the families who nurtured their vocations, accepted the sacrifice of separation, prayed for them, and supported their mission.

India has received the generous witness of missionaries from many nations. Today, numerous Indian priests, religious, and lay faithful serve the Church across continents. Behind each missionary stands a family that first taught the language of faith, generosity, and self-giving

A Mission of the Gospel, Hope, and Communion

Families become homes of the Gospel when the Word of God shapes their choices. They become homes of hope when difficulties are faced with faith rather than despair. They become homes of communion when no member is treated as disposable and when love creates space for dialogue, forgiveness, and growth.

The Church, in turn, becomes missionary when she protects families, listens to them, and accompanies them through every season of life. Mission at the service of families must defend the dignity of marriage, women, children, the elderly, and the vulnerable. It must also address the social and economic conditions that prevent families from flourishing.

As we celebrate ten years of Amoris Laetitia and one hundred years of World Mission Day,

...Continued on Page 25

‘Magnifica humanitas’

AI Must serve humanity, not concentrate power



Marking the 135th anniversary of Rerum novarum, Pope Leo XIV releases his first encyclical, entitled 'Magnifica humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.' He appeals for the safeguarding of humanity, promotion of truth, dignity of work, social justice, and peace.

"Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together."

The opening words of Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, Magnifica humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence, summarize its underlying reasons and purpose. Published on Monday, May 25, the Pope signed the encyclical on May 15, the 135th anniversary of the promulgation of Pope Leo XIII's Rerum novarum.

Pope Leo XIV has taken up the legacy of his predecessor, writing a social encyclical which addresses one of the principal challenges of the contemporary age: artificial intelligence. Divided into five chapters, Magnifica humanitas has an underlying premise: technology is not "a force antagonistic to humanity" (4), nor is it "inherently evil" (9). However, "technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate, and use it." Therefore, Pope Leo XIV appeals for people to build "for the common good" and to "remain human," following a courageous mentality of shared responsibility and communion, so that the world "will come to recognize the human heart as the place where God desires to dwell" (16).

Church's social doctrine

The first chapter—"A Dynamic Approach Faithful to the Gospel"—traces the Social Doctrine of the Church in recent magisterium and the Second Vatican Council, highlighting "its dynamic character" (17). Far from being "a handbook of principles and norms to be applied," the Church's social teaching is rather a "theology of communion in history" (27), which guides our reading of events in light of the Gospel. In the years following, each successor of Peter "interpreted historical changes according to the Gospel, bringing to light different aspects of a single heritage: the dignity of the person, the value of work, the universal destination of goods, solidarity and subsidiarity, care for creation and the centrality of peace and fraternity" (45).

Safeguarding human dignity

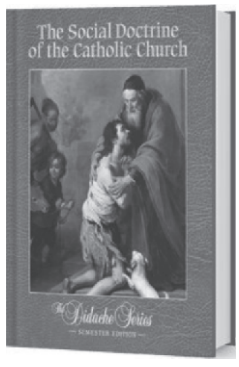
In the second chapter, Pope Leo XIV explores the "Foundations and Principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church." These foundations, he says, include the dignity of the person, created in the image and likeness of God. It is important to recall this since "the pressure of new ideologies or certain highly powerful interests" can reduce the human person to "a resource to be used and exploited." On the contrary, "the fundamental dignity of each person…is neither acquired nor earned, nor does it need to be justified" (53). A second foundation is the inviolability of human rights, among which the first is the right to life "from conception to its natural end." In this regard, Leo XIV defines induced abortion, the killing of the innocent, and euthanasia as "choices that the Church considers gravely wrong" (55). The third foundation is the recognition of the rights of minorities, with particular attention to women. The Pope calls for "concrete decisions" in their favor regarding laws, employment, education, in social and political responsibilities, so that they may be truly heard and valued (57).

'Gravely immoral' to subjugate a nation



Pope Leo XIV then identifies five principles of the Social Doctrine of the

Church. The first is the common good, and the Pope defines it as "the social expression of the dignity recognized in every person" (59). He forcefully affirms that "the promotion of the common good can never be separated from respect for the right of peoples to exist, to preserve their own identity and to contribute their unique qualities to the family of nations." Therefore, he says, "any attempt or plan to eliminate or subjugate a nation is gravely immoral and therefore unacceptable" (64).



Technology must not be in the hands of a few

The Pope then identifies the second principle of the "universal destination of goods." Pope Leo XIV insists on the need to ensure that technologies are not concentrated in the hands of only a few people, thereby widening the gap between those included and those excluded from the digital revolution (67). The third principle, subsidiarity (68), requires humanity to overcome "any form of paternalistic or welfare-based management of societal life" in favor of shared responsibility. Solidarity (73), the fourth principle, is both "a principle and a virtue," opposed to indifference and takes into account people and future generations.

Social justice is the fifth principle. In the digital age, social justice requires ensuring fair access to opportunities for all people, protecting the most vulnerable, combating hatred and disinformation, and subjecting the use of technologies to public oversight, "so that the guiding principle is not solely profit but the dignity of every person and the common good of all people" (80). Pope Leo XIV identifies migrants, refugees, and displaced persons as a "litmus test" for social justice. He therefore appeals for societies to protect "the rightful hopes" of those forced to leave, by ensuring them safe and legal routes, dignified welcome, and genuine paths to integration, while promoting "the right to remain" in one's homeland in peace and security (81).



Abuse and the examination of conscience by the Church

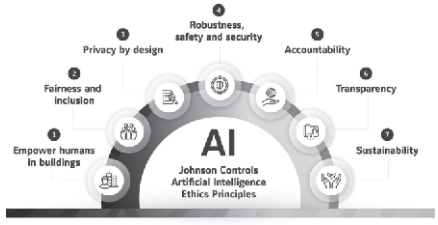
The Pope says these five principles should be applied not only to society, but also to the Church herself, which is called to carry out "an examination of conscience." Living out this justice calls for "purifying ecclesial relationships and structures from distortions that give rise to inequality, lack of transparency and abuse of power." This means to listen to the "victims of spiritual, economic, institutional, sexual and power-based abuse, as well as abuses of conscience." This examen "is an integral part of a journey toward justice, which includes acknowledging the harm done, just reparation and taking steps to prevent it from happening again" (89).

Tech for All
making technology accessible

An ethical code for AI

The third chapter stresses the need to approach artificial intelligence with vigilance. Pope Leo warns about the "technocratic paradigm" already denounced by Pope Francis and how it can require that every choice be dictated exclusively by measuring efficiency and profits (92). On the contrary, the most powerful technology is not necessarily the best. AI can imitate and simulate the person, but it does not possess a moral conscience, empathy, or affective, relational or spiritual capabilities. The Pope urges clarity about responsibilities and accountability at every stage of the development process, focusing on adequate AI policies and legal frameworks, independent oversight, and user education. Above all, Pope Leo calls for an ethical code subject to shared standards of social justice, because "a more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few" (107). Nor, he adds, should the environmental impact of new technologies be overlooked, since they require large quantities of energy and water, affecting Creation (101).

Disarming AI



AI must be "disarmed," Pope Leo XIV continues, in order to free it from the mentality of military, economic, and cognitive competition. "To disarm means discrediting the assumption that technical power automatically confers the right to govern. To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity" (110). He devotes ample space to a critique of transhumanism and posthumanism, which interpret progress as the overcoming of human limits. Instead, limitations are not defects to be eliminated, but a constitutive dimension of the human person, because it is in fragility and finitude that relationship and openness to God and to others mature. "Humanity flourishes not despite limitations, but often through them" (118).

Technological progress without regression of the heart

Pursuing technological innovation at the expense of eliminating human limitations would cause an anthropological regression. "Humanity—in all its grandeur and woundedness—must never be replaced or surpassed." Technology can alleviate humanity's sufferings and open new possibilities, but it must not deny the essence of humanity, which is our "capacity for relationship and love" (126). In the face of AI, "the true alternative is not between enthusiasm and fear, but between two paths of development: a progress that serves individuals and peoples, or a progress that subjects them to the mentality of power" (129).

An ecology of communication and the centrality of schools

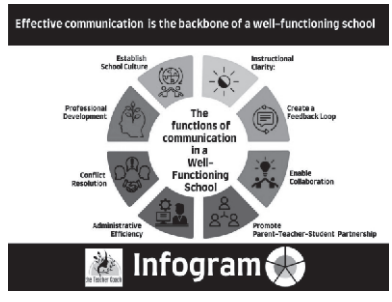
In the fourth chapter, the Pope calls for an "ecology of communication" based on truth. He urges transparency in how content is selected, protection of personal data, serious journalism founded on argumentation and verification, and a new awareness in the "proper and critical" use of digital tools. The Pope also appeals for a renewed educational alliance, so that the "desire to ask questions" may not be extinguished in young people by perfect machines that make human thought seem useless (140). Pope Leo XIV calls for renewed attention to schools as places where people learn to "seek and love the truth" (147).

The dignity of work

The Pope emphasizes the importance of protecting the dignity of work by designing systems centered on the person and not only on performance. "The 'new ways' of working are not necessarily better," he writes, "while AI promises to boost productivity by taking over mundane tasks, it frequently forces workers to adapt to the speed and demands of machines, rather than machines being designed to support those who work" (150). Technology must not lead to unemployment in the name of reducing costs and increasing profit. The Pope expresses his hopes for a renewal of labor organizations (155).

Peace and development

Pope Leo notes the need to move beyond GDP as the measure of a country's level of development, focusing instead on the dignity of work, shared prosperity, the reduction of inequalities, and environmental protection. The encyclical underscores the interdependence between peace and development, calling for international cooperation in favor of the most vulnerable, because prosperity contributes to peace "only if it is widespread, inclusive, and sustainable" (163). The Pope upholds the family, founded on the stable union between a man and a woman, as a "primary social good" and the "fundamental and irreplaceable cell of every community organization" (165).



'Architecture of visibility' and risks for freedom

Pope Leo XIV discusses human freedom in an age when digital platforms are designed to capture users' time and exploit their vulnerabilities. Profiling, predicting, and directing behavior is "a new form of power" (171) that risks discriminating

against the weakest. The Pope particularly criticizes the "architecture of visibility," which amplifies only what is visible and shapes opinions.

New forms of slavery and colonialism

AI also generates new forms of slavery, such as that of the "scarred, injured, and worn down" bodies (173) of those who work in the extraction of the "rare earth elements" needed for technology. Pope Leo XIV stresses that "the Church renews her firm condemnation of every form of slavery, trafficking, and commodification of persons," and that to not react or to tolerate grave violations of human dignity means becoming accomplices to them. The Pope "sincerely asks forgiveness" for the delay with which the Church in the past condemned "the scourge of slavery" (174-176). He calls the use of personal data to guide economic strategies a new face of colonialism, making the digital environment a "space of exploitation" (178-179).



Overcoming 'just war' theory

In the fifth chapter, Pope Leo XIV says "the digital revolution is changing the nature of conflict." At the root is a "culture of power" that normalizes war and rehabilitates it as an "instrument of international politics." Peace today is no longer understood as a task to be undertaken, but as an interval between conflicts. Pope Leo XIV reiterates that the theory of "just war" must be overcome, and dialogue, diplomacy, and forgiveness must instead be promoted (192).

Algorithms do not make war morally acceptable

Pope Leo warns against the use of weapons linked to AI, because "there is no algorithm that can make war morally acceptable." The Pope writes, "AI does not remove the intrinsic inhumanity of conflict; indeed, it can only bring about conflict more quickly and render it more impersonal, lowering the threshold for resorting to violence, transforming defense into threat prediction and thus reducing victims to data." The Pope urges strict ethical limits based on personal responsibility and the protection of civilians. "Any technology that facilitates attacks without seeing the face of human beings lowers the moral threshold of conflict" (199).

Crisis of multilateralism and irresponsible Realpolitik

The culture of power emerges from the crisis of multilateralism and "a disorderly and conflict-ridden multipolarism" (201). The Pope laments that the rule of law has been replaced by the law of the strongest. He hopes for "profound reforms" of the UN in favor of the common good (226). Today "hybrid" wars are fought "also on the economic, financial and cyber fronts, where disinformation and campaigns that feed people's fears are used to manipulate public opinion." But this is only a "false realism," an irresponsible Realpolitik that describes peace as a utopia (204-205).

The civilization of love

Christians are called to respond to the culture of power by building "the civilization of love." The Pope indicates five paths of responsibility: disarming words by speaking the truth; building peace in justice; adopting the perspective of victims; cultivating "a healthy realism" that seeks practicable paths of peace through deeds; and relaunching dialogue. Of decisive importance is "interreligious dialogue." He writes that "those who use the name of God to legitimize terrorism, violence or war betray his true nature, for to fight in the name of religion means attacking religion itself" (223).

Grandeur of humanity

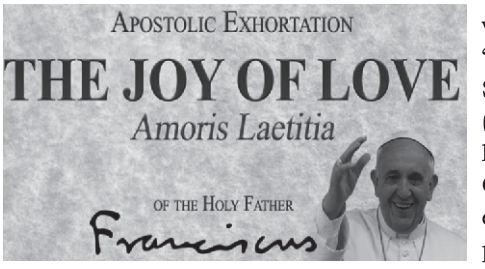
At the conclusion of his first encyclical, Pope Leo XIV invites the faithful to navigate this new technological era in the light of the Gospel, following "a sober yet demanding program of Christian life." Even in the age of AI, concludes the Pope, "we may bear witness to the grandeur of humanity, in which God has made His dwelling."

----- By Isabella Piro, Vatican News (edited for Proclaim by Dr Thomas J DSouza) ◆

Amoris Laetitia

Stimulus to reflection and pastoral conversion

Message of Pope Leo XIV on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia



Dear brothers and sisters,

On 19 March 2016, Pope Francis offered the universal Church a luminous message of hope regarding conjugal love and family life, which was the fruit of three years of synodal discernment enriched by the Jubilee Year of Mercy: the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. On this tenth anniversary, we give thanks to the Lord for the stimulus that has encouraged reflection and pastoral conversion in the Church, and ask God for the courage to persevere on this path, always welcoming the Gospel anew in the joy of being able to proclaim it to all.

The Second Vatican Council taught that the family is "the basis of society," a gift from God and "a school for human enrichment." Through the sacrament of marriage, Christian spouses form a kind of "domestic church," whose role is essential for teaching and transmitting the faith. Since the Council, the two Apostolic Exhortations, *Familiaris Consortio* — issued by Saint John Paul II in 1981 — and *Amoris Laetitia* (AL), have both strengthened the Church's doctrinal and pastoral commitment to the service of young people, married couples and families.



Recognizing that "anthropological and cultural changes" (*AL* 32) have become increasingly pronounced over the past thirty-five years, Pope Francis wanted to further engage the Church in the path of synodal discernment. His address on 17 October 2015, delivered during the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the family, called for "mutual listening" within the people of God: "all listening to the Holy Spirit, 'the Spirit of truth' (*Jn* 14:17), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (*Rev* 2:7)." He explained that it is not possible to "speak about the family without engaging families themselves, listening to their joys and their hopes, their sorrows and their anguish."

In gathering the fruits of synodal discernment, *Amoris Laetitia* offers valuable teachings that we must continue to examine today: the biblical hope of God's loving and merciful presence, which allows us to live "love stories" even when navigating "family crises" (*AL* 8); the invitation to adopt "the gaze of Jesus" (*AL* 60) and tirelessly to encourage "the growth, strengthening and deepening of conjugal and family love" (*AL* 89); the call to appreciate that love in marriage "always gives life" (*AL* 165) and that it is 'real' precisely in its "limited and earthly" way (*AL* 113), as the mystery of the Incarnation teaches us. Pope Francis affirmed the need "for new pastoral methods" (*AL* 199) and for a better education of children (cf. *AL* chap. VII), while inviting the Church to accompany, discern and integrate fragility (cf. *AL* chap. VIII), overcoming a reductive conception of the norm, and to promote "the spirituality that unfolds in family life" (*AL* 313).



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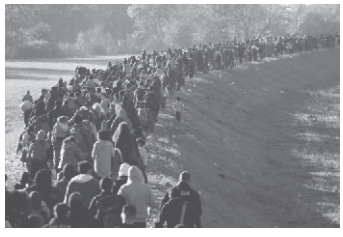
Amoris Laetitia: a Pastoral Roadmap

Church Must Accompany Families with Compassion

*Fr Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose**

Introduction

A decade after the publication of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*, the Church continues to plumb the depths of its insights into marriage and family life. More than a document on family ethics, *Amoris Laetitia* serves as a pastoral roadmap, encouraging the Church to accompany families with mercy, realism, tenderness, and hope. This message takes on renewed significance in India, where families grapple with formidable social, economic, cultural, and spiritual challenges. Families remain the bedrock of Indian society and the primary educators of faith, values, and relationships. Yet they are increasingly confronted with issues such as migration, poverty, interreligious marriages, caste dynamics, domestic tensions, dowry practices, digital pressures, and rapid generational change. In this context, *Amoris Laetitia* does not merely provide answers but offers a compassionate framework for walking alongside families and helping them become vibrant signs of God's love in the world.



The Family as a Missionary Community

One of the central insights of *Amoris Laetitia* is that the family is not merely an object of pastoral care but an active subject of evangelisation. Families are called to be "domestic churches" — places where faith is lived, celebrated, and transmitted. Pope Francis reminds us that the Gospel of the family is a joy that fills hearts and lives. In India, where family bonds remain strong despite sweeping social transformations, this vision is particularly resonant. Families are often the first place where children learn prayer, compassion, respect for elders, and concern for the poor. Even amid hardship, Indian families possess a remarkable capacity for resilience and self-sacrifice. The Church's mission is to strengthen these positive values while equipping families to face emerging challenges with faith and hope.

Migration and the Fragmentation of Family Life



Migration has become one of the defining realities of contemporary India. Millions leave their villages and hometowns in search of employment in cities or abroad. While migration often improves economic circumstances, it can also separate spouses, erode family relationships, and leave children and elderly parents without adequate emotional support. *Amoris Laetitia* invites the Church to acknowledge the concrete realities that families face. Rather than passing judgement from a distance, the Church is called to accompany families through attentive listening and sustained pastoral care. Migrant families need communities that welcome them, sustain them, and help them preserve their spiritual and emotional bonds.

Parishes can respond by establishing support networks for migrant workers and their families, organising family-centred pastoral programmes, and harnessing digital means to nurture communication and prayer among separated family members. In this way, the Church can help transform migration from a source of fragmentation into an occasion for solidarity and growth.

Poverty and the Struggle for Human Dignity

Poverty continues to afflict millions of Indian families. Financial insecurity generates stress, limits educational opportunities, contributes to health crises, and places immense strain on family relationships. Pope Francis consistently emphasises that economic hardship is not merely a social issue but a pastoral concern. *Amoris Laetitia* draws attention to the social conditions that shape family life, reminding us that families flourish when society respects their dignity and

fosters conditions conducive to integral human development.

For the Church in India, this means integrating family ministry with social outreach. Supporting education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social justice initiatives becomes an intrinsic part of the mission to strengthen families. The Church's charitable institutions and grassroots communities can play a decisive role in helping vulnerable families experience the love and care of God through concrete acts of solidarity.

Interreligious Marriages: Challenges and Opportunities

India's rich religious diversity has given rise to a growing number of interreligious marriages. Such unions frequently encounter difficulties arising from differing religious practices, divergent family expectations, and contrasting cultural traditions. Yet they also present genuine opportunities for dialogue, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence. The pastoral approach of *Amoris Laetitia* is particularly valuable in this context. Pope Francis encourages discernment, accompaniment, and profound respect for the unique circumstances of each family. Rather than focusing exclusively on the difficulties, the Church is invited to recognise the seeds of goodness present in these relationships. Interreligious families can become powerful witnesses to harmony and mutual respect in a society often marked by religious tension. The Church must support such couples through careful preparation, ongoing pastoral accompaniment, and opportunities for dialogue that help them nurture both their personal faith and their marital unity.



Confronting Caste Realities through the Gospel of Communion

Although legal and social progress has been achieved, caste-based discrimination remains a painful reality in many parts of India. Even within Christian communities, caste attitudes sometimes influence social interactions, marriage choices, and communal life. *Amoris Laetitia* presents the family as a school of inclusion, where every person is cherished and loved. The Gospel vision of marriage and family transcends social divisions and affirms the equal dignity of every human being.



The Church in India is challenged to ensure that family ministry becomes a vehicle for promoting equality, reconciliation, and social inclusion. Marriage preparation programmes, youth formation initiatives, and parish activities should consciously confront caste prejudice and encourage families to embody the Gospel values of fraternity and communion. In a society fractured by division, Christian families are called to witness that love is stronger than social barriers, and that all people are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Domestic Tensions and the Need for Healing

Many families experience conflicts arising from financial stress, emotional wounds, addiction, poor communication, or unresolved expectations. Domestic violence and abuse continue to affect numerous households, often concealed behind a culture of silence. One of the most distinctive contributions of *Amoris Laetitia* is its unflinchingly realistic understanding of family life. Pope Francis acknowledges that no family is perfect; families grow gradually through patience, forgiveness, dialogue, and mutual support.

The Church must therefore become a place of healing and accompaniment. Family counselling services, support groups, spiritual direction, and attentive pastoral care can help couples address difficulties before relationships deteriorate irreparably. The document's emphasis on mercy and gradual growth encourages families not to lose hope when confronted with trials. The message of *Amoris Laetitia* is clear: family difficulties are not signs of failure but opportunities for growth, conversion, and renewed love.

Challenging the Dowry Culture

Despite legal prohibitions and widespread awareness campaigns, the dowry system continues to burden many Indian families. It places severe financial pressure on parents, entrenches gender inequality, and in some cases leads to harassment and violence. The vision of marriage presented in Amoris Laetitia stands as a direct challenge to such practices. Marriage is understood as a covenant of mutual self-giving, grounded in love and dignity rather than economic transaction.



The Church in India has an important prophetic role to play in confronting the dowry culture. Marriage preparation programmes should clearly affirm the dignity and equality of spouses, while encouraging families to reject customs that undermine human worth. Christian communities must actively support couples who choose simple, dowry-free marriages, thereby bearing witness to the liberating power of the Gospel.

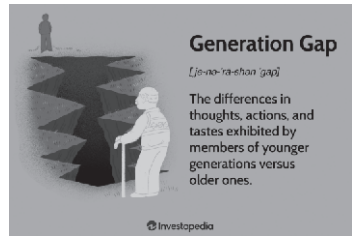
Digital Pressures and the Formation of Relationships

The digital revolution has profoundly transformed family life. Social media, smartphones, online entertainment, and artificial intelligence offer many benefits but also generate formidable new challenges. Family members often spend more time connected to screens than to one another, and young people face mounting pressures related to comparison, loneliness, misinformation, and digital addiction. The recent encyclical *Magnificat Humanitas* on Artificial Intelligence by Pope Leo XIV focuses on safeguarding human dignity and the common good in the age of AI. With regard to the family, it calls for protecting familial relationships from digital exploitation and insists that technology must support, rather than supplant, human connection. The encyclical warns against algorithmic control and digital isolation, urging families to limit excessive screen time and to prioritise authentic human interaction.

Although *Amoris Laetitia* was written before many of these technological developments, its emphasis on authentic relationships remains strikingly relevant. Pope Francis underscores the importance of presence, dialogue, tenderness, and attentive listening. Families today need to cultivate healthy digital habits that safeguard relationships and foster meaningful communication. Parents bear a vital responsibility to guide their children in the responsible use of technology while creating space for shared prayer, conversation, and family activities. The Church can assist through digital literacy programmes and faith formation initiatives that address the pastoral dimensions of contemporary technological challenges.

Generational Change and the Transmission of Faith

Rapid social change has widened the gap between generations. Younger generations often embrace new values and lifestyles, while older generations seek to preserve inherited traditions and cultural practices. These differences can give rise to misunderstanding and tension within families. *Amoris Laetitia* encourages genuine dialogue between the generations. Pope Francis frequently highlights the wisdom of grandparents and the creativity of youth, insisting that both are essential to the vitality of family life.



In India, where reverence for elders remains a cherished value, families have a singular opportunity to foster intergenerational solidarity. Grandparents play an irreplaceable role in transmitting faith, culture, and lived experience. At the same time, young people bring fresh perspectives and renewed energy. Families grow stronger when both generations learn from one another and journey forward together.

Conclusion: A Path of Hope for the Church in India

A decade after its publication, *Amoris Laetitia*

remains a prophetic and pastoral guide for the Church in India. Its enduring relevance lies not in offering simplistic solutions but in proposing a spirituality of accompaniment, discernment, mercy, and hope. Amid migration, poverty, interreligious marriages, caste realities, domestic tensions, the dowry culture, digital pressures, and generational change, Indian families continue to be the places where the Gospel can take flesh. They remain homes of love, sacrifice, resilience, and faith.

The tenth anniversary of *Amoris Laetitia* is an invitation for the Church in India to renew its commitment to families — not merely by defending family values in the abstract, but by walking alongside families in their joys and in their struggles. As families become authentic homes of Gospel hope and communion, they will also become powerful agents of mission, revealing to the world the enduring joy of a love that has its source in God.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Kottar, is the Director of the Centre of Canon Law Studies at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, and Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law of the CCBI.** ◆

Continued from Page 09: Stimulus to reflection and pastoral conversion



As I had the opportunity to say to the young people gathered at Tor Vergata during the Jubilee of Hope, fragility is "part of the marvel of creation… We are not made for a life where everything is taken for granted and static, but for an existence that is constantly renewed through gift of self in love." To serve the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of the family to younger generations, we must learn to evoke the beauty of the vocation to marriage precisely in the recognition of fragility, so as to reawaken "trust in God's grace" (*AL* 36) and the Christian desire for holiness. We must also support families, especially those suffering from the many forms of poverty and violence present in contemporary society.

We thank the Lord for families who, despite difficulties and challenges, live "the spirituality of family love […] made up of thousands of small but real gestures" (*AL* 315). I also express my gratitude to the pastors, pastoral workers, Associations of the faithful and ecclesial Movements that are engaged in family ministry.

Our era is marked by rapid changes which make it necessary, even more than ten years ago, to give particular pastoral attention to families, to whom the Lord entrusts the task of participating in the Church's mission of proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel. [6] There are, in fact, places and circumstances in which the Church "can become the salt of the earth" only through the lay faithful and, in particular, through families. For this reason, the Church's commitment in this area must be renewed and deepened, so that those whom the Lord calls to marriage and family life can, in Christ, fully live out their conjugal love, and that young people may feel attracted, within the Church, to the beauty of the vocation to marriage.

In light of the changes that continue to impact families, I have decided to convene the presidents of the Episcopal Conferences from around the world in October 2026, in an effort to proceed, in mutual listening, to a synodal discernment on the steps to be taken in order to proclaim the Gospel to families today, in light of *Amoris Laetitia* and taking into account what is currently being done in the local Churches.

I entrust this journey to the intercession of Saint Joseph, guardian of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

From the Vatican, 19 March 2026, Solemnity of Saint Joseph

LEO PP. XIV

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The Joy of Love

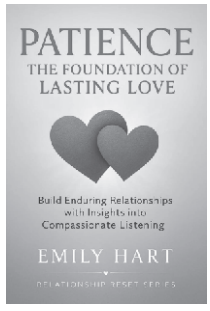
Family as the First School of Mission

*Fr Dr I Raymond Joseph**

Introduction

One can firmly say that the family is the first social institution that ever emerged in this world. It also occupies a prime place in God's plan for humanity. From the very beginning of creation, God established the family as the first community of love, trust, and life. The Book of Genesis speaks of God creating man and woman in his own image and blessing them with the mission of building a loving community: "So God created humankind in his image, …. male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

The Christian family is much more than a social institution. It is a divine vocation and a living replica of God's love. It is in the family that one gets the first experience of care, understanding, sacrifice, and forgiveness. It is in the home that children first learn to pray, to respect their elders, to love, and to serve others with compassion.



In *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love"), Pope Francis wonderfully explains the vocation and mission of the family in today's world. He articulates, "The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 31). This statement emphasises the importance of family life not only for the growth of the individual person but also for society, the Church, and the world. The mission of the family is to become a witness of God's love.

Families all around the world face a myriad of difficulties and challenges, such as broken relationships, materialism, lack of communication, economic struggles, and weakening spiritual values. In spite of these challenges, Christian families are called to radiate the joy of love and peace. They become missionaries of faith and hope not primarily through preaching but through everyday acts of communion, kindness, and sacrifice. This article explores how a Christian family can become the first school of mission by reflecting on five important Christian values: patience, service, forgiveness, prayer, and care for the weak.



1. Patience: The Foundation of Family Love

Patience is an important virtue in family life and the fourth fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Since family members live under one roof, there are always chances for differences, misunderstandings, and misconceptions to arise. Patience keeps families united in times of struggle and confrontation.

"Love is patient, love is kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4), writes Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. He places patience as the first quality of love because true love requires endurance and understanding. When there is patience in the family, members can accept others as they are, forgive the mistakes of others, and generously share time with one another. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis reflects along the same lines: "Patience takes root when I recognize that other people also have a right to live in this world, just as they are" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 92). This teaching reminds us that family life is not about demanding perfection from one another but about learning to live together with compassion and understanding.

Jesus also exhibited patience during his earthly life. He was patient even when his disciples did not comprehend what he taught, and with incredible compassion he forgave Peter, who denied him during his Passion. Every Christian family is invited to imitate this patient love. Parents can practise patience in raising their children, and children are called to be patient with parents and other family members. The Book of Proverbs says, "Whoever is patient has great understanding" (Proverbs 14:29). Patience is especially necessary during difficult moments such as sickness, financial crises, or personal failures, for in such moments it heals wounds by strengthening relationships. In a culture marked



by impatience and conflict, families that practise understanding and tolerance mirror the peace of Christ and become witnesses of God's mercy in society.

2. Service: The Family's Mission of Self-Giving Love

Service lies at the heart and soul of Christian family life. Jesus taught his disciples that greatness is achieved only through humble service: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43). Parents dedicate themselves to the well-being of their children through hard work, care, and unconditional love, reflecting God's own self-giving love. Children also learn the value of service within the family. By helping with household responsibilities and caring for other members, they discover the joy of generosity and collaboration. Families that serve together become united in love.



Jesus gave the perfect example of service when he washed the feet of his disciples and said: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:14–15). This act of humility and servanthood teaches that no service is too small when done with love. Cooking meals, cleaning the home, caring for children, supporting elderly parents, and helping family members are all forms of Christian mission. Paul reinforces this in his Letter to the Galatians: "Serve one another humbly in love" (Galatians 5:13).

In our society, selfishness and individualism often weaken family structures. Christian families are called to live differently by placing charity and service at the centre of daily life. Even small acts of kindness can become meaningful expressions of God's presence. When families participate in charitable works — visiting the sick, sheltering the homeless, serving the aged, and helping needy families — they become living witnesses of the Gospel. As Pope Francis reminds us, "Love benefits and helps others" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 94). Authentic love is never selfish; it always seeks the good of others. Through acts of sacrifice and generosity, the family becomes a true school of mission.

3. Forgiveness: The Pathway to Healing

Forgiveness is an essential virtue to be practised in family life. No family can survive without it. Since every human being is inclined to make mistakes, misunderstandings and conflicts are unavoidable. Forgiveness heals wounds, restores relationships, and strengthens the bonds within the family.

Jesus emphasised forgiveness throughout his public ministry and forgave even those who persecuted him at the cross (Luke 23:34). When Peter asked how many times he should forgive, Jesus replied, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22), revealing that forgiveness must be unceasing and unconditional. Forgiveness in family life can be difficult because hurts caused by loved ones often cut deep. Humiliating words, broken trust, and bitter disappointments can create pain and anguish, and the natural response is anger and hatred, which destroy the peace and harmony of the family. St. Paul writes, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

God's forgiving love is illustrated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), where the father welcomed his wayward son with mercy and joy. Christian families are called to imitate this spirit of reconciliation — not overlooking wrongdoing, but choosing love over revenge and bitterness. When family members experience God's mercy toward themselves, they become more willing to forgive others. Pope Francis offers practical wisdom: "Families should never end the day without making peace" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 104). Forgiveness requires humility, as pride often blocks people from apologising or accepting reconciliation. Humble hearts, however, open the way for healing and peace. In a world marked by broken relationships



and divisions, forgiving families become signs of hope and witnesses of God's mercy.



4. Prayer: The Spiritual Heart of the Family

Prayer is the foundation of Christian family life. A family that prays together remains spiritually unified and deeply rooted in God's love. Prayer brings God into the daily experiences of the family and strengthens the relationships among its members. Jesus promised, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20), assuring families that he is present whenever they pray together. Pope Francis writes, "Moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 288).

Through prayer, families pass on spiritual values from one generation to another. Children often learn their first prayers from grandparents and parents. There are many forms of family prayer: Scripture reading, prayer before and after meals, Rosary recitation, praise and worship, Lectio Divina, and participating in the Holy Eucharist. These practices help to create a home centred on God. The Holy Family of Nazareth serves as the perfect model of prayerful family life. Mary and Joseph trusted God even during hardships and uncertainties, teaching today's families to rely on God's guidance.

In today's busy world, finding time for prayer is a genuine struggle due to work schedules, family demands, and competing interests. Yet prayer remains essential because it nurtures the psychological, physical, and spiritual unity of the family. As Pope Francis writes, "The home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 287). Families that pray become more compassionate, forgiving, and generous. As the saying goes, "The family that prays together stays together." Prayer transforms the home into a place of peace, love, joy, and God's presence.



5. Care for the Weak: A Mission to People on the Peripheries

One of the greatest expressions of Christian charity is care for the weak, the needy, and the vulnerable. The Book of Deuteronomy underlines the principle of "not forgetting the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the alien" (cf. 24:14, 17, 19). Jesus consistently showed compassion toward the poor, the sick, children, widows, and sinners, and Christian families are invited to continue this mission of mercy. His words, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40), should be the hallmark of every Christian family, revealing that caring for the vulnerable is caring for God himself.

Care for the weak begins at home — in parents' love and care for their children during illness and crisis, and in family members supporting ageing parents with respect and gratitude, as the fourth commandment calls for: "Honour your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). Families are also called to extend compassion beyond their homes by helping the poor, comforting the lonely, supporting persons with disabilities, and assisting those facing hardships. Children who grow up witnessing such acts develop generous hearts and learn that every person has dignity as one created in the image of God. Care for the weak also includes spiritual and emotional support — listening to one another, encouraging family members during difficult times, and offering comfort in suffering.



St. Paul writes, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Pope Francis frequently warns against a culture of indifference that neglects the vulnerable. Through care for the weak, families reveal the merciful heart of God and fulfil their mission in the world.

...Continued on Page 22

Ten Years after Amoris Laetitia

Families Forming Tomorrow's Church

*Sr Dr Metti Amirtham, SCC**

"Where did you first learn about God?"

For most people, the answer is not a classroom or a textbook, but a home — through the quiet witness of parents and grandparents, through prayer, shared meals, forgiveness, and love. Pope Francis recognised this deeply when he signed *Amoris Laetitia* on 19 March 2016, offering the Church a profoundly missionary vision of the family. Ten years on, the question remains urgent: how do families form the next generation in faith, virtue, and hope? In a world marked by declining religious belonging and shaken institutional trust, the family remains "the first school of faith" (AL 16) — a domestic church where the Gospel is lived before it is taught. To understand this missionary vocation of the family, we must begin where every human life begins: at home.





1. The Home as the First Seminary of the Heart

Long before a child enters a classroom or a catechism class, they learn who God is from the texture of family life — from how parents speak to one another after a disagreement, whether prayer is a living conversation or a formal obligation, and whether forgiveness is genuinely practised. *Amoris Laetitia* calls parents "the primary educators" of their children (AL 84). What they transmit is not merely doctrinal content but an entire posture of trust, gratitude, and service. Faith formation is not a programme; it is a way of life. It happens when a mother names suffering as the place where God draws near, or when a father kneels in prayer and teaches his child that every human being stands small and beloved before God.

2. Nurturing a Culture of Vocation

One of the most significant gifts a family can offer the Church is a culture in which vocations to priesthood, consecrated life, lay ministry, and marriage are named, honoured, and freely discerned. When families are wholly absorbed in narratives of grades, careers, promotions, and salaries, vocation quietly disappears from young people's imaginations. Speaking openly about priests and religious, praying for vocations, and welcoming a local sister or priest to the family table can gently restore it. A family that nurtures a culture of vocation does not raise less ambitious children — it raises freer ones.

3. Safeguarding as an Act of Love and Justice

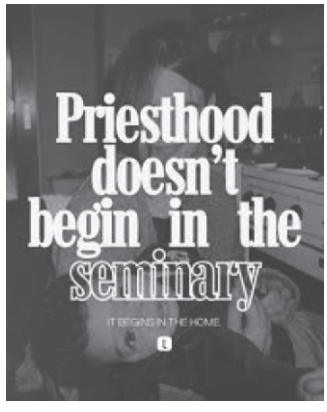
No honest reflection on families and the Church in 2026 can sidestep the question of safeguarding. The abuse crisis has wounded the Body of Christ, causing parents to hesitate before entrusting children to parish structures, and leading young people to associate institutional religion with betrayal. Safeguarding is not a bureaucratic requirement; it is a concrete expression of the Church's commitment to the dignity of every child. It begins at home: naming healthy and unhealthy relationships, giving children the language to identify what is wrong, and fostering a family culture in which no secret is kept "for the sake of adults." Parents who take safeguarding seriously are not being suspicious of the Church; they are being faithful to it.

4. Emotional Maturity: The Forgotten Dimension of Formation

Amoris Laetitia devoted remarkable attention to the psychology of love — unhealed



wounds, emotional immaturity, and the long, patient work of integrating feeling and reason (cf. AL 137–141). This was not a concession to secular therapy; it was a recovery of the tradition's own wisdom: grace builds on nature. A young person who cannot regulate their emotions or extend forgiveness under pressure will struggle to pray, to relate, or to sustain any vocation. The capacity for self-knowledge is not merely a psychological asset; it is a spiritual one. Genuinely saying "I am sorry" to one's children is an act of Christian witness, not a sign of weakness.



5. Transmitting Christian Hope to a Generation in Crisis

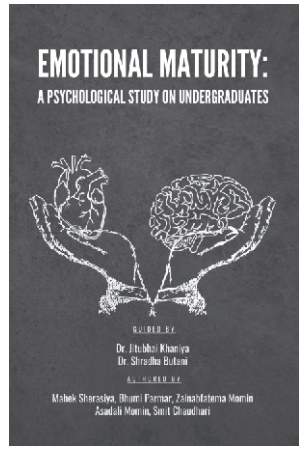
One of the greatest challenges facing Christian families today is transmitting hope to the next generation. Young people are growing up burdened by real anxieties — climate uncertainty, financial instability, and a cultural atmosphere that often feels exhausted and purposeless. Into this, the Christian family is called to offer something altogether different: not a forced cheerfulness, but a deep, resurrection-rooted hope — the conviction that death and despair do not have the final word.

This hope can be embodied in concrete practices: in the stories of saints and ancestors passed down across generations, in service to the poor, and in the regular celebration of the sacraments that unite the domestic church to the great living tradition of the universal Church.

Practical Suggestions

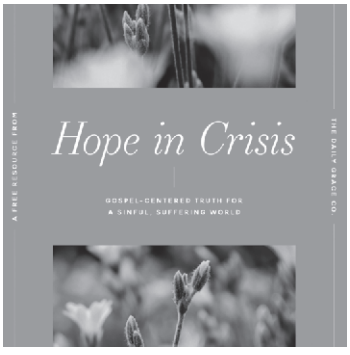
For Families Everywhere

- Hold monthly family Scripture evenings where children read a passage, ask questions, and connect it to their daily lives.
- Create a prayer corner in the home with a candle, a Bible, and a simple prayer ritual at mealtimes.
- Invite priests, religious sisters, or committed lay ministers to share their vocation stories at the family table.
- Pray explicitly for vocations as a family each week, honouring consecrated life alongside marriage.
- Allow teenagers to attend vocation camps or discernment weekends, free from pressure toward any particular outcome.
- Teach children body safety, healthy boundaries, and consent at age-appropriate stages, drawing on trusted safeguarding resources such as the "PANTS" rule for younger children.
- Ensure that parish family ministries include safeguarding training for parents, not only for volunteers.
- Model genuine apology to children — "I was wrong; I am sorry" — as an act of Christian witness.
- Teach children an emotional vocabulary from an early age, helping them name feelings without shame, while also teaching that feelings are not the final word.
- Tell the stories of saints and family ancestors across generations, and make service to the poor a regular and natural part of family life.
- Celebrate the Easter Vigil as a family from an early age: the liturgy of darkness and light is the Church's most powerful proclamation of hope.



For Families in the Indian Context

- Revive the practice of the family rosary or evening prayer as a daily



anchor, and connect Sunday Mass to the family table: "What did the homily mean for our family this week?"

• Use Indian festivals — Christmas, Easter, Diwali, harvest feasts, and others — not merely as cultural celebrations but as catechetical moments, drawing out the biblical story behind each feast.

• Honour, rather than merely tolerate, a child's desire for consecrated life; resist the societal pressure that treats a religious vocation as a "waste" of education.

· Parishes can organise Vocation Sunday programmes where families of priests and religious share their experiences of accompaniment and support.

• Ensure that all Catholic schools and parish institutions are trained and fully compliant with the POCSO Act (2012), and that parents are aware of their rights under it.

• Overcome cultural taboos around naming abuse: parish communities must create genuinely safe spaces where children and parents can speak freely, without the fear of protecting "family honour" at a child's expense.

• Acknowledge the intergenerational trauma arising from poverty, caste, or migration, and seek healing through counselling, spiritual direction, or faith communities.

• Catholic institutions should integrate school counsellors and family counselling services, normalising mental health care within a faith framework.

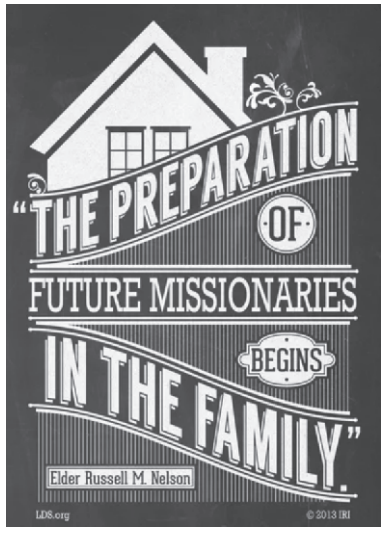
• Draw on India's own Christian martyrs and saints — from Blessed Devasahayam Pillai to the martyrs of Cuncolim — to offer indigenous stories of hope in the face of persecution.

• Participate in parish-based service to Dalit communities, tribal villages, or urban slums, making such service a natural expression of Christian identity.

• Create spaces of Sabbath and rest — technology-free meals, Sunday as genuine family time, annual family retreats — to counter the anxiety that so readily robs young people of hope.

The Missionary Future Begins at Home

The children and young people who will carry the missionary future of the family are already among us — in our parishes, schools, and homes. They are watching closely to see whether what we profess is also what we live. Ten years after *Amoris Laetitia*, the Church's call to families is not primarily a call to programmes and policies, though these certainly matter. It is a call to conversion: to the daily, hidden, and joyful work of forming the next generation in faith, hope, and love.



Whether in a tribal village in Odisha, a middle-class home in Hyderabad, a migrant household in London, or a farming community in Kenya, the missionary vocation of the domestic church remains the same: to become a home where the Gospel is not merely taught but lived, not merely inherited but desired, not merely remembered but renewed in every generation. As Pope Francis writes, it is a "great joy" (AL 1) to be entrusted with such a mission — a mission sustained by grace, strengthened through love, and continually renewed by the God who makes all things new.

*** The writer is a nun of the Cross of Chavanod Congregation, belonging to the Province of Trichy. Currently she serves as the animator of her religious community and teaches Systematic Theology. ◆**

Mission and Family

Not Two Tasks but One Integrated Life

Dr Thomas J DSouza*



Ten years ago, Pope Francis gave the Church a document that felt, to many readers, like a long exhale. *Amoris Laetitia* — "The Joy of Love" — did not arrive as a juridical decree or a defensive boundary-marking. It arrived as a letter, warm and unhurried, written by someone who had clearly sat with real families in their kitchens and confessionals, their celebrations and their ruins. It spoke of love not as an abstract theological category but as something lived in the daily friction of shared meals, sleepless nights, difficult conversations, and the slow, ordinary heroism of fidelity.

A decade later, the question is not simply what the document said, but what it continues to call us toward. And at the heart of that calling is something that the anniversary theme names with precision and beauty: the family is not merely a recipient of the Church's pastoral care. The family is itself a subject of mission. A home of Gospel, hope, and communion — not as a metaphor, but as a lived ecclesial reality.

The Family as Domestic Church, Renewed

The phrase ecclesia domestica — the domestic church — has been part of Catholic theology since the Second Vatican Council. But *Amoris Laetitia* retrieved it with fresh urgency and, crucially, with pastoral realism. Francis did not paint the family as a small, perfectly functioning parish. He painted it as it actually is: marked by tenderness and tension, by grace and woundedness, by moments of transcendence and stretches of tedium. And he insisted that mission begins precisely there, in that un-romanticised reality.

This matters enormously. For too long, a quiet assumption has operated in pastoral thinking: that families are formed by the Church so that eventually they can go out and serve the Church. The domestic church is preparatory. Mission belongs to the ordained, the consecrated, the trained. Amoris Laetitia gently but firmly dismantles this hierarchy. The family does not graduate into mission. The family is mission, from its very first breath.

When a couple chooses to love generously — to welcome life, to practice forgiveness, to remain present to one another through suffering — they are not merely fulfilling a private vocation. They are making the Gospel visible. They are, as Francis writes, "a light in the darkness of the world." The witness of a faithful, joyful, and honest family is itself an act of evangelisation, perhaps the most persuasive kind in an age that has grown suspicious of institutional proclamation but remains desperately hungry for proof that lasting love is possible.

Gospel Proclaimed in the Ordinary

Mission, in the imagination of *Amoris Laetitia*, does not require extraordinary circumstances. It inhabits the ordinary with extraordinary intentionality.



Consider what happens when parents pray with their children before bed — not as a ritual checkbox but as a genuine act of surrender, of naming the day before God. Or when a family opens its table to someone lonely or marginalised. Or when a husband and wife, after a genuine rupture, choose repair over withdrawal. These are not sentimental gestures. They are proclamations. They say something about the nature of reality — that we are not alone, that forgiveness is real, that love is stronger than whatever diminishes it.

Francis speaks of the "spirituality of family life" as woven from small gestures: a look of appreciation, a word of encouragement, the patience to listen when listening is costly. He

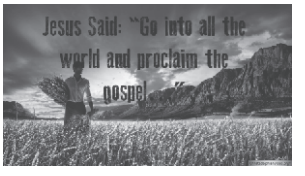


refuses to let these gestures be dismissed as minor. They are, he insists, the connective tissue of human flourishing, and they point, even when no one names it explicitly, toward the one who is the source of all love. The family evangelises not primarily by talking about faith but by embodying it — imperfectly, honestly, persistently.

This is why mission and family cannot be cleanly separated. They are not two tasks in rotation. They are one integrated life, ordered toward the same end: the encounter of human persons with the living God and with one another in God.

Hope as a Family Practice

If the Gospel is the content that families proclaim, hope is the posture from which they proclaim it.



We live in what many sociologists and philosophers describe as a "crisis of the future" — a cultural moment in which the horizon has contracted, in which trust in institutions, in commitments, in the possibility of shared life has eroded. Into this contraction, the family makes a staggering counter-claim. To marry is to bet on the future. To have children is to act as though the world is worth inheriting. To remain in covenant through difficulty is to refuse despair as the final word.

Amoris Laetitia understood this prophetic dimension of family life without making it burdensome. Francis does not ask families to carry the weight of cultural renewal as a conscious project. He asks them to love well, trusting that love, faithfully lived, generates hope almost as a byproduct — in the children formed by it, in the neighbours who witness it, in the couples who look at a long marriage and dare to believe that it is possible for them too.



There is a particular tenderness in the document toward families who are struggling, who have known failure, whose stories do not fit the tidy arc of Christian witness we might prefer to project. And yet Francis sees even these families as bearers of hope, not despite their fragility but often because of it. A family that has survived crisis and emerged, wounded but together, testifies to something that a family that has never been tested cannot — that grace is not a reward for virtue but a resource for the broken. That is not a lesser Gospel. In many human hearts, it is the only one that lands.

Communion: The Shape of Mission

The third gift that families bring to mission — and that mission returns to families — is communion.

Amoris Laetitia insists that the love between spouses, and the love within families, is not a private possession. It has an inherent outward movement. "No family," Francis writes, "can be self-referential." The energy of genuine love is expansive; it does not hoard itself but spills, quite naturally, toward those outside the home — toward the poor, the lonely, the immigrant, the elderly neighbour, the child in crisis.

This outward movement is not an obligation added onto family life from the outside. It flows from within love's own logic. To love is to be changed — made more generous, more attentive, more willing to be inconvenienced. A family that truly loves one another is, almost inevitably, a family that finds itself caring about others.

And here the theme's beautiful reciprocity becomes fully visible: mission is not only something families give. It is something that gives back to families. Engagement with the wider world — with the poor, with the parish, with the broader human community — stretches a family beyond the gravitational pull of its own preoccupations. It is, paradoxically, one of the things that keeps a family healthy, turned outward rather than inward, animated by a purpose larger than its own comfort.

Ten Years On: The Invitation Remains

Ten years after *Amoris Laetitia*, the document has not aged into mere historical significance. If

anything, the questions it raises have sharpened. In a world of increasing fragmentation, loneliness, and disillusionment with the institutions meant to bind us together, the family — imperfect, struggling, graced — remains one of the few places where the human longing for belonging can still find a genuine answer.

The anniversary we celebrate is not an occasion for institutional self-congratulation. It is a renewed invitation: to take seriously the missionary dignity of every family; to accompany those who are hurting without waiting for them to be whole; to build parishes that feel less like service centres and more like communities of communities — networks of families who carry the Gospel into the very places where life is actually lived.

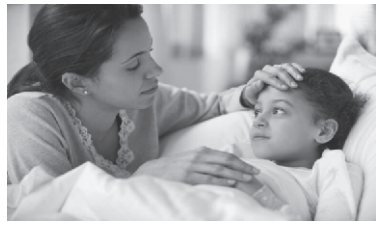
The joy of love, Francis reminded us, is not a feeling to be attained but a way of being in the world to be chosen, again and again, in the thousand small decisions that make up a life. That choosing, repeated across millions of ordinary homes, is how the Church fulfils its mission. Not from the top down, but from the inside out — from kitchen tables and bedside prayers and hard conversations and long fidelities.

This is the Church that *Amoris Laetitia* dreams of. Ten years on, it remains worth dreaming together.

*** The writer is a former General Manager of Janavahini (Bangalore); News Editor of Deccan Herald (Bangalore); Assistant Editor of Northern India Patrika (Lucknow); Principal of St Joseph's College (Allahabad); and Professor of Philosophy at St Joseph's Regional Seminary (Allahabad). ◆**

Continued from Page 16: Family as the First School of Mission

Family as Ecclesia Oikia (Domestic Church) and Missionary Community



Every Christian family is called the "domestic church" because it imitates the life and mission of the Church itself. Within the family, faith is taught, love is practised, hope is nurtured, and God's presence is experienced. Pope Francis explains, "The family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 274). The family is a miniature society, and it is families that shape the moral and spiritual character of society. A healthy family contributes to a healthy Church and nation.

The mission of the family is not limited to private life. Families are called to evangelise through their witness of love, joy, peace, and harmony. As Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). The witness of a loving family speaks more powerfully than any words it utters. Christian families accomplish their mission through ordinary acts of love: sharing meals with the needy, praying together, forgiving one another's mistakes, helping needy neighbours, and caring for the sick and the vulnerable. These daily acts of mercy and compassion become signs of God's kingdom.

Conclusion

The family is truly the first school of mission because it is within the home that individuals first learn the meaning of love, faith, hope, joy, sacrifice, and compassion. Through patience, service, forgiveness, prayer, and care for the weak, families become living witnesses of the Gospel. Patience keeps families steadfast despite struggles. Service opens the way for self-giving love. Forgiveness heals wounds and restores peace. Prayer keeps God at the centre of family life. Care for the weak echoes the compassion of God.

Families become missionary communities when they live with love, mercy, and joy. It is the responsibility of every Christian family to become a true school of mission where God's love is experienced, shared, and proclaimed to the world.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Sivagangai, is a professor of Scripture, Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamalle, Chennai. ◆**

The Interior Discovery of God's Gift

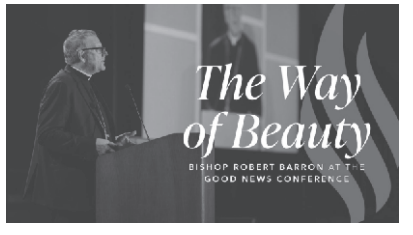
Pope Leo's 1st Message for Vocations Day

Dear brothers and sisters, dear young people!

Guided and protected by the Risen Jesus, we celebrate on the fourth Sunday of Easter — also called "Good Shepherd Sunday" — the 63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations. It is an occasion of grace in which we share some reflections on the interior dimension of vocation, understood as the discovery of God's free gift that blossoms in the depths of our hearts. Let us explore together the truly beautiful path of life along which the Shepherd guides us.

The way of beauty

In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself as the "good shepherd" (ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός) (*Jn* 10:11). This expression refers to a shepherd who is perfect, authentic and exemplary, in as much as he is ready to give his life for his sheep, thus revealing God's love. He is the Shepherd who draws us to himself, whose gaze reveals that life is truly beautiful when one follows him. Neither the eyes of the body nor aesthetic sensibilities alone are sufficient to recognize this beauty; rather, contemplation and interiority are required. Only the one who pauses, listens, prays and welcomes the Shepherd's gaze can say with confidence: "I trust him; life with him can truly be beautiful. I want to walk this path of beauty." What is most extraordinary is that, in becoming his disciple, one truly becomes "beautiful"; his beauty transforms us. As the theologian Pavel Florenskij wrote, asceticism does not produce a merely "good" person, but a "beautiful" one. Indeed, more than goodness, the distinctive trait of the saint is the luminous spiritual beauty that radiates from his or her life in Christ. In this way, the Christian vocation reveals itself in all its depth as a participation in the life of Jesus, by sharing in his mission and reflecting his beauty.







This interior experience of life, faith and meaning was also that of Saint Augustine, who, in the third book of the *Confessions*, while acknowledging the sins and errors of his youth, recognizes God as "more inward than my most inward part." More than self-knowledge, Augustine discovers the beauty of the divine light that guides him in the darkness. Perceiving God's presence in the innermost recesses of his soul, he came to understand the importance of caring for the interior life as a place of encounter with Christ, which is the way to experience the beauty and goodness of God in our own lives.

Such a relationship is based on prayer and silence, and when cultivated opens us to receive and actively respond to the gift of vocation. It is never an imposition or a one-size-fits-all model to which one merely conforms; instead, it is an adventure of love and happiness. Thus, on the basis of caring for the interior life, we must urgently recommence our vocational ministry and renew our commitment to evangelization.

In light of this, I invite everyone — in families, parishes and religious communities, as well as bishops, priests, deacons, catechists, educators and all the faithful — to commit themselves more fully to creating conditions that allow this gift to be embraced, nourished, protected and accompanied, so that it may bear abundant fruit. Only when our surroundings are illumined by living faith, sustained by constant prayer and enriched by fraternal accompaniment can God's call blossom and mature, becoming a path of

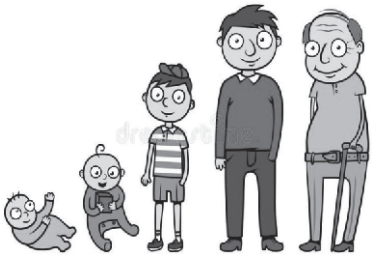
happiness and salvation for individuals and for the world. By embarking on the path that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, shows us, we come to know more deeply both ourselves and the God who calls us.

Mutual awareness

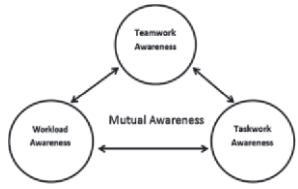
"The Lord of life knows us and enlightens our hearts with his loving gaze." Indeed, every vocation begins with the awareness and experience of a God who is love (cf. 1 *Jn* 4:16). He knows us profoundly; he has counted the hairs of our head (cf. *Mt* 10:30) and has envisaged for each person a unique path of holiness and service. Yet this awareness must always be reciprocal. We are invited to know God through prayer, listening to the Word, the Sacraments, the life of the Church and works of charity for our brothers and sisters. Like the young Samuel, who unexpectedly heard the voice of the Lord during the night and learned to recognize it with the help of Eli (cf. 1 *Sam* 3:1–10), we too must create a space for interior silence in order to hear what the Lord desires for our happiness. This is not a matter of lofty ideas or scholarly learning, but of a personal encounter that transforms one's life. God dwells in our hearts. A vocation entails an intimate dialogue with the One who calls and invites us to respond, despite the deafening noise of the world, with true joy and generosity.



Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas — "Do not go outside yourself. Return within yourself. Truth dwells in the inner person." Once again, Saint Augustine reminds us how important it is to learn to pause and to create space for interior silence, so that we may hear the voice of Jesus Christ.



Dear young people, listen to this voice! Listen to the voice of the Lord who invites you to a full and fruitful life, calling you to put your talents to use (cf. *Mt* 25:14-30) and to unite your limitations and weaknesses with the glorious cross of Christ. Make time, then, for Eucharistic adoration; meditate faithfully on the word of God, so that you may put it into practice each day; and participate actively and fully in the sacramental and ecclesial life of the Church. In this way, you will come to know the Lord. Through the intimacy of his friendship, you will discover how to give of yourselves, whether through marriage, the priesthood, the permanent diaconate, or consecrated life. Every vocation is an immeasurable gift for the Church and for those who receive it with joy. To know the Lord means above all learning to entrust oneself to him and to his providence, which is abundant in every vocation.



Trust

Knowledge leads to confidence, a mindset that arises from faith and is essential both for welcoming one's vocation and for persevering in it. Indeed, life reveals itself as a continual act of trusting in the Lord and abandoning ourselves to him, even when his plans unsettle our own.

Let us consider Saint Joseph, who, despite the mysterious and unexpected pregnancy of the Virgin, trusted the divine message revealed in a dream and welcomed Mary and her child with an obedient heart (cf. Mt 1:18-25; 2:13-15). Joseph of Nazareth is an example of complete trust in God's designs. He trusted even when everything around him seemed shrouded in darkness and uncertainty, when events appeared to diverge from his own plans. He trusted and abandoned himself to God, certain about the goodness and fidelity of the Lord. "In every situation, Joseph declared his own 'fiat', like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane."

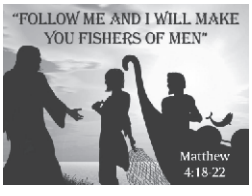
As the Jubilee of Hope reminded us, it is necessary to cultivate firm and steadfast trust in God's promises, without ever yielding to despair. We must overcome fears and doubts, confident that the Lord of history — both of the world and of

our own personal story — is risen. He does not abandon us in our darkest hours, but comes to dispel every shadow with his light. Through the light and strength of his Spirit, even amid trials and crises, we can see our vocation grow and mature, reflecting ever more fully the beauty of the One who has called us — a beauty shaped by fidelity and trust, despite our wounds and failures.

Maturation

Indeed, a vocation is not a fixed point, but a dynamic process of maturation sustained by intimacy with our Lord. To grow in one's vocation means being with Jesus, allowing the Holy Spirit to act in our hearts and in the circumstances of life, and reinterpreting everything in light of this gift.

Like the vine and the branches (cf. *Jn* 15:1-8), our whole lives must be rooted in a strong and vital bond with the Lord, so that we may more wholeheartedly respond to his call through our trials and necessary "pruning." The "places" where God's will is most manifest, and where we experience his infinite love, are often the authentic, fraternal bonds we establish throughout our lives. How precious it is to have a true spiritual guide to accompany us in the discovery and growth of our vocation! How important it is to discern and test the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that a vocation can be brought to fruition in all its beauty!



A vocation, therefore, is not an immediate possession — something "given" once and for all. Instead, it is a path that unfolds much like life itself. The gift we have received must not only be protected but also nourished by a daily relationship with God in order to grow and bear fruit. "This is helpful, since it situates our whole life in relation to the God who loves us. It makes us realize that nothing is the result of pure chance but that everything in our lives can become a way of responding to the Lord, who has a wonderful plan for us."

Dear brothers and sisters, dear young people, I encourage you to cultivate your personal relationship with God through daily prayer and meditation on the Word. Pause, listen and entrust yourselves. In this way, the gift of your vocation will mature, bringing you happiness and yielding abundant fruit for the Church and the world.

May the Virgin Mary, model of the interior acceptance of divine gifts and expert in prayerful listening, always accompany you on this journey!

From the Vatican, 16 March 2026

LEO PP. XIV

Continued from Page 4: FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

we are called to renew this covenant between family and mission.

Let every family ask: How can our home become more missionary? Let every parish ask: How can our community accompany families more faithfully? Let every missionary disciple ask: How can the joy of Christ's love reach those who feel wounded, excluded, or forgotten?

The joy of love becomes missionary when it refuses to remain enclosed within the home. It goes out to welcome, serve, reconcile, and proclaim. At the same time, mission becomes credible when it enters homes with humility, listens to their stories, and helps them discover the presence of God within their daily lives.

May the families of India become living homes of the Gospel, enduring signs of hope, and radiant schools of communion. Rooted in Christ and united in mission, may they carry the joy of love from one generation to the next and from their homes to the ends of the earth.

+ Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

Bishop of Vellore Diocese

Director, Pontifical Mission Organizations - India

SAINT OF THE MONTH – I

St Damien of Molokai

03 January 1840 – 15 April 1889 **Feast Day: 10 May**

The man who would become St Damien of Molokai was born in rural Belgium on January 3, 1840. His name was Jozef De Veuster, and he was the youngest of seven children. Growing up on the family farm, Jozef was expected to take over the business, but he felt called elsewhere — he wanted to follow his older brother and two sisters, who had all taken religious vows.

Jozef attended school until the age of 13, when his help was needed on the farm full-time. He worked alongside his family until he was old enough to enter the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, taking the religious name Damien, after a sixth-century martyr.

In 1864, Damien's brother, who belonged to the same religious order, was assigned to Hawaii. When his brother fell ill, Br Damien offered to go in his place. He arrived in Honolulu in 1864 and was ordained a priest that same year.



In 1866, Hawaii established a leprosy colony on the Kalaupapa Peninsula. It was widely — though mistakenly — believed at the time that leprosy was highly contagious, and this led to the forced quarantine of those diagnosed with the disease. Despite their isolation, these people still needed spiritual and medical care, and Fr Damien felt called to serve them. In 1873, he made the journey to their colony.

Upon arrival, he found it in a state of neglect and disorder. Many patients had no one to care for them; others had turned to alcohol. Lawlessness and immorality were widespread. Fr Damien responded with both compassion and leadership. He rallied the community to build homes, schools, and eventually a parish church — St Philomena — which still stands today. The sick were tended to, the dead were given proper burials, and a sense of order and routine transformed the colony into a livable community.

Originally, Fr Damien was meant to serve at the colony for a limited time before being relieved by one of three other volunteers. But he grew deeply attached to the people and their work, and he requested permission to stay permanently. His request was granted.



Though leprosy is not as contagious as people of that era believed, roughly five percent of the population is genetically susceptible to it, and the disease can take several years to present symptoms. Fr Damien eventually became one of those affected. He contracted leprosy in 1884 — after more than a decade of service — and discovered his condition when he accidentally placed his foot in scalding water and felt no pain, a telling sign of the nerve damage the disease causes.

Despite his illness, Fr Damien continued his work. He drew strength from prayer and devotion, often going to the cemetery to pray the Rosary or spending time in adoration before the Eucharist. "It is at the foot of the altar that we find the strength we need in our isolation," he wrote. He improved the colony's water supply, food provisions, and housing, and founded two orphanages. He received assistance from other priests for only six of his sixteen years on Molokai. He refused to leave for treatment and succumbed to the disease on April 15, 1889.

Fr Damien was buried at the colony, as he had requested. His remains were later transferred to Leuven, Belgium, in 1936, though his right hand was returned to his original grave in 1995.

He was beatified on June 4, 1995, by Pope John Paul II at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Koekelberg, Brussels, and canonized on October 11, 2009, by Pope Benedict XVI in Vatican City. When Hawaii became a state in 1959, it chose Damien of Molokai as one of its two representatives in the National Statuary Hall at the US Capitol.

Sources:

www.britannica.com; www.catholic.org; www.franciscanmedia.org

SAINT OF THE MONTH – II

St Mariam Thresia Chiramel Mankidiyan

26 April 1876 – 08 June 1926 **Feast Day: 08 June**

St Mariam Thresia was born on 26 April 1876 as Thresia Mankidiyan in Kerala, India. Raised in the Syro-Malabar Rite of the Catholic Church, her parents named her in honour of St Teresa of Avila — a name that seemed to foreshadow the life of holiness and contemplation she would go on to live.



As a young child, she had an intense desire to love God. She fasted four times a week and prayed the Rosary several times daily. Her mother, concerned at seeing her daughter grow thin from such rigorous fasting, tried — with little success — to dissuade her from this severe form of piety.

Home life was not easy for young Thresia. When the family fell into poverty, her father and brother often turned to drink. Compounding her hardship, her mother died when Thresia was just twelve, around the time her schooling also came to an end. It was then that she began to discern her own vocation in life.

She longed for a life of contemplation, prayer, and penance in solitude, but she eventually set this aside, drawn instead to a life of active service. Together with three companions, she helped clean and decorate their parish church. Inspired by a deep devotion to Christ, she wanted to help the poor, nurse the sick, and comfort the lonely — and she did so selflessly, serving the people of her neglected village.

From 1904, Thresia began calling herself Mariam Thresia, following a vision in which she believed the Blessed Virgin Mary had asked her to add "Mariam" to her name.

With her three companions, she formed a prayer group and an apostolate, visiting the poor and the sick without distinction of caste or religion. They even broke with the cultural custom of not leaving the house without a male escort — a decision that drew criticism from villagers.

In 1903, she requested her bishop's permission to build a house of solitude for prayer. He instead suggested she join the Congregation of the Franciscan Clarists, but she did not feel called to that path. She then went to live with the Carmelite nuns at a convent in Ollur, but felt equally that this was not the life God intended for her.

Finally, in 1913, the bishop granted her permission to build a house of prayer where she and her companions could live as hermits — devoted to austere lives of prayer and penance while continuing their mission of service to the poor and the sick. This marked the founding of the Congregation of the Holy Family (CHF). Mariam Thresia was named its first superior, and her companions became postulants. The congregation ministered to the sick and the poor, provided education for girls, and cared for orphaned children.

Mariam Thresia's life was marked by profound spiritual experiences. She is said to have first received the stigmata in 1905, with the wounds becoming more visible by 1909. It was also reported that people would gather to witness her lifted and suspended against the wall in the form of a crucifix every Friday.



In 1926, a falling object struck her leg. The wound would not heal — likely due to her diabetes — and on 8 June 1926, she died at one of the convents she had founded, in Kuzhikkattussery, India. Many miracles have since been attributed to her intercession. She was beatified on 9 April 2000 by Pope John Paul II and canonised on 13 October 2019 by Pope Francis.

Sources:

www.slmedia.org;

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'Love is stronger'

STORY

She saved tens of thousands of orphans



Out of the horrors of the Burundian Civil War and the Rwandan genocide emerged a woman willing to risk her life for peace.

In a chapel in Burundi in 1993, after she saw 72 of her friends, family, and colleagues executed, Marguerite Barankitse told God she no longer believed he was love.

"How could God create those killers?" she recalled asking through her tears.

As mass killings and ethnic violence tore apart her home country after a coup, Barankitse fled with 25 children, both Hutu and Tutsi, to the safest place she could think of — a Catholic church.

But her faith had been challenged.

"I felt broken," she told EWTN News. "After witnessing continued massacres and the deaths of my friends and family, I lost my voice and spirit."

"[I] told God I no longer believed he was love because I could not understand how he could have created such hatred and killers," she said.

Then, she heard the voice of a little girl — one of the first children she had rescued.

"We're still in life," little Chloe said. "We are here."

"In this moment, I was reminded and saw that God is love," Barankitse said.

She prayed for the strength "to go and shine in his glory."

"I knew God had not abandoned me," she said.

This wasn't the only moment that shook Barankitse's faith to her core. She would see more violence and death over the years. But it would become a defining moment for her.

Beginning with the 25 children she saved, Barankitse would go on to rescue and raise tens of thousands of children, eventually formally creating an organization called Maison Shalom.

Maison Shalom didn't just provide for the children's practical needs like shelter, education, and healthcare. Barankitse wanted to teach them to love and forgive, across ethnic barriers.

It was the children who came up with the name.

"We took the name 'Shalom' because my children heard on the radio that shalom meant peace, and that is our dream," she explained.

"From the beginning, Maison Shalom was more than a shelter — it was a community where every child could belong, regardless of ethnicity," she said.

Barankitse had seen firsthand the destruction of hate, and she wanted to break the cycle.

"Hate destroys not only its victims but also those who carry it," she said.

"It is not entire ethnic groups that hate each other; it is individuals who choose hatred," she said. "I refused to make that choice."

"I asked myself, what could I do to raise children who would break this cycle?" Barankitse continued. "My answer was to raise children with compassion, forgiveness, and love."



"My strategy has always been to love, because love is creative and transformative," she said. "Through this love, I choose to respond to violence with compassion, protection, and reconciliation."

"Love made me an inventor, and I sought to build a community infused with compassion."

"Forgiveness, as taught by the Church, is radical — it asks us to break the cycle of vengeance and hatred, even when it seems justified," Barankitse said.

"Love is not just a feeling; it is a force that builds futures out of the rubble of war," she said.

"And I know that I can never give up because the children I help give me the strength and courage to always stand up, their resilience inspiring me every day," Barankitse said.



Walking through war zones

Barankitse would walk through war zones to save orphans — even those other people thought weren't worth saving.

"As the brutal violence and killings continued, I fought for the safety of these children," she said. "More and more children continued to find refuge with me."

"I walked directly into war zones and picked children out amid piles of dead bodies because these children deserved the opportunity to live, be treated with dignity, and build peace," she said.

Barankitse fought for those who other people thought weren't worth saving.

"One day, I came across a mother who had been killed in a grenade attack with her 4-month-old baby strapped to her back," she recalled. "The baby was severely injured and people told me to leave him, but I knew I could not give up."



"I chose to protect him and find medical help for him," Barankitse said.

In spite of his injuries, the 4-month-old baby would live.

"I am proud to say that he survived and has grown up into a successful young man," Barankitse said.

Baranktise still remembers another harrowing moment when she had to fight to get medical help for a child who was injured with a deep gash in her neck.

She took her to the airport to bring her to a hospital that could treat her — but other passengers "were refusing to let me aboard due to her condition," she said.

"They were afraid," Barankitse said. "I said, 'No, you have no compassion. You will help me.'"

"Eventually, they listened to me and let me on the plane, putting a curtain between myself and the child and the other passengers," Barankitse said.

The little girl survived. Now she is married with two children of her own.

"Sometimes love means standing strong for those who need help," Barankitse said. "Nobody can stop love, and it remains my way of remaining strong against violence and hatred to this day."

Barankitse had another "deep spiritual crisis" in 1996 after another wave of killings in which she witnessed the death of one of her best friends.

"I spent a month in prayer and returned humbled, realizing I am just a small instrument in God's hands," she said. "That is why I continue to pray to God to give me enough strength to continue doing his work."

"Faith does not shield you from suffering; it walks with you through it," she said.

"My strength comes from my faith and from the children themselves," Barankitse said.

"Even as a child, I was troubled by violence and dreamed of becoming a teacher to change the world by teaching children compassion and love," she said. "Throughout my childhood, my mother taught me that God is love, and when we are created, he gives us strength."

Faith amid violence

Even after being forced out of her home nation in 2015 due to threats of violence, Barankitse has continued her work, relying on her faith to motivate her.

She left Burundi for Rwanda, where she created Oasis of Peace, which served more than 70,000 Burundian refugees.

"My faith taught me that we are created in love and that God gives us enough strength — 'Do not be afraid, I will be with you until the end of the world,'" Barankitse said. "That is where I found my smile and my joy, even in the darkest moments."

Barankitse's work is founded in her Catholic faith.

"Being Christian is not just about going to church and praying; it is about restoring dignity to every human being," Barankitse said.

"You can give someone food or clothes, but if they have no dignity, they have nothing," Barankitse said. "By showing my love to the people around me, I seek to give back dignity to all — deciding to see the humanity in everyone, even those who have hurt you most."

"This is how I build a future where no child has to suffer as my family and friends did," she said. "Hate will never have the last word. Not as long as we practice love."

"Catholic teaching tells us that every person is made in the image of God and deserves reverence and love," she said. "This belief is a foundation for all of my work."

Oasis of Peace offers counseling for victims of torture and rape, as well as education, vocational training, and micro-financing "so families can rebuild their lives with dignity," Barankitse said.

Oasis of Peace also provides education for children. The recently launched École Sainte-Anne de Kigali initiative helps in "bringing together children from both underprivileged and more privileged backgrounds in a shared space of learning, growth, and dignity," according to Barankitse.

"When I see a child orphaned by violence, I see a child of God. When I meet a woman who has survived rape, I see a person of infinite worth," Barankitse said. "I believe in celebrating differences because this reminds us of how we are all created uniquely. We all deserve to feel love, compassion, and dignity."

Barankitse continues her work every day, expanding Oasis of Peace, and speaking internationally about her story and the needs of the people she helps.

"Every day is full and purposeful," she said.

"My hope is to continue sharing my story and the stories of Mason Shalom, inspiring others by showing them the power of love. My days are spent listening, organizing, and dreaming with those I serve."

Barankitse won the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, which provided her with funding to help more refugee children.

"My dream is to create Shalom Houses everywhere, so every person knows they belong," she said.

When asked what message she wanted to share, Barankitse said: "Do not give up."

"The world can show you things that make you want to despair — I have seen them," she said. "I have been forced to watch friends be murdered, held mutilated children, and fled my country as a refugee. Yet I still believe love is stronger."

------ Kate Quinones : www.ewtnnews.com ◆

Patron Saints of World Youth Day Seoul 2027 Announced

The Local Organizing Committee for World Youth Day Seoul 2027 has officially announced the patron saints who will spiritually accompany the next major international gathering of young Catholics, which will take place in the South Korean capital Aug. 3–8, 2027.

According to a statement from organizers, the five patron saints of WYD Seoul 2027 are St. John Paul II, founder of World Youth Day; St. Andrew Kim Taegon and his companion martyrs; St. Frances Xavier Cabrini; St. Josephine Bakhita; and St. Carlo Acutis.

As is customary for each World Youth Day, the patron saints are presented as models and guides of faith for young people through the witness of their lives and spirituality. For WYD Seoul 2027, the choices were made in light of the event's major spiritual themes: truth, love, and peace.

After the announcement, a group of young volunteers spent two months studying the lives and spirituality of the five patron saints. Through prayer, dialogue, and shared reflection, they prepared a special prayer and a representative symbol for each saint to express the particular witness they offer to new generations.

------ Victoria Cardiel, www.ewtnnews.com April 27, 2026 ◆

News Roundup

Pope grants ecclesiastical communion to Chaldean Patriarch

Following a request from His Beatitude Patriarch Polis III Nona, Pope Leo XIV has agreed to grant ecclesiastical communion, “an expression and bond of full communion with the Apostolic See, in common service to unity in the Church and the building up of the Body of Christ.”

“It is with a heart full of joy that I grant you Ecclesiastical Communion,” Pope Leo wrote in a letter addressed to the Patriarch of Baghdad of the Chaldeans, Polis III Nona, and made public today, April 28, by the Holy See Press Office,

The Patriarch was canonically elected on April 12, 2026, by the Synod of Bishops of his sui iuris Church, which had gathered in Rome.

Patriarch Nona had previously written to request, in accordance with Canon 76 § 2 of the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium, the granting of Ecclesiastical Communion, which, as the Pope writes, is “an expression and bond of full communion with the Apostolic See, in common service to unity in the Church and the building up of the Body of Christ.”

“I am pleased", Pope Leo writes, "to raise fervent prayers that Your Beatitude, as Father and Head of this beloved sui iuris Church, will exercise with pastoral care the ministry entrusted to you, leading the People of God according to the Heart of Christ and confirming them in faith, hope, and charity.”

The Pope prays that the Holy Spirit will sustain the mission that the Patriarch is called to fulfill, “so that the Chaldean Church, rich in its ancient apostolic tradition and marked by the luminous testimony of numerous martyrs and confessors, may continue to make fruitful the proclamation of the Gospel,” strengthening ecclesial communion "in its territory and in the ever-expanding diaspora.”

Pope Leo then extends his greetings to the Chaldean Church's bishops, clergy, religious men and women, seminarians, candidates for consecrated life, and all the lay faithful.

The Pope recalls that the election took place “on the day when the Chaldean liturgy commemorates the encounter of the Risen Lord with Saint Thomas, from which the living tradition of this Church originates.” In the luminous wounds of Jesus, the Pope writes, Thomas recognized “the merciful manifestation of his Lord". This, he says, is a reason to hope that God will accompany the ministry of Patriarch Nona “in the sign of faith, which demands much courage and perseverance from many of the faithful in Chaldean communities who face, as true believers, trials that are often quite challenging.”

------ Vatican News

Arunachal Pradesh govt to consult Christians on anti-conversion law

Christian leaders in Arunachal Pradesh have welcomed an assurance from Chief Minister Pema Khandu that all religious communities will be consulted before the state implements a law banning conversions.

The assurance from Khandu came during a June 15 meeting between the government and representatives of the Arunachal Christian Forum (ACF), which has strongly opposed the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA), 1978.

Although the law received the president's assent soon after it was passed, the state government did not issue subsidiary regulations to implement it, leaving it unenforceable for the past five decades.

Christian leaders began protesting in March this year, when the state government appointed a panel to draft the law's rules. The panel submitted the rules, along with its recommendations, on June 8. Once the rules are publicized in the state gazette, the law will become enforceable.

Tara Miri, chief adviser of the Arunachal Christian Forum, told UCA News on June 16 that the Christian community feels “relieved after the chief minister's assurance to consult all stakeholders before implementing what many perceive as a draconian anti-conversion law.”

Khandu's social media post said his government's priority “will always be peace, harmony and progress. In our beautiful state, no

religious community should ever feel hurt, excluded or alienated."

— UCA News, June 16, 2026

Pope authorises beatification of 20 Spanish martyrs

Pope Leo XIV has authorised the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to promulgate decrees recognising the martyrdom of 20 diocesan priests from the Spanish islands of Ibiza and Formentera, who were killed in hatred of the faith during the Spanish Civil War.

The 20 priests, led by Juan Torres Torres, were killed between August and September 1936 amid the anti-religious persecution that accompanied the Spanish Civil War. At the time, they represented nearly half of the local clergy on Ibiza, where increasing restrictions on religious worship had already forced the diocese to suspend public processions for security reasons.

The Holy Father also recognized the heroic virtues of five Servants of God, who are now declared Venerable: Mother Clara Andreu y Malferit, a 17th-century religious from Mallorca; Father Júlio Emílio Alberto De Lombaerde, a Belgian missionary and founder of several religious congregations; Sister Maria Petra Giordano, a Dominican nun from Italy; Mother Maria Teresa Tallon, founder of the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate in the United States; and Mother Maria Agnese Tribbioli, founder of the Pious Workers of Saint Joseph.

Mother Clara Andreuy Malferit

Born in Mallorca in 1596, Mother Clara Andreu y Malferit entered the Monastery of Saint Bartholomew in Inca at a young age and spent her life in prayer and service. Known for profound mystical experiences, she responded with exemplary obedience and humility when Church authorities examined them.

Sister Maria Petra Giordano

Born in Naples in 1912 and later raised in Rome, Sister Maria Petra Giordano discerned her vocation at the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva before entering the Dominican Monastery of Santa Maria del Sasso in Tuscany. Appointed novice mistress at a young age and later elected prioress, she dedicated her life to Gospel living and the formation of religious sisters.

Mother Maria Teresa Tallon

Born in New York State in 1867 to Irish immigrant parents, Mother Maria Teresa Tallon felt called to consecrate her life to God from an early age. After joining the Sisters of the Holy Cross, she served as a teacher and cared for the sick, even contracting diphtheria while assisting patients during an epidemic in San Francisco.

Father Júlio Emílio Alberto De Lombaerde

Born in Belgium in 1878, Father Júlio Emílio Alberto De Lombaerde, a member of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, devoted his life to missionary work and founded three religious congregations. After receiving missionary formation with the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa, he was sent to Brazil in 1912, where he dedicated himself to pastoral ministry, education, and catechesis, particularly in remote regions of the Amazon.

Mother Maria Agnese Tribbioli

Born in Florence in 1879, Mother Maria Agnese Tribbioli overcame a difficult childhood before embracing religious life. She later founded the Congregation of the Pious Workers of Saint Joseph in the Diocese of Imola.

During the Second World War, she promoted numerous charitable initiatives, including sheltering a group of Jews despite the dangers involved.

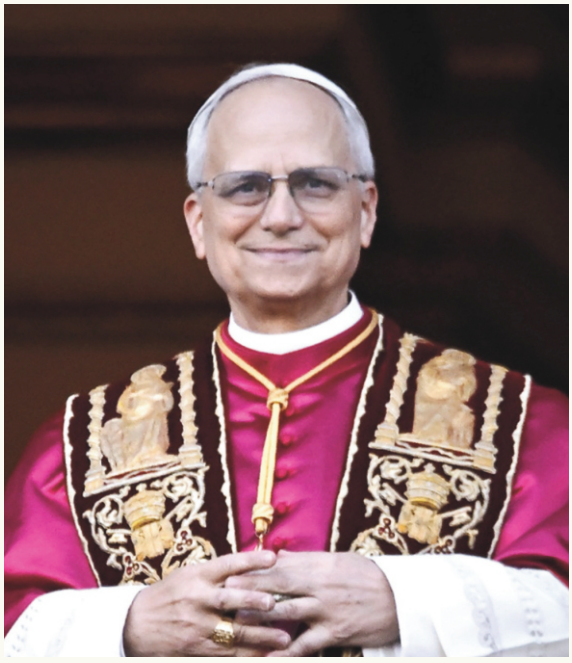
Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

May 2026: *That everyone might have food*
Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.

June 2026: *For the values of sports*
Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter, and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity, and personal growth.

Two Popes
One Gospel of Family





Pope Francis

- “Please, thank you, and sorry.” — Three essential words for peace and love in every family.
- “The Gospel of the family is truly joy for the world.”
- “As families, you are the hope of the Church and of the world!”

Pope Leo XIV

- “Families are the cradle of the future of humanity.”
- “In the family, faith is handed on together with life, generation after generation.”
- “We must look upon families with realism and compassion.”





GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIEITES, ROME, 1 JUNE 2026.
Most Rev. Ambrose Pitchaimuthu, Director, with the Holy Father. Photos Courtesy: Vatican Media.

Christ at the Centre
We hand in hand

"Let us therefore continue our missionary journey with joy and renewed zeal. In all that we do for the work of evangelization, may we always place Jesus Christ at the centre."
Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Participants of the General Assembly, PMS, 2026.

#10, 3rd Cross,Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru 560 042, Karnataka, INDIA
+91 79758 31942 secretariat@indiapms.com www.pmoinindia.org