

## Lesson 11

# MISSION THROUGH FAMILY LIFE



The gentile Cornelius and his family became Christian through a special intervention of God. God asked Cornelius to send someone to bring Peter to his home in a vision. At the same time, in a vision God asked Peter to go with the people whom Cornelius sent. Thus, not only Cornelius and his family, but also many who assembled there received baptism from Peter (Acts. 10). There were many people in the early Church who received baptism with their families and became missionaries of Christ. Lydia and her family (Acts 16), Stephen and his family (1 Cor. 16 : 15), etc. are examples. St. Paul has written letters thanking the couple Prisca and Acquila for protecting his life even risking their own and greeting the Church assembled in their house (Rom. 16:3-5). This indicates how in the early Church, missionary activity in family was very much alive.



## **Family : An Institution by God**

God, who created man out of love, calls him to family life to share this love. Marriage is not a mere human institution or set-up; but a set up God formed to share in the creative and redemptive plan of God. The matrimonial covenant, establishing a strong and life-long relationship with man and woman, by its very nature, is meant for their good and upbringing of their children in the right way. God, the creator of all, instituted marital relationship as the foundation and beginning of human society. Hence the missionary activity through families is very important for the Church and society (AA.11).

## **Family: A Missionary Community**

The essence of mission is to be a witness to the love God has shown to humanity through Jesus. Second Vatican Council teaches thus about the divine mission of the family as the basis and living factor of the Church and society: Family is to be a temple of God through mutual love among the members of the family and family prayer in which every member participates. The mutual love and dedication of the couples makes them close to others and especially their own children. Selfless love, loyalty and spirit of sacrifice and good example of the parents will give their children new spirit. Prayer sanctifies the family and strengthens marital relationship. (AA. 11). A family that prays together, lives together. The whole family, especially children are evangelised through prayer. Hence a very effective media of missionary activity in the Church is family (Document on Missionary Activity in Syro-Malabar Church 7:6).

**Activity- 1.** Find out and write down the means to give more importance to the Word in the family.

## **Family: A platform for Evangelisation**

The basis of a man's life of faith is the word of God. Man is to be saved by the word of God. "Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal

life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life” (Jn. 5:24). These are the words of Jesus. The word of God is to be given importance in family. God said to the Israelites: “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”. (Deut 6: 6-9). The members of the family together must study the word of God. God speaks to us even today, through His Word. Whoever listens to and obeys His Word are His own (Lk. 11: 27-28; Mk 3:35).



### **Family: The School of Faith - Formation**

Family is the primary school of Christian life and the School of noble human nature. It is parents who have to teach children faith for the first time and proclaim faith to them. In this sense, parents are the first principal teachers of their children. They form the faith and missionary life of their children through their own example and advice. Parents have the right and responsibility to give their children proper Christian education. These are regarded as the most important factors of the mission of Christian families (AA. 1, LG.11).



Children learn from parents the greatness of loving others forgetting self. They grow accepting one another and correcting one another through the instructions and formation given by their parents. The ideal life of the parents makes them concerned about others and generous in helping those who suffer. The formation in the family helps them to move away from luxury and

stinginess and to develop the habit of contributing to good cause. Parents, by their example, train their children to pay proper wages to the workers, to deal with them in a humane way and to have a good approach to their neighbours without distinction of caste or creed.

Families growing in faith become the models of Christian life in society. Salvation of the world accomplished by the Church is to be made effective in each family. Like the Church, Christian family should be the platform where Gospel is lived. At the same time Gospel truths are to be brought to the community. Thus, family becomes a powerful platform for evangelisation.

### **Means of Missionary Activities of the Family**

The important means of missionary activities of the family are married life based on love, Christian formation of children, participation in sacraments and prayer, life of witness, charitable acts, etc. The whole family should participate actively in the liturgy. They must deepen life in the Church by participating with interest in the Holy Mass and other sacraments. We become participants in the missionary activities of the Church when we co-operate with the activities of the Parish and help in the needs of the Church.



Families can participate in the missionary activities through sharing with the poor, extending hospitality to others, helping to get justice to the fellow beings who are in poverty and suffering, adopting rejected children, receiving the refugees with respect, giving necessary help for catechism, helping in the running of schools etc (AA 11). Above all when they encourage their children to accept missionary vocation and help them in this, parents will be participating in the missionary activities of the Church in a lively manner.

If the Church is missionary by nature, each Christian family is missionary by nature. Understanding the great role of families in evangelisation the Church gives prime importance to the apostolate of the family. Let us take up this mission and participate in the missionary activities. Let us also join hands to try to find out solutions to the problems that modern Christian families face.

### **Let us Read the Word of God and Meditate**

Heb. 13 : 1-6

### **A Word of God to Remember**

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16).

### **Let us Pray**

Christ the Lord of families, unite us and our parents in love and communion.

### **My Decision**

I will seek the opinion of my parents before taking any important decision.

### **Let us think with the Church**

When the members of the family come together in a natural way, parents should try to make them useful and important. They must use such occasions for prayer, Bible reading and meditation, other suitable ceremonies under the supervision of the parents and healthy entertainment. It will help the Christian family to be a platform for evangelisation where each member experiences God's love and becomes an instrument to share this with others  
(Church in Asia 46).

### **Let us find out the answers**

1. Why do we say that parents are the primary and main teachers of children?
2. How does family become a platform for evangelisation?
3. Write a note on: 'Family-the School of faith - formation'.
4. 'Family - the platform of experiencing the word of God' - Explain.
5. What are the missionary fields of family?