

*Knowing God
And
Living The Gospel*



**"The Love of God has been poured into our hearts by
the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."**

Romans 5:5

All glory, praise and thanks is Yours: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit One God as it was in the beginning, now and forever.

Amen and Amen. Alleluia. 

This book is based on “Faith goes from one generation to another through Family” (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7, Psalm 78) and aims to turn the hearts of the fathers (parents) towards God and towards their children (Ecclesiasticus 48:10, Luke 1:17), i.e. towards their spiritual needs so that they will all be lead to eternal life with the Glory of God.

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Preface ... Feelings of Love

This book goes deeply into our relationship with God by understanding the Sacrament of Marriage and divorce, and the Sacrament of Holy Order, i.e. Priesthood.

‘Love’: The most precious thing that can have different meanings and actions (as a result of feelings) depending on the two persons sharing this love. It is different when it is between a husband and wife; or a father and a son, or a father and a daughter; or a mother and a son, or a mother and a daughter; or grandparents and their grandchildren; or between relatives, neighbors, friends, groups within the same culture, etc. It is totally different when it is between man and God. Love is something that cannot be seen but felt and has a tremendous influence on our lives. Love is a feeling that is felt by all creatures on earth (some may not have intelligence, wisdom, patience, etc., but they all feel love one way or another) because God is our Creator and He is Love.

If we ask ourselves: What kind of Love is God’s love to us? What is the relationship between God and us? Then to reach an answer we need to take a closer look at Jesus Christ’s Life (deeds and words) and compare it to the Sacrament of Marriage as we, the followers of Jesus Christ, are made brides to Jesus Christ. Being identified to be God’s bride and looking at the description of the perfect housewife that will make God pleased with her actions (Proverb 31:10-31), we need to understand who we are and the traditions we need to follow accordingly.

Jesus Christ’s Life is found in the Holy Bible. The Sacrament of Marriage as any other subject is better understood if it is defined from all aspects including the wrong part of it in order to be avoided. It is like someone who wants to learn about Heaven so he tries to understand Hell and do things to avoid reaching there. In this booklet, a study for ‘Divorce: Is it a Sin’ can hopefully put us on the right meaning of ‘The Sacrament of Marriage’ and show us God’s Feelings, His relationship with us, and our obligations towards this relationship.

What is marriage and what is divorce? How does the desire to have a divorce grow and come into reality? What are its consequences? What is sin? These are some questions if answered might lead to why Jesus Christ forbade divorce unless it was for the reason of adultery which in itself is a sin.

This book can also serve as:

1. A preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage.
2. A reminder to married people that **“Faith is passed from one generation to another through Family”**.
3. A prevention to divorce.
4. A call to priesthood.

KNOWING GOD AND LIVING THE GOSPEL

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CHAPTER ONE

Sacrament of Marriage

As Christians, and according to our faith (as believers in One God, The Creator: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit), the marriage covenant or vow (which unites the soul and body of a man and woman to God's Spirit by the Holy power given to the priest and witnessed by God during the marriage ceremony (Malachi 2:14)) would read like this:

"We, as son and daughter of God, will love each other as one and will love and serve God sincerely, and do what is pleasing to Him by abiding to His teachings and trusting in Him throughout all the days of our lives no matter what. And, we will lay on our children the obligation to behave uprightly, to give alms, to keep God in mind and to bless His Holy Name always, and give thanks sincerely and with all their might so that they can in turn teach our faith to their children". (Refer to the Book of Tobit, Tobit 14:8)

Marriage is something very important for whoever loves God and has heard that **Faith is passed from one generation to another through Family** (Genesis 17:7-9, Deuteronomy 4:9-10), and any break would affect this chain (see figure -1.1-). With the **couple's actions**, both man and woman need to grow the seed of love they share for God and for each other, and plant a new one in their children's heart; they do this with joy. If the husband or wife cannot put a seed of love in each other's hearts and the obedience to God in their children's heart (see figure -1.2-), then how can the children in their turn put it in their own children's heart?? Remember that **parents can't teach their children what they don't know and practice, and it is the responsibility of the parents to lead their children into the Kingdom of God.**

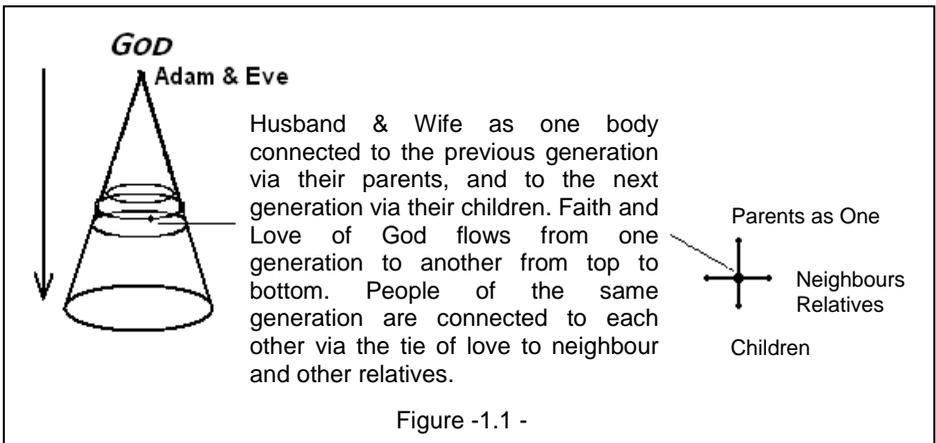


Figure -1.1 -

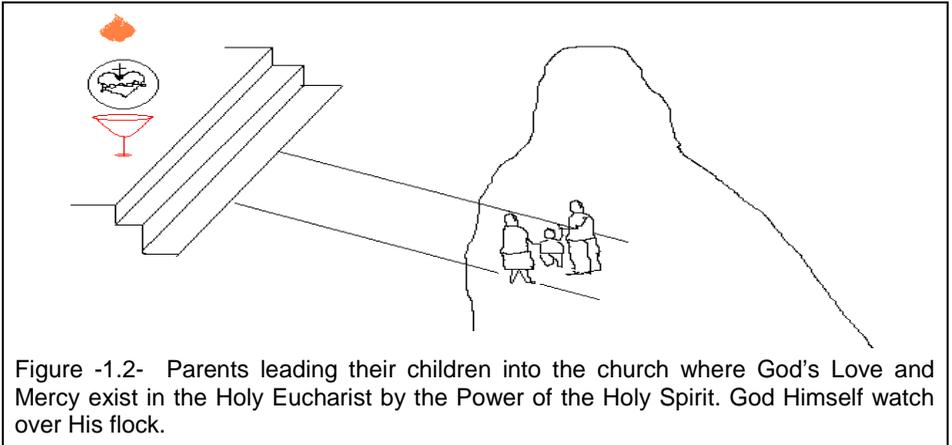


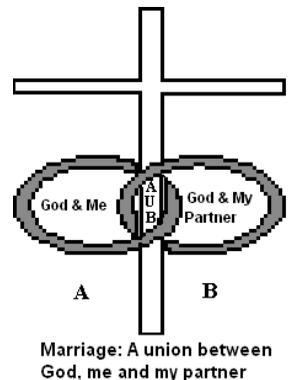
Figure -1.2- Parents leading their children into the church where God's Love and Mercy exist in the Holy Eucharist by the Power of the Holy Spirit. God Himself watch over His flock.

Family is so precious to God as it is His creation. The beautiful natural feeling: “Love” that fills the hearts (sown by God through the Holy Spirit into everyone) within family members and fruits the care, sacrifice, respect, courage, trust, patience and obedience is similar to the feeling between God and us as He being the parent and we being His children. In actual family life, the more the children are attached to their parents, the more their desire to imitate them and share their virtues (like father like son); and this is exactly how God want our relation with Him to be when Jesus Christ asked us to: “*Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect*” (i.e., set no bounds to your love, just as Your Heavenly Father set none to His) (Matthew 5:48). As children of God, we should seek and grow God’s virtues and make it conquer our heart, mind and conscience and act accordingly to show God how deep is our love to Him and only Him. Knowing that love creates jealousy, so we should understand the jealousy of God to us and should not allow the love for other things to be greater than the love for God nor listen to anything from anyone that contradicts His Word and would keep us away from Him. Furthermore, the obedience of the children to their parents and honoring them is like the obedience to God’s Word and praising Him (when we obey God’s Word, we are actually glorifying Him as any king is glorified when his servants and people obey his commands). In other words, God’s Commandment for the children to honor their parents is equivalent to His Commandment for us to be holy as He is Holy (Leviticus 19:2, 1 Peter 1:15) and He is Our Father in Heaven.

Man is always and will always be the head of the family. As a husband, his name (i.e. dignity and honor) and his wife’s name become one as their flesh is, and he is responsible for her acts. As a father, his daughters’ names are his responsibility until they get married to be unified with another man like their

mothers. A woman of faith knows that her father and later her husband is a mirror of herself as she is a mirror of him. She would fear for her father's/husband's name as she cares about her own. For example, a wife would cook a big meal for guests to show her husband's generosity and kind heart rather than to receive compliments for the nice food; in other words, a wife would do things so that people would appreciate her husband. In the same manner, we as Children of God; 'God's Wife' our actions should be in a way that when people see it they will praise, give thanks and glorify God. This kind of relationship and acts represent our love and zeal to God as it is through our acts of love and mercy to others that would show the non-believers the Love & Mercy of God towards us rather than to tell them that we are believers. Remember that Jesus Christ with His actions towards all of us (the living and the dead; at His time, before and after) have showed us the Love of His Father and Our Father, and has been a mirror reflecting Our Father's Love & Mercy, i.e. His image.

When a self-dependent man and woman love each other, then the only thing they expect from each other is feelings of love and all the acts that show these feelings and make them pleased with each other (exchanging gifts (bought from own hand-work) and words of thanks and appreciation, caring for the ones that the other person loves, and saying "Sorry" when feelings are hurt are simple examples of these acts that do not humiliate the person performing them). To keep love in the heart, such acts no matter how small they might be should always be performed from both partners to each other, not only from one partner to the other. The same thing is with our relationship with God; all He want from us is to love Him, and to show Him that love in our actions including admitting our mistakes and asking for forgiveness. He want us to be like infants who submit themselves totally to their parents out of love allowing their mother to feed them and cloth them, and are content with what their father provides; children whose heart is pure and does not know wickedness (Mark 10:15, 1 Corinthians 14:20). Doing an act of mercy with any other person (towards his body and/or soul) and making him happy, will please God as much as a parent seeing his/her child happy since that other person is a child of God. God expect from us to thank Him verbally in prayer in addition to the acts of mercy for all graces that He provide as an acknowledgement from us that He is the Loving Father and the One who provide and not ourselves. In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus Christ indicated that giving thanks and praises to God heal the soul (giving praises to God is an indication of a humble soul: one of God's will). The love in the heart between a husband and wife, or any two persons, would increase with a simple 'Thank You'



message. In addition, the words 'I miss you' would indicate that the other person is always in the mind and thought of in a sweet and loving way; now how often do we tell God that we miss Him? Also, the obedience to each other (as long as what is requested is according to God's teachings) is a necessity in their relationship as '**obedience is a way of showing love and respect to each other**' (John 14:15, 21), where if they cannot obey and please each other then how can they obey and please God, and teach their children to do so and to obey the elderly? Love is not something that can be taught in a school, but feelings that are part of our nature and being, so it needs food to grow and medicine to be cured if required. A priest once said that we become adults only when we know how to say: "Thank You" AND "I am sorry".

"God is Love" and all of His Work and Words focus under this characteristic, starting from the first moment of the creation and forever. Where, the greatest two Commandments of the Law in which hang the whole Law and the Prophets too outline this concept: "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*" and "*You must love your neighbor as yourself*" (Deuteronomy 6: 5, Leviticus 19: 17-18, Matthew 22: 36-40). And, God wanted to teach man about these commandments even before He say them, and He directed them when He created man. In the beginning, God created Adam first alone by himself, and Adam did not know someone else other than God to love, so all his love was given to God and only God [when God created man in his image, He filled him with emotions of love: "*I was leading them with human ties, with leading-strings of love*" (Hosea 11: 4)], he loved Him wholeheartedly, and hence was the first Commandment: We have only God to love; as if there is no one else with us. Then God created Eve from Adam's rib to draw Adam's attention to love another person, and this other person is originally part of him, and hence was the second Commandment as God taught us to love others as ourselves and not only love God and ourselves, because we are all of the same body that was created by one word and breath from God; God showed us how the two "Adam and Eve" were originally one body and they should keep One in heart even if they were separated in the flesh. God also directed the second Commandment within the concept of "fruitful marriage" (i.e. the way for re-production), God showed us how one pregnant woman and the baby inside her, are two in one body/house, one outer-beta, which resulted from the seeds of love within two separated bodies that originally were one, i.e. man and woman. This one house, i.e. the one body of a woman and her child, the one heart, will remain one even after their separation in body "*with human ties, with leading-strings of love*" that God created in the hearts. Thus, God want us to be filled with love: a selfless love with humbleness, a love that will sacrifice oneself for each other because this other complements me in the one body according to God's Will.

True love between a husband and wife is to find oneself in the other, and this love to the other gives satisfaction to oneself. Doing acts, regardless of its simplicity or difficulty, for the satisfaction or the sake of the other and not for the satisfaction of oneself is like the love Jesus Christ have for His Father and for us, as it was for that love that Jesus Christ accepted the death on the cross (to please God and be our Savior), and what more than that can anyone endure for the sake of the ones he loves and finds himself in them. As God's Love to us (represented in what Jesus Christ did on the cross) is the medicine to our sick soul, so is the true love between family members and others; it will keep all relationships healthy and cure any mental/emotional sickness that may arise, where the absence of true love will create mental/emotional diseases that are accumulated in time and it will be difficult to solve. True love is to understand that admitting mistakes and asking for forgiveness is not a weakness, and forgiveness is the best solution to restore love. True love does not mean that you don't need to say 'Sorry' to be forgiven (Matthew 5:21-26). True love will keep everyone's heart happy and be able to overcome any obstacle in life. True love will please God's Heart and will keep pleasure in parents' and children's hearts. True love is to love the other as he/she understands love and not according to how we set the rules for love or think that the way we act is love without considering the reaction of the other partner for our actions. In the same way, we love God by obeying and according to His Law not ours. As Christians, in most cases, our actions reflect the feelings that come out of our heart rather from our mind (the best example is the action of the poor woman who gave all what she had to live on into the treasury (Luke 21:1-4)). Our actions towards anyone should be based not on what is expected of us to do as duty only (i.e. according to expectation) but according to the motive behind the action (i.e. according to motivation); and as Christians we understand that our motive is 'the love for God and others' (Matthew 25:31-46, 1 Corinthians 13), and this will please God as it is His Will. True love is to love others, including God, with such love that is best described in the Book of The Song of Songs chapter 8 verses 6-7: *"For Love is strong as Death, passion as relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of Yahweh Himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown. Were a man to offer all his family wealth to buy love, contempt is all that he would gain."*; such love that requires meekness and humbleness in the heart just as the meekness and humbleness of Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:29).

On the other hand, the sadness in a parent's heart when his/her son/daughter refuses to talk to him/her because of (1) misunderstanding, or (2) blame for something not even caused by the parent, or (3) the parent's teaching does not correspond to the child's desires and beliefs, is like the sadness in God's Heart when His Children turn away from Him. As children start to feel maturity,

some will become so independent that they will not ask themselves if their parents accept and approve of what they are doing, and this would annoy and make their parents sad especially if they decided to do what is against their parents' will and try to teach them that this is the right way instead of learning from them, and this is similar to God's feeling when one of His Children thinks that he/she knows better and acts according to what pleases himself/herself.

Parents are compassionate by nature, and their love is shown to its maximum when any of their children is sick, cripple, blind, handicapped or having any abnormality; a love that makes them wish to give away the most valuable thing they have (even to the point of giving away their own life) just to bring their children back to a normal and healthy life, they would give away their own time, health, and happiness to see their children happy; a love that is normally shown in happiness when a very happy occasion appears in their children's life, e.g. their wedding day. The same compassion God feel for our sick soul, and for this love He gave us His Heart, His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to save our souls without thinking of any humiliation or pain that He would suffer.

As the love between parents and children represents the love between God and us; so does the sorrow of separation between a husband, wife and/or children will be like the sorrow and sadness of God when we are separated from Him. A sorrow that yields pain similar to the deep pain caused by the betrayal of the loved ones to us after giving them all we have. A sorrow that can be turned into happiness by forgiving, forgetting and rejoicing when the person, causing the pain, comes back to his/her senses and asks for forgiveness. And, the happiness in Heaven for a repented sinner resembles the happiness of the parents when their child is born.

Within the family, the teachings taught to us by Jesus Christ can be translated into true actions: by loving God above all things and trusting Him, loving each other, asking for forgiveness and forgiving from the heart when misbehavior occurs, and turning the cheek if required in order to live for Him and in Him and be part of His Family on earth to be able to join His Family and praise Him in Heaven. Marriage will last depending on how parents look at marriage and how much they believe that Jesus Christ is The Way, The Truth and The Life and do whatever He told us. As Christians, parents should do their best to grow the love to each other and will be willing to sacrifice themselves for each other and for their children (with actions that are accepted by God and according to His teachings). In Saint Paul second letter to the Corinthians 12:14, he said: *"After all, children should not have to save for their parents, but parents for their children"*. May Our Lord's Word (undoubted) be the platform on which everyone builds his/her home on earth and in Heaven, and putting His Word

into practice is the actual work and material required to build a blessed house for all members within the family. Saint Anthony of Padua quotes: "Actions speak louder than words; let your words teach and your actions speak...It is useless for a person to flaunt the law if their actions undermine it."

Marriage should not be a contract to define inheritance or who will get what when it is over. For a husband and wife (as they become one according to God), should think of how to inherit eternal life rather than earthly riches not only for themselves but for everyone under their care. As our relationship with God is based on pure love without hypocrisy or fear, i.e. we should not remember Him only whenever we are in need of His help or for the forgiveness of sin, so is the relationship between partners where they should not use each other for their own interest whenever it suits them, or be scared from each other. True Love (to love someone as oneself) should always exist and be the base of the partners' relationship. If either of the partners stopped caring for the other, where would the other one find love?? How can we say we are Christians if in our homes we don't love each other and are not willing to sacrifice ourselves for each other (Jesus Christ told us to love each other as He loved us)? A man should love his wife as much as he loved his mother and treat her the way he wants his son-in-law to treat his daughter, i.e. he should care about her feelings as a mother and as a daughter to be able to treat her as a wife. Parents should not forget their children and their needs, and should always be there for them offering them love and protection, as our Lord is always with us. A husband and wife should keep the bond of love between them as Jesus Christ keep His promise and stay with the Church (A group of people who believe in Jesus Christ (are baptized with the Holy Spirit and water), and obey His Word). His love to us is like the love between a faithful husband and wife. He Himself is fruitful by His work and the work of His Children starting with the Apostles, He is the seed and they are part of His fruit, i.e. His Children (John 13:33) who praise God wholeheartedly; accordingly He ask us to be fruitful through our works and our children. To His faithful followers, He provide security to an everlasting love and life as His promise is true. Such security is what normally a bride wants from her bridegroom, and children from their parents; a feeling of safety that nothing will affect the stability of marriage or can shake its pillars.

As our love to God is above our love to all other people and material things, so should the love be between partners where no love to any person or habit or anything is to come between a person and their partner, i.e. nothing, other than God Himself, should have more priority or importance than the other partner in his/her life. It is an awful feeling to know that your partner prefers to spend time with someone else or anything else more than you, especially when he/she

is the only thing in your life. In the same way we need to remember that we are God's only concern and we need to act accordingly.

As children of God, the faithfulness between a husband and wife should be a mirror to God's faithfulness to us, as He fulfilled all His promises and promised that He will stay with us forever. Faithfulness is one of God's virtues, and it is only we who can become unfaithful to Him by worshiping other false Gods beside Him (money, lust, people ...), and this is considered adultery; that is why unfaithfulness in marriage relationship (i.e., adultery) is a reason for separation, actually the only reason for divorce. As a mirror to Jesus Christ's image, both partners need to love each other in a way where "love is patient, trust all things, hopes all things, and endures all things". In Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (13:4-7), God have written the definition and basis of "Love" so that no one can claim that he/she loves while they don't, or a person who really loves would be accused of not loving. God will bless and protect every marriage that is not based *on any lustful motive, but it is done in singleness of heart* (Tobit 8:1-17).

During married life, there are so many stumbling blocks that try to keep us away from the true meaning of marriage (One of the best advices Jesus Christ gave us as children is to stay faithful as trials should come). Each member in the family must be very careful not to be a stumbling block on each other's path. Some of these obstacles come directly from our own actions that are affected a lot by the way that we were raised within the members of our own families (i.e., spoilt, pampered, used to lying, proud, helpful, caring, ... etc.; actions through which we make others love or hate us). To overcome these obstacles, we need to:

1. Nail ourselves to the cross of Jesus Christ (i.e. be faithful to His teachings which require a good knowledge and understanding to the gospel through the church and our families),
2. Take our responsibilities seriously and with joy just as Jesus Christ took the Cross of Forgiveness on Himself and acted accordingly. Each individual parent should not blame the other partner (or other people) for the consequences resulting from his/her mistake in not fulfilling the duties towards God, himself/herself and others according to God's Word,
3. Trust Jesus Christ and allow Him to wash our feet (forgiving and helping us to stay away from wrong thoughts and deeds) so that in turn we can at least do the same for each other,
4. Allow His Merciful Sacred Heart and Precious Blood (given to us as our daily bread in the Holy Eucharist) to be the soil and water that we use to grow our seeds of love (i.e. we base our love on a strong platform: The Virtues of the Spirit of Truth),

5. Always ask God (pray) for His graces through Jesus Christ including patience, wisdom in thoughts, speech and act to understand and accept others as they are and serve them; to recognize our faults and ask for forgiveness and change our wrong behavior; and to be merciful and have meek and humble hearts,
6. Remember that just like Jesus Christ, a servant will never say “what about me?”, but surrender totally to his Master’s Will, and give himself willingly always for his children, and have perseverance to fulfill God’s call to him and say “Here I am”,
7. Ask Jesus Christ to be our everlasting help to put all our efforts to solve any misunderstanding that may arise and to increase the love between both parties, and
8. Ask for advice from spiritual people (mainly priests), as this is what Jesus Christ advised us to do when any two people come into a situation of conflict.

When unconditional love exists between two people, and every action is done with self-denial for one another, then their bodies and souls are actually united and no power will separate them. They will not be separated in order to do God’s Will, as the two hands that are required to do a clap. They will live a life of constant love, as the relation between us and God when we really love Him: A constant prayer in words and deeds.

Recalling our Mother’s, Immaculate Virgin Mary, words to the servants during the wedding in Cana: “*Whatever He says to you, do it*”, and keeping this advice in our hearts, and as servants (or children) of God in this world, we should be obedient to Him and do what He asked Adam & Eve to do since creation: “*Be fruitful and multiply*” (Genesis 1:28), “*a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24, Mark 10:7-8), and “*therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Mark 10:9). God created male and female, comparable partners (i.e. helpers to each other in their journey), to know that He is God and serve no other. Looking at the life of Abraham and especially when God asked him to offer his son as a burnt offering to God (Genesis 22:1-19), we will immediately understand that the obedience to God’s Word is what please God and make Him shower blessings on whoever obey His Word and on his descendants after him.

As Christian parents, we know that we are the salt of the earth, i.e. the people who live by the Lord’s Spirit thus keeping God’s Love and Mercy in their hearts (i.e. saltiness); the people who love God as a Father and know how great His Love & Mercy towards us is, and have heard God’s Word and act on it by loving others as ourselves and serving them. In the same way, we need to keep

the love in the heart for each other so that the salt will not lose its purpose (Appendix J). It is the natural love that will generate in us the natural loving behavior towards others. If you lost your love to your partner then what will happen?? How can you bring it back?? Work hard, ask for forgiveness and forgive, and don't reach a stage of lukewarm love because it will be easy for any temptations to disturb the relationship (which is supposed to last forever) and break it; don't reach a situation where your actions are made out of duty only without love, i.e. actions out of a dead heart. Such a relationship is unhealthy and weak both for the parents and the children. When this situation occurs, the next step will be the hidden separation (divorce: which can start by not talking to each other or sleeping in two different rooms (hint: this is not the "One Flesh" concept)) that although is not clear to the outsiders, can be noticed by the children and will have a great effect on their future actions. Also, such separation is not hidden from God's eyes as He see and know what is in the heart of everyone of us, and it is He whom we should not deceive. In the same manner (same concept but different acts), we need to keep our love to God always on fire; a steadfast faith and an everlasting pure love.

As Christians, we are called by God to change our wrong behaviour, the behaviour that can be reflected by the actions of the people surrounding us; the behaviour that does not reflect a meek and humble spirit. If a person is not willing to change, he/she will be considered dead; dead in the eyes of the people whom he hurt unless their faith is so strong to forgive without the need from him/her to change, especially if his/her unchanged behaviour is repeated so many times (Luke 17:3-5). A change might occur if a person acknowledges his/her mistakes when someone tells him/her about this wrong behaviour or he/she might feel the reaction and behaviour of the other person which can be sadness, harsh communication, ending a relationship or stop responding. When informing/ rebuking others regarding their mistakes and wrong behaviour, we need to do it with love and the will to forgive, and without direct accusation or anger or hate, just as when Jesus Christ reminded St. Peter about his denying act (John 18:15-27) with a simple question: "*Do you love me?*" (John 21:15-17), and St. Peter acknowledged his love to Jesus in words and deeds. Yet if none of these happens and the person is filled with the belief that he/she cannot be wrong, or shouldn't apologize, or doesn't care to see a smile on the face of the other person then it will be hard to change, and this will bring hearts to be distressed. When the Disciples received the Holy Spirit they were given the right to forgive anyone's sin or to retain anyone's sin so that it will be judged (John 20:22-23), and because of their faith, i.e. love to God and to others they have forgiven even the ones who had persecuted them (Acts 7:55-80, Luke 17:3-5). And, on Pentecost Day, the Disciples, through the Holy Spirit, were given the capability to speak in different languages in order to communicate

with others to proclaim the message of Love. In the same manner, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to give us the capability to forgive and to talk and understand the language of the heart in order to love and please God and others as Jesus Christ loved and pleased His Father and us. Accordingly, in our daily prayer, let us ask God to increase Faith, Hope and Love in our hearts.

In the time of distress, when any person is upset from the other partner, and he/she feels nothing, i.e. his/her heart feel emptiness towards the other partner or sometimes even towards the children, this would give him/her the feeling that it is OK to leave them and he/she will not be affected. And though it is so terrible to think that there are no feelings towards anyone in the family, but actually this is not a true feeling that stays forever, rather it is a false feeling that can be easily changed just by talking to a friend or someone wise to solve the problem. In the same manner, we might face a certain problem where we don't see God in our hearts and we feel nothing towards Him, and stop praying, but actually our love to God does not demolish but it can hide under the surface waiting for a word from someone wise to bring it back or a situation that resolves all troubled/empty feelings. Once we really love God, then it is not easy to take His Love away from our hearts although this is what Satan will always try to do.

In the time of conflict that makes both partners unforgiving, both partners might not remember the promise they've said to each other in the presence of God, but they can easily remember "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4) that they've learned since childhood to sit down together to pray asking for God's help. This prayer is a heavenly miracle by itself that works on changing us if we really prayed it from the heart with good intentions and complete surrender to God's Word, i.e. a prayer that is accompanied with actions. We can change by comparing our actions with the words of this prayer and what we understand from these words. This prayer is a covenant with God where through it we promise Him to do so many essential things in order to live with Him a Christian Life where God is the One Creator and ***Our Father in Heaven*** who wish that man becomes an image to Him as when He created him in the beginning:

- ***Hallowed be Your Name (May Your Name be held Holy)***: Do we know that God is Holy, and our actions should be a mirror that reflect this Holiness to others? God is "Love" and "Good", so where are we within our actions from these characteristics in order to be His children and worthy to call Him "Our Father"?
- ***Your Kingdom Come***: Do you understand that the Kingdom is the people who live together as one body with one Spirit: The Spirit of Jesus Christ?

So, when we argue and become a stumbling block to our children and others, where are we from this Kingdom? And, why are we asking for it? Where is the Spirit of Christ that is working within us?

- ***Your Will be done:*** Do we know that God's Will is for the two to become one, and no one to separate them?
- ***Give us today our daily bread:*** Do we know that when we complain from our financial situation or from the other partner and are not content with what God have provided, then we are actually standing in front of God complaining about His Gifts to us? (Proverbs 30:7-9)
- ***Forgive us our debts (sins) as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us (sinned against us):*** Do we understand that when we don't forgive and still pray this prayer asking God to forgive us, then we are cheating God and are standing as liars in front of Him asking for something that we cannot do for others? Have we forgotten that there is no one without sin except God?
- ***Don't put us to the test (into temptation) but save us from the Evil One:*** Do you know that God gave us the "Freedom of Choice" within our actions? Now, how can God deliver us from evil if we don't surrender to Him? And, if we insist on our wrong actions and did not feel sorrow for our sins, then how can God listen to us and help us?

Yes, both partners need to understand this prayer and reflect on its meaning to live by it, instead of repeating its words just like a parrot and then he/she would say to God: "O God, I pray to You but You do not listen, You don't provide me with money to be happy, or change my partner's behaviour and financial condition so that it will be in harmony with mine and my needs and I will be happy". One of the most beautiful advices that Jesus Christ gave us is to remove the plank from our eyes (i.e., to know our mistakes and change our behaviour) so that we will be able to see clearly, before we pinpoint the wood in other people's eyes (Matthew 7:1-5). This is equivalent to asking God first for His graces and for the Gifts of The Holy Spirit: Wisdom, knowledge, piety, love, meekness and humbleness, patience and content before anything else even before asking God to change the other person (Matthew 6:33-34). This advice calls us to be honest with ourselves and strong to admit our mistakes without blaming anyone else when we don't fulfil our responsibilities towards God and others; as we normally put the blame on others so that we will be the victim who needs care and pity in the eyes of the people outside the conflict, and this actually increase the conflict (as what happened with Adam and Eve). This advice calls us to endure and persevere in finding solutions for the conflict to keep love in the hearts.

In the time of distress, it is important that everyone continue doing what he/she is supposed to do as far as his/her duties towards the other members of the family. This will ease the problem and will keep faith and hope in the hearts of the children. Though it is not easy for someone to live with someone else whom he/she started to hate because he/she had hurt him/her whether emotionally or physically, but as Christians, we need to remember God's Love to us and how He accepted to come for the sinners to make them Holy to be able to live with Him forever. With this in mind, we can say that God love us no matter how we behave. Remember, that when hate-rage fills the heart, then you cannot do any act of mercy towards the person you hate, not even forgiveness. God said to Saint Paul: "*My Grace is enough for you*" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and this is what we should keep in mind in time of distress that it is enough for us to have His Grace knowing that we became His Children, and in knowing this we can ask Him for solutions that only Him can provide; a solution that not necessary mean that the other partner will change his/her attitude and actions but it could be a change in our heart to accept without agony the attitude of the other partner. Ask God and He will provide. Saint Francis of Assisi prayed and said: "Divine Master, grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving (*to others*) that we receive (*from God*); it is in pardoning (*others*) that we are pardoned (*by God*), and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen."

There are two incidents where man unwillingly would stand naked in front of God: (1) At birth, and (2) at death; in other words, when a body is born thus giving birth to a spirit that does not know God, and when the body dies thus giving birth to a living spirit that kneel to God. Also, there are two incidents where man would stand naked in front of God with his own will:

- (1) When he sins by disobeying God's Word (Genesis 3:8-13). This nakedness tells God: "I don't need You cause I have full knowledge and understanding, and I will put on myself a gown bought from what I earn".
- (2) When he submits himself totally to God and say: "Let Your Will be done, not mine" as what happened to Jesus Christ when He was on the cross (Luke 22:39-44, Matthew 26:39, 27:27-28). This nakedness tells God: "Come, and take over me as without You I am nothing. I take off my desires and whatever feelings that keep me connected to this world, and come to You to cloth me with what Your Hands have done, cover me with Your Spirit and Glory".

The first kind of nakedness is disgraceful and it leads to leaving Heaven and entering this world (i.e. A dead spirit that does not know God), while the second kind of nakedness leads to leaving this world and entering eternal life in

Heaven (i.e. A living spirit that kneels to God). If man can see the first kind of nakedness, then he would have been ashamed from himself and repented, and would ask God to cloth him with the cloak of integrity and obedience; to cloth him a grace that make him offer himself to God thus become naked again to wear God's Light that shines to all people surrounding him.

No matter how society changes (because of freedom of opinion which depends on personal interest) and new ideas about marriage and its purpose arise 'True Faith' should not change because God's Law stays forever above all laws (Appendix A).

Engagement Period

Our days on earth are like the engagement period before marriage where both lovers would come to understand each other and love each other more and more until they are joined together forever after the marriage ceremony. The bridegroom to come is God and all of us, in his own, are His fiancé. The bridegroom keeps on offering himself, his love and a bouquet of red flowers to his fiancé, and the fiancé accepts these flowers, takes care of it and does not throw it away but hides it in a book (engraves it in her heart) and makes it last forever. God offered us the engagement ring being His Heart, i.e. The Body and sufferings of His Son Jesus Christ, along with a beautiful bouquet of red roses having His mystical fragrance where every rose is a drop of blood of His Beloved Son Jesus Christ. Who can resist this offer? And, what do we really offer in return? The wedding ceremony starts the minute our body dies.

The Role of the Family in Knowing God

From the beginning of creation, 'The Family' concept, manifested by man, woman and a wonderful relationship that yields to children, was and still is and will always be the only way to establish a small society which will grow to form a nation. Beliefs, ethics, culture, customs, etc., are passed on from parents to children who in turn will pass it on to their children and so on. During this process, some beliefs, ethics, customs, etc., have changed to suit God's Will or the desires of the human being. This creation did not start out of nowhere. It is God Who did so for His Glory. God emphasized the importance of family and distributed the roles among man and woman and made them continue each other for the purpose of raising families through which faith is passed from one generation to another in order for all to reach eternal life with Him; i.e. the promised land (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25 & 11:18-21).

In His teachings regarding the kingdom of God (Luke 13:18-21, 15:1-32 and

Matthew 13:31-34, 18:12-13), Jesus Christ gave examples using both man and woman thus emphasizing their role in forming the Kingdom of God, where the man is the shepherd who takes care of his lambs, or the farmer who sows seeds to fruit, and if for any reason a lamb was lost, he would go after it and try his best to find it, and if his plant did not bear fruit then he would fertilize the ground and do his best to make it nourish and bear fruit (Luke 13:6-9). While the woman, with her wisdom, would manage the survival of the house spiritually (spreading the yeast of love in her household's hearts) and economically (handling the treasury of the house and is responsible for not wasting and losing it). It could be that by their actions that their children can be lost and it is their duty to find them and put God's Love in their hearts.

God created us in a family because He want us to be a big family to love each other and praise Him before and after death. God sent His prophets to teach us gradually the way and truth about life, but some of the human beings with the help of evil thoughts have chosen to blind their eyes and close their ears. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, in a family to tell us about the importance of a family and the role of every member in it. A loving worker and sacrificing father, a tender caring mother and obedient children who love, trust, honor and respect their parents (Ephesians 5:21-33). Both parents share the same responsibility of being the first teachers to their children for faith, language, customs, ethics, etc., and if they failed in their duties for one reason or another, things can change and might be forgotten.

On the 26th of July the Church commemorate the parents of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Ann and Joachim, and one of the scriptures that are read on that day is Ecclesiasticus 44:1, 10-15 where the faithful ancestors are praised in their successive generation; in other words, when the descendants stand by God's Commandments, then their children will inherit the good work and pass it on to their children; i.e. faith really goes from one generation to another through the actions of the family.

As Christians, the family plays a big role in keeping the real Christian Faith and beliefs from one generation to another (Psalm 78:1-7). Every parent should be like John the Baptist (John 1:23), i.e. prepare the way for the Lord in their children's heart (Malachi 3:23-24, Luke 1:17). And, as the parents of Jesus Christ took Him to the Temple and presented Him to the Lord, and then taught Him the Love of God and His Commandments; and as they were anxious and worried to feel that they have lost Him and then they found Jesus Christ teaching in the temple, so must the Christian parents do, and they should:

- Open the gate of their children's heart to Jesus to enter (as He is standing knocking at the door and waiting for it to open (Revelation 3:20)) and fill it

with graces from childhood,

- With their actions, they would become the light that would remove the darkness from their children's life as Jesus Christ asked His Followers to be (Appendix G),
- Take their children to church to be purified, and later on to find Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, in His Word, Love & Mercy (see figure -1.2-),
- Teach them how to love and glorify God by obeying His Commandments,
- Teach them how to give thanks and praise God through their relationship with others, and
- Teach them how to walk humbly with God by: (1) admitting their mistakes and asking for forgiveness through Jesus Christ (in the Sacrament of Penance followed by having The Holy Eucharist), (2) forgiving others from their hearts, and (3) respecting all other human beings as we are all created by God.

Also, we need to remember that Jesus Christ took on Himself the responsibility to make God known to His children at His time and stayed with us forever through His Word and Sacrifice, and He did for His Children what they cannot do for themselves (He forgave our sins against God and became our Savior and gave us peace in our souls). Accordingly, parents must feel the big responsibility on their shoulders towards their children, and they should love, give support, protect and take care of their children not only when they are young, as this is natural, but forever. The love, support, protection and care towards their children's soul (i.e. spiritual needs) should be equivalent to the love for their humanly needs. Love should increase in all aspects not decrease or according to circumstances. As God stay with us always so parents should stay with their children forever and be a good example to them.

We need to remember that every follower of Jesus Christ (i.e. fathers, mothers, priests and other consecrated people to God) must build his heart as a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:4-5). This also reminds parents about their responsibility to share in carrying the Ark of the Covenant (Numbers 1:48-51, 18:1-7) [The Ark of Covenant resembles Jesus Christ The Son of God: God's Word and Bread of Life; The Living Tree on Whom God's Glory rest and through Him God speak to His Children] and preserving it from falling into captivity, i.e. to carry the glory of God to their children without changing His Word. Parents carry this responsibility with joy, humbleness, meekness and patience (Ephesians 4:1-7), forgiving each other and covering the defects of whoever abused them, and reminding each other about the Commandments of God and abiding by it.

Nowadays where human's desire rules, parents should be more faithful to God and to each other, united and tolerant to all stumbling blocks in their lives in order to teach their children God's desires and ways. Just as a pregnant woman in her last days of pregnancy, so weak and burdened with a heavy weight, but patient and tolerant to all pain, united with the child in her womb, just to give him/her a healthy birth. When any of the parents forgets his/her mission; when problems and personal desires come in the way of the family; when the link between a husband and wife breaks then the faith link from one generation to another can easily break. As parents, we must always remember that our children are the next generation who in turn would be able to teach their own children what they were taught.

The bond within the family is the instrument God used to build up His army. The family members are the army; God's Word (showing/explaining/visualizing God's Love and Mercy) is the basis of the relationship between its members and the sword they need to armor themselves with to defend themselves and their children from any evil (Ephesians 6:10-20). The priests are the echo of The Word and their constant advice and explanations must be sought either through the homily within the Holy Mass or privately. The commitment towards the one God to be loved will spring in us praises, prayers, and actions that are fit to His Holy Name; actions that are based on love and not just fulfilling certain duties.

In a family, we understand that every person starts his/her life as a baby (son/daughter) and at that stage the only love he/she knows is the love to his/her parents; this is equivalent to the first of God's Law that is: To Love God with all your heart above all things (as God is our Father). Then after growing, he/she gets married and becomes a husband/wife, and normally we do this out of love for ourselves and the need to be cared for and happy; this is equivalent to the second law: Love yourself (when Jesus Christ says to love your neighbor as yourself would indicate first you love yourself and then you love others as much). The last stage is to become a parent and have children and at that stage you will love others, as the children are the closest neighbors that we need to love and take care of. Though the three stages of our lives are time related, they just imply the order of Spiritual Love: God first, oneself as a soul, and others' souls.

<u>God's Law</u>		<u>Stage of Life</u>
Love of God	-----	Son/Daughter
Love of Your soul	-----	Husband/Wife
Love of Neighbor	-----	Father/Mother

And as our Mother Immaculate Virgin Mary, so we should all:

- (1) Become a faithful son/daughter to God The Father (i.e. children who hear the Word of God and keep it),
- (2) Become united with the Holy Spirit as Its spouse and enrich ourselves with God's Virtues, and
- (3) Be faithful parent to God's children (Luke 11:27-28).

The Church, The Sacraments & The Family

The words addressed by Jesus Christ to His disciples (in Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16): "*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*" put on every faithful the responsibility of making God known to his/her children so that they can be His Children (Appendix C). The first and least thing to do with the aid of the Church is Baptism, followed by Confirmation, and later on receiving the Holy Communion.

In our journey on earth, the love of God grows in our hearts from zero level to the maximum until freedom is given to our soul at death to meet Her Lover. During this growth, we face difficulties especially at the beginning and at the end, just like the difficulties of pregnancy period, yet we know that The Holy Spirit help us all the time. As Jesus Christ, i.e. "God's Love", was introduced into the world in steps, so are the steps to be taken to put God's Love into our hearts:

- Baptism with water in the Name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit is to clear all previous sins (especially Original Sin) and make the heart clean to receive The Holy Spirit so that He will put the Spirit of Jesus Christ into our hearts. This step can be compared to the annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to our Mother Virgin Mary that she had been chosen to be the Mother of Jesus Christ* (Luke 1:26-33); i.e. with Baptism we are chosen to be God's Children. It is God's Will for us to be baptized, and to confirm that: Jesus Christ as Son of Man was also baptized with water (Matthew 3:13-15).
- Confirmation is the actual coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts as He came to Virgin Mary when she said "*You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me*" and she was conceived with Jesus Christ in her womb (Luke 1:38), and in the same manner Jesus Christ's Spirit is conceived in our hearts. Jesus Christ as Son of Man was also baptized with the Holy Spirit and God anointed Him and declared that He is His Beloved Son* (Matthew 3:16-17).

- Holy Communion including penance and receiving the Holy Eucharist is our daily food so that we grow in Spirit and Love. With the baptism of blood (by putting our sins in the wounds of Jesus Christ and asking Him to wash it away with His Blood) our hearts become clean and fit to stand in front of God. On the Cross, Jesus Christ was baptized with His own Blood (Luke 12:50). This process is an ongoing one along with listening to God's Word in the Holy Mass as Jesus Christ was found in the Temple.
- Evangelizing or spreading the good news of our salvation through Jesus Christ is like the visit of Virgin Mary to her relative Elizabeth, as it represents taking Jesus' Spirit that is in our hearts to others and they along with their children will be glad (Luke 1:39-41).

[* Please note that the above comparisons don't aim to say that Virgin Mary was not conceived without sin, neither to say that Jesus Christ did not have a Divine nature from birth.]

It is the responsibility of the parents towards themselves and towards their children to attend to church in order to be enriched by the Word and The Holy Eucharist. And it is the responsibility of the Church and its related religious schools to teach the Gospel with courage and without doubt. The actions at home, from which a child learns during his early childhood, and the teachings of the Church should be in harmony and according to Jesus' teachings. Once children start to go to a Catholic school for example, some parents think it is the responsibility of the school to teach moral and spiritual issues to their children and they themselves have nothing to do with it. What can the church/school do if every person doesn't want to stop for a second and ask himself/herself: "Am I Your child my God by my acts (words, thoughts and deeds)? Am I a good example for my children by my acts? Are my acts according to God's Will? Am I teaching my children what the church/school teaches?" What can the church do if people stopped going to church, if people see gossip as part of their daily talk to others, if there is no mercy in their hearts towards the poor, if they don't have in their hearts the feeling of being responsible towards their children? At the same time, the church must have control on the teachings of priests/catechists in such a way that teachings will not be of distraction to the soul.

In summary: it is not enough to raise our children only in body, but we need to think of raising their soul simultaneously from early childhood, and it is our actions that count. As Jesus Christ is always with us, so the Church should stay with its children. The parents and the Church carry together, with the same load and effort, the cross of transferring faith to the next generation (see figure-1.3-), keeping in mind not to fall into the trap of blaming the other party and stop

fulfilling our responsibility.

Figure -1.3- The responsibility of passing Jesus' Teachings (represented by the cross) to our children is equally distributed between The Church & religious schools, and the Parents.

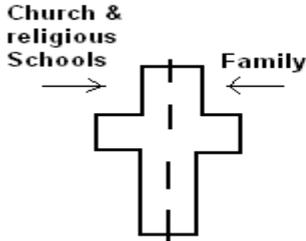


Figure -1.3.1- A solid faith is passed to the children when both sides fulfill their duties in harmony with each other.

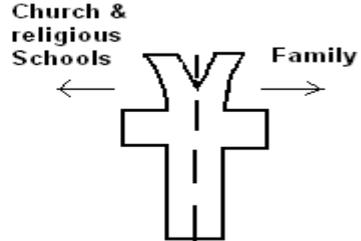


Figure -1.3.2- A shaken and broken faith is passed to the children if any side failed to fulfill its duties.

Who can understand God's Wisdom or what God's Will is for our life on earth to fulfill His plan, or how do the difficulties in our life teach us what faith is, strengthen it and keep it fast and steady?

We say: "God love us", yet we cannot understand why living on earth is not like living in Heaven where there will be no tears. A child would easily become angry when he knows that his father, who loves him, is rich and he can provide for anything he asks yet he doesn't. Similarly, a wife would not understand her husband's love if he does not approve of her practicing what she enjoys doing. It is the same fatherly love that so many could not understand why Jesus Christ and all other martyrs who followed Him had to suffer; a fatherly love that cannot be understood easily. A Fatherly Love that can be understood if we believe that trials are for our benefit to learn not to harm others as they might not forgive us as our Heavenly Father do when we sin, and then we will be standing in front of them for judgment after our death. A love that seems to be incomplete without suffering or without surrendering and offering yourself totally to the person you love. With marriage, this person is God, your partner and your children. With priesthood or brotherhood and sisterhood, this person is God and the children/families you were asked to serve as they become the children in whose hearts you want to put the seed of faith, to change their hearts from hardness to tenderness to become meek and humble, to know God and give Him thanks (no matter what He provide), and praise Him loudly from all their hearts with joy.

The Importance of Understanding the Gospel

The words addressed by Jesus Christ to His followers (in Luke 6:39): “*Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit?*” places great responsibility on parents to understand God’s Word, obey it and live according to the principles of their faith in order to pass it on to their children, as parents can only pass to their children what they know and understand. Accordingly, we can see the importance of understanding the Gospel.

Some readings from the Gospel are easy and direct to the point aiming to teach us how to behave as Children of God, for example: St. Paul in his letter to the people of Ephesus (Ephesians 4:32, 5:1-2, 8-9), he wrote: “*Be generous to one another, sympathetic, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ. As God’s dear children, then, take Him as your pattern, and follow Christ by loving as He loved you, giving Himself up for us as an offering and a sweet smelling sacrifice to God. ... You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; behave as children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and uprightness and truth*”. In the same letter, St. Paul explains the morals of the home by explaining our duties towards each other, and what concern us as a family is the responsibilities of the husband, wife and children (Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4). Though these readings are easy to understand, but still some Christians do not live according to God’s Word and Will, knowing that the Gospel was written with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to the fact that people often say: “We are humans and cannot endure” or “We live only once” to justify the way they are living [i.e., treachery, not forgiving, greedy ...], we also see that many people try to interpret the Gospel according to their benefit, and to justify their unaccepted behaviour, and this is wrong. The Church has the responsibility to explain God’s Word to its parishioners, and we need to always seek knowledge and understanding from the Church. An example of wrong interpretation is shown when someone thinks of getting a divorce; and he/she supports their way of thinking by certain readings from the Gospel and makes it an excuse to ask for divorce, for example:

1. Jesus Christ’s answer regarding why divorce was allowed in Judaism, saying: “*It was because you were so hard-hearted*” (Matthew 19:7-9), will make them say that if one of the partners is hard-hearted then the other partner can ask for divorce; and mainly the wife will ask for a divorce because her husband is very hard-hearted.

This is wrong interpretation, and we forget that Jesus Christ invite us here, both man and woman, to alter our ego from harsh heart to loving, caring,

meek and humble heart, in order for *the two to be one-flesh*. In addition, He clearly declared divorce as a sin of adultery for the one asking for the divorce and marrying another one if the other partner didn't commit adultery.

2. According to Saint Paul's letter (Ephesians 5:21-33), some woman would say that the husband should always make his wife happy and provide whatever she asks regardless of his capabilities; on the other hand, some men would say that the wife should obey whatever her husband commands regardless of her capability or physical vulnerability.

This is wrong interpretation, as we forget that God have said: "*A wife must not be separated from her husband – and a husband must not divorce his wife*" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

3. In Jesus Christ's talk with His disciples on the reason of His coming to Earth (Luke 12:49-53), He mentioned that He will be the cause of dissension between members of the same family, where: fathers opposed to sons, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law to mother-in-law. This, in a wrong interpretation, gives an excuse for verbal fighting and hate and division. We often hear about marital problems caused by dissatisfaction of the mother-in-law with her daughter-in-law or daughter-in-law with her the mother-in-law to the point that it causes the divorce, and they would justify it according to Jesus Christ's talk.

If we examine Jesus Christ's words, we would understand that the fire that He wished it was blazing on earth before His coming is the fire of love that the Holy Spirit inflame in the heart, i.e. "the love of God" that give peace knowing that this love will lead the soul to God's Bosom; this enkindled fire makes us not accept any teachings contrary to the teachings and commandments of God from anyone but insist on the right (1 Corinthians 5:6-13). Accordingly, a division from the spirituality point of view will occur. For example, a father can ask his son to lie while the son refuses to do so, or a daughter-in-law would ask her mother-in-law not to dislike her parents but the mother-in-law insist on her behaviour because of her jealousy or belief that she loves her son more than his in-laws and that they would take away her son from her and accordingly she will ignore them and even abuse them. This type of division is resolved when the love of God fills the hearts through prayer and repentance, and joining God's Church of one heart and one thought having Jesus Christ's Spirit. We need to remember:

- (1) God have always commanded us to love, and loving Him is above all,
- (2) What Jesus Christ said: "*I have come so that they [i.e. people] may have life and have it to the full*" (John 10:10); and

- (3) Jesus Christ prayed to God The Father in Heaven saying: "*And eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*" (John 17: 3), which indicate to us that God's Word is the only word that needs to be obeyed.

In addition, His talk here is confirmation of Him being the Messiah, The Saviour of the people from all injustice, and their hope according to prophet Micah of the Old Testament (Micah 7:6-7).

Let us remember what it is written about God's Word: "*Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" (Deuteronomy 8:3, Luke 4:1-4).

Behaviour Inside the Church

Through the Holy Mass, God is sending us an **Invitation to Heaven** and asking us to wear the gown that pleases Him and is fit to meet Him One God: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit and share His Table in His Kingdom.

So, where is the Transfigured Jesus Christ, where is God: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, and how do we see Him in the church and feel His Holiness?? God have sent us an invitation to His Castle, an invitation in the shape of a cross with His Son's Body and Blood, Soul & Divinity sealed on it; and with His Blessings we come to meet Him and enjoy His Fatherly Love (Appendix B).

We are coming to meet the King of Kings (Appendix E); we are going to see there the Transfigured Jesus Christ whose garment is whiter than snow and reflects all the Light we need to see in the darkness (Just as the whiteness of the snow reflects light at night). So, shall we sit and look, or stand in front of Him, or kneel as His disciples did, or bow as the ancestors did when they were in the temple in front of the Tabernacle (where they believed that God exist)? Nowadays, we don't even bow when we hear God talking through the readings of the Old Testament, and if we can't see His Glory there, then how can we see the Transfigured Jesus?

In the church, some people would listen to the readings just as a story telling not as the Real Word of God to be understood and act accordingly. Some would go to church in order to fulfil God's Commandment "Bless the Sabbath day and declare it sacred (Remember to keep Holy the Lord's Day)". Some would go to a certain church because they enjoy the homily of a certain priest, and some would stop going to a church because they dislike how the priest approaches things or because of other parishioners. Who is responsible for that? Every one has an answer, and most of the time we blame others or the circumstances not admitting our responsibility towards our actions.

Our hearts are the most important thing with our relationship with God, and respect to the King of Kings is a sign of acknowledgement to His presence (knowing that He is everywhere we need to happily act accordingly and keep our hearts pure). People need to go to church with full understanding to “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20), and how this saying came into life.

We are all invited, but what we see or hear or how we act varies from one person to another. Some can be like the five thousand people who came to listen and then God gave them food, some would like to be workers in the field, and some feel that the field needs a guard against undesirable practices and they try hard to be one. Parents, for instance, should be a guardian (not only teachers (i.e. workers)) for their children (who at this stage are the ones who want to listen and be fed). Priests are considered also a guardian with lots of responsibilities if not to be considered a good shepherd. When Jesus Christ used to teach, He sat and people sat around Him to listen to the Teacher; and when Jesus Christ prayed to His Father, He fell on His Face. The people saw Jesus as a teacher (Lord), and Jesus saw God His Father. Yet, in the Holy Bible, when people wanted to ask Him for some kind of mercy, they kneeled and asked. God said every knee would kneel to Him; so why would some people kneel and insist on kneeling in front of the Holy Eucharist or stand when listening to the Word, because they see the miracle that is greater than Jonah’s miracle.

The liturgy is not a set of actions without meaning. When it becomes like that, we miss the opportunity to see God in the Temple. Come to the Holy Mass as any bride who will go to her wedding wearing the white gown (holiness), then walking the narrow path with a trembling heart full of love for her bridegroom who is waiting for her at the end of the path (Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist) to take her hands and welcome her into His kingdom. Both of them make a pledge to be together in good times and in bad times forever. With faith, we can see in the Holy Eucharist the Transfigured Jesus Christ standing with a bowl of Living Water in His hands, giving His “Holiness and Love”, “Wisdom, Mercy and Divine Providence”, “Forgiveness, Counsel and Peace”, and “Power over Satan and evil spirits” to each one of us and asking us to give it to others (Isaiah 41:13-20, Revelation 22:17).

Come as you are and give thanks to the Almighty One with a Big Heart that can hold all people since creation and till the end of time. A Big Heart full of love to all, waiting for us to love Him as He love us, to give Him a kiss through His Beloved Son when our lips touch His Body, and seal it with His Mercy when His Blood runs into our veins straight to our hearts. Come filled with joy as if you are really going to a wedding or like someone who is going to receive

an Oscar, a joy of the peace in the heart that Jesus Christ promised us. A joy to know that God is so Merciful that He have forgiven your sins and there is nothing to fear no matter how heavy that sin is. A joy knowing that Jesus Christ with His Blood have become the 'Red Carpet' that cleans our feet step after step (washing our inequities and purifying our hearts) until we reach the end and receive our Oscar and see the Truth. Note that unless we feel guilty, admit our mistakes humbly, clean our hearts towards others and repent, we will not feel this joy.

Come and enjoy being one of 'The Family', and don't look at how others are coming. Come until you see God's Love & Mercy above any action and become blind by the Light of God so you don't worry about other people's actions as long as their hearts are filled with love to God. Come and start seeing others through the Eyes of God, through His Sacred Heart.

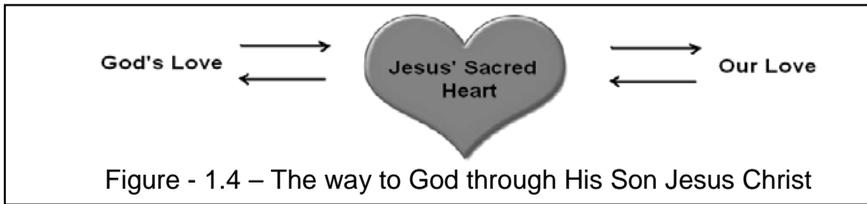


Figure - 1.4 – The way to God through His Son Jesus Christ

Once, Saint Teresa was overwhelmed with God's Goodness and asked Our Lord: "How can I thank you?" Our Lord replied: "ATTEND ONE MASS".

Death & The Family

In our human nature, death is a very sad event that fills our heart with feelings that cannot be described, feelings that sometimes cannot be taken away and replaced with joy, feelings that make us think why should we be alive after the death of a very close member in our family, feelings that if we didn't believe in God and the Resurrection can make us crippled for the rest of our lives, feelings that make us judge the existence of God and His Will, feelings that only God can ease in His Wisdom through the loving people surrounding us.

Death, although it is a subject that people prefer not to talk about, is the same subject that can be the initiative to some to keep the love going between themselves and their partners, as death is a fact and life is too short to spend it quarrelling and crying rather than in happiness, thanking and praising. Keeping love between a husband and wife so that life can be filled with endurance and happiness is like keeping the love between a human being and God. In our lives, we must also care for God's feelings until death so we can have eternal happiness. The table below shows God's and our feelings at certain times/ events which are equivalent to each other.

<u>Marriage Life</u>	<u>God</u>	<u>Feelings</u>
At Birth/Newly Wed	At Creation	Happiness, Gladness
At betrayal/Dishonesty/Usage	Worshiping other Gods	Anger, Sadness
Mutual Sacrifice for each other	Jesus Christ Sacrifice	Pleased and Happy
Loss of Child/Death	Losing a child to sin	Sadness

Failure to see the feelings and needs of the other partner during the marriage period is like the failure to see Jesus Christ as God and His Word is to be obeyed. To know God just by name and fail to know His Feelings as His response to our actions; to do things that might hurt Him in order to please ourselves after listening to His Word will make Him sad and the result will be death. A death of the soul is more painful to God than the sorrow on the death of a dear person. For that, as Christians we understand that it is God's Love & Mercy through the Sacrifice of His Beloved Son Jesus Christ that gives our soul a new life after its death by sinning and has turned God's sadness into happiness.

'Death of body' is something not avoidable as everybody will face death sooner or later, yet there is something else in us that we can keep alive, something that can die if we didn't take care of it and feed it with the correct food, and that is our feelings of love towards God and each other. It is the 'feelings of love' that we should avoid killing as without love our soul is eternally dead and our relationship with each other is over. As God is eternal, so is His love to us as with Jesus Christ's Sacrifice He tell us that He have forgotten all our sins and He will not stop loving us and will always welcome us when we repent (Luke 15:11-32).

All of a sudden when someone dear to us dies, we would like to know everything about him: for example, what he likes, what his favorite color or fragrance is. How sad to stay away from the people we love and remember them when they are on their deathbed. Death should teach us to love each other more and become a big family and not spend our time on earth fighting or ignoring each other as we are all children of God. Spiritually, it should also teach us to love God and act by His Word, i.e. God Law, and not according to earthly laws.

When someone dies, he is remembered by the good work he did when he was alive. When someone dies, he leaves an inheritance equal to the savings he did from the wages he received (i.e. he did not use it for his own benefit and luxury). For our soul, our wages on earth are God's graces, and the savings are the work that we did not get a reward for during our life on earth nor receive something in return, mainly it is the work for the poor in body and spirit [just like the example Jesus Christ gave: if we want to throw a party then we need to

invite the poor who cannot invite us to a similar one and God will reward us instead].

For the faithful, death of body is like a new birth to a baby from the womb of the earth rather than the womb of his/her mother (Psalm 22:9). The minute a child is born, he/she is given to his/her mother to rest on her breast; to feel her love and tenderness; and to be fed by her protective and nourishing milk. When we die, our soul go back to God, who gave us birth, to be nourished by the flowing milk in Heaven that is sweeter than honey and makes us live forever. And for this reason, the church remembers the saints on the date of their death.

When we die, the soul that is **alive** in us (i.e. it does not die with the body) will leave the human body and take a new form that fly away to The Light, to God, just like the butterfly when it emerges from the pupa. As a comparison, our human body is the pupa where the soul grows, and this soul whether good or bad (a butterfly or a moth, respectively) can be seen transparently in the pupa (i.e. through the actions of the body). If we read what scientists say about the life cycle of the butterfly we will amazingly see how these words fit with our own and say to God: “How wonderful and amazing Your Creation is”.

Respect Between Family Members and Others

The ‘FAMILY: The Christian Home’ represents the Kingdom of God where (1) all members are ONE in Love, and (2) every member has duties to perform, and has his/her own place in the hearts of the others and no one else should occupy this place other than that member, or do the duties of others, or overtake the rights of others (Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4) (e.g. A mother-in-law cannot take the place of the wife; a father should not love one of his children more than the other; money and leisure cannot be more important than the happiness of the children; ...) otherwise problems will start and the seed of envy, hate, bitterness, greed, revenge and other evil characteristics will be sown in the hearts. We need to remember that the family members are the closest to the hearts of each other, and thus part of their duties is to listen to each other and defend the rights of each other as the Lord Jesus defended His Bride the Church [which is also God’s Children].

As Christians, we understand that God is Holy and Righteous and we should deal with each other as children of The One God. Disrespecting any of God’s children (whether by words or actions) is not accepted by God, and Jesus Christ have said that whoever say ‘Fool’ to any of his brothers will need to answer/pay on judgment (Matthew 5:22).

Love grows when “respect and acknowledgement of the other partner’s rights and share in happiness in marital life” exist. To love others as you love yourself and doing for them what you would like them to do for you is “Love with respect and humbleness, no pride no selfishness; love with a gentle spirit”.

For Husband and wife, showing respect towards each other (no yelling, no hitting, no cheating ...) and caring for each other’s feelings is among the basic elements to keep healthy everlasting relationships. If for any reason any action that would imply disrespect is to take place, then an apology and asking for forgiveness will have the same effect as throwing cold water on a fire. Always try to avoid these actions from happening in front of the children as they cannot imagine but love to conquer the hearts of their parents. Disrespect between husband and wife will lead to disrespect between children and parents from one side, and children and other people from another side.

The authority that God gave to parents over their children should not be misunderstood that they can do anything including child-abuse and at the same time ask for their love and obedience, as it is not easy to love someone who does not respect you or make you feel secure. As God loved us, so parents would love their children. Child-abuse is not necessary to be only sexual which is the worst kind of child-abuse, but it can be to the point that accepting unjust actions from other members of the family to be done to them.

Respect should extend to every member in the family including the in-laws. Parents of the bride should consider the bridegroom as their son; equally, the bride is a new daughter to the family of the bridegroom. All actions should be based on this simple reality, although many in-laws can destroy the happiness of the marriage because they cannot accept the fact that their son/daughter has someone else to share his/her love with, or they treat him/her as another person they meet on the road (i.e. without love) and not as a son/daughter. From the beginning, God said to the married couple that they became one flesh. Accordingly, the ties between both families become stronger, where the parents of the bride will become the parents of the bridegroom and their children become brothers/sisters to the bridegroom [they are called brother/sister-in-law], and the parents of the bridegroom become parents to the bride and their children become brothers/sisters to the bridegroom. This is how both partners should look at their in-laws, and pay respect to them according to God’s Commandment “*Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Your God is giving you*”, where the land for us as Christians is Heaven. And, no matter what the in-laws feel towards their son/daughter-in-law, good feelings should always stay in the heart of the partners.

According to Saint Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians 12:20, he included the following things that can be found among the Christians that make

them stray from Jesus Christ teachings: Quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander (insult), gossip, arrogance and disorder. And these things, if they existed among the members of one family or even between the in-laws they might bring the family into such problems that can destroy the love between the bride and groom on one hand, and between the children and their relatives from both sides on the other hand, and be a reason for hate and unhappiness if not a divorce.

Respect, also, should extend to people who have great responsibilities in the society (Religious and non-religious) by: (1) following the regulations (Matthew 22:21), (2) be obedient as the parents of Jesus Christ (Luke 2:1): Saint Joseph and the Holy Mother of God were obedient to the authorities, and (3) respecting their authority by accepting their orders as Jesus Christ accepted to be tortured knowing that Pilate's authority is from God (John 19:11). It is out of our love to God that we respect others; it is part of our walking with God in humbleness that we respect the people in authority; it is part of wisdom that we submit ourselves to God's Wisdom, obey and do His Will for His Glory, and at the same time if we were given by God to have an authority on others (parents on their children, husband on his wife, leaders on their people, ... etc.) then we should not be like Hagar who turned her back to her mistress Sarai when she became pregnant, as our work (i.e., our fruit) will be just like Ishmael's: a work that is always against (condemn/judge) others and others will not be able to understand it (Genesis 16:1-16). We need to realize that disrespecting others would be like disagreeing with what God have done or created. Jesus Christ advised us to be wise and innocent (meek) when we deal with people whom we think they are wolves (Matthew 10:17), so how kind then shall our attitude be towards the people we love. If any misunderstanding occurs, then having faith in God, we pray to Him and let Him defend our case if we were right.

Unity of the House

"A house divided against itself will fall" (Luke 11:17). Stubbornness of the heart is one of the reasons of division (Psalm 81) as it creates ignorance that will lead to separation from the life of God (Ephesians 4:17-18).

The relationship and feelings between both partners can determine the solidarity and the foundation on which their house is built. Both husband and wife need to have the same spirit that provides love, understanding, forgiveness, humbleness, content, patience, and other virtues of the Spirit of Truth rather than the qualities of the Spirit of Lie which includes but is not limited to hate, revenge, malice and greed. If we imagine the relationship between both partners as a shape of a cross with two halves joined together

(each half represent a partner), then the virtues of the Spirit of Truth will join both halves into one solid cross; while the qualities of the Spirit of Lie will break the cross into two halves that sometimes it is hard to join again. This will have the same effect as mentioned in figure 1.3 where the actions of the partners will be pushing the cross either towards unity or pulling in two different directions (i.e. by replacing the church with one of the partners, and the family with the other partner).

Both partners need to understand the term “Unity/One Body” in accordance with Jesus Christ’s teachings, where misunderstanding this term might cause problems. “Unity” does not mean that one partner SHOULD provide the other partner with all her/his needs (sexual, money, luxury ... etc.) regardless of his/her capabilities, or to be controlled by the other partner without debate as this will lead to fundamental differences that are difficult to solve. Unfortunately, this kind of unity is a misconception that prevail some husbands’/wives’ minds. Sometimes, people misinterpret God’s Word in order to make it suit their needs (refer to point 2 on page 22).

In case of any disturbances in the relationship between both partners, then both partners need to:

- (1) Listen to advice and not close their ears thinking that each one’s way is the correct one,
- (2) Always depend on what a ‘pure in heart’ would do or act,
- (3) Sit down and negotiate and put all points (where there is a division in thoughts) on the table open for discussion, and clarification,
- (4) Solve the issue with love and satisfaction from all sides,
- (5) Base your decisions on a unity with God, because unless you are united with God, then you have already divided yourself on yourself (a child of God) and stayed away from His blessings and wisdom, and
- (6) Put on you a new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24).
- (7) Remember that ‘Forgiveness’ is a grace from God that is connected directly to the grace of ‘Faith’ where you belief that “God is Love”: you cannot have one grace without having the other, i.e., to say that you have faith in God is to keep love in your heart and forgive, and in case you cannot forgive then you need to pray to God to increase your faith (Luke 17:3-6). Love yields Forgiveness, which is a kind of spiritual silence and self-control: "not wanting to have revenge or disclose the bad deeds of others" (John 8:3-11), but forget the abuse.

Saint Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (4:25-32) states advices on how to become holy by:

- Turning away from falsehood and speaking the truth always,

- Not to sin if we become angry (anger is not a sin but might lead to it as it gives the devil a foothold, for example it might lead to cursing others, to have revenge, to divorce ...),
- Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,
- Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice.
- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave us.

Also, Saint Peter in his first letter advises the following actions (1 Peter 2:1-3):

- Rid yourself of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.
- Like a newborn baby, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation because you know that the Lord is good.

In case of any disturbances, and for the marriage to be fruitful, then both partners must be like the magnet poles: they will stay united if they were in polarity; reflection here does not come from the angle of divergence of views or ethics but of wicked morals such as bullying others by opinion, or imposing ones view, or arrogance. For example: If the two disagreed on something and both partners wanted to impose his/her word and be dominant then a dispute could arise and disrespect or insult might occur especially if the controversy occurred before other people, and if this situation reiterates and both partners want to dominate then this inevitably leads to separation even though the separation might not be clear in front of people. Each partner must allow the other to be dominating at certain times. Remember: just like the magnet, similar poles will repel, and opposing poles will attract; accordingly, at a certain time one partner need to be positive and the other negative, allowing the other partner to be positive at other occasions and he/she becomes negative.

The unity between a husband and wife needs to be like the unity between Jesus Christ (The Son) and God (The Father), and in the same manner our unity (as Christians) with God's Word, i.e., a unity of love and holiness (John 17:20-26), a unity of obedience based on faith (Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews). Such unity is not just words on paper but is lived through **perseverance/fortitude** which is a gift/grace from the Holy Spirit that we need to ask God to fill our hearts with (Appendix D). On the cross, the utmost example of this kind of unity is given to us.

Difference in Religion in Marriage and its Effect on Children

Spiritually speaking as far as faith is concerned (Knowing God and Loving Him): Love is what combines a man and a woman into one flesh, but if this

love does not put God's love first, then it will not be spiritually fruitful. **Both parents need to have the same beliefs (A Christian-Print or Signature, i.e. the characteristics in personality of the follower of Jesus Christ (Appendix D)) in order to feed their children with the right spiritual food.** Some would say: "Let the children decide for themselves when they grow up", and this just show how ignorant they are in knowing Jesus Christ, and would help in turning their children away from God.

For example, if one of the parents cannot see Jesus in the Church, then this will place a burden on the whole family and might result in no longer attending the Holy Mass and stop going to the church. And, one can ask himself what faith will be passed to the children, the father's faith or the mother's faith? We need to remember always that "it is in our actions that faith can be taught to our children", the faith that is based on God's love, forgiveness, obedience, mercy, doing acts of charity, etc. (Appendices H & I).

In addition, a person might stay away from Jesus' teachings for the sake of the other partner. This will have the same effect as mentioned in figure 1.3 where the partners will be pulling the cross in two different directions, i.e. by replacing the church with one of the partners, and the family with the other partner.

From another point of view, the difference in religion can bring hardships to the marriage especially if every partner insisted on his belief, and to come to an agreement, then there should be a lot of compromising in faith!! This can be compared with the marriage of two partners with totally different personalities, where they will face big clashes because of that, for example a greedy person and a generous person.

Christianity & Culture

It is Christianity (The teachings of Jesus Christ) that should be the base that forms the culture of the church [the group of people of the same belief]. Our culture that is identified with our behavior and set of traditions should say a lot about 'Who we are' and about Christianity to others. Part of this culture is:

- (1) To whom we pray and how,
- (2) How we talk, dress, forgive, ... , treat others with kindness and mercy so that we don't put a stumbling block on their path,
- (3) Fast on sin, and
- (4) Avoidance of fornication (i.e. sexual immorality) which is: (a) Living together without marriage as husband and wife then breaking up and going into other relationship and so on, as this will destroy the whole meaning of 'Marriage', and (b) commit adultery [which, by the way, point (a) is part of

it considering a man cannot say that the woman he is living with is his own unless they are married].

We should not be ashamed of this culture in front of anyone and especially in front of our children. The world around us is trying to change our beliefs in the name of 'Freedom of Choice' [which gives pleasure to the person who wants to do what he wants whenever he wants], accordingly we should remember that whoever denies (be ashamed of) Jesus in front of people, Jesus would deny him in front of His Father. God will always give blessing to the people who walk according to His way.

As Mary 'Mother of God' is the mother of the whole church and she is the example for a sinless person, then if we look at Mary's Annunciation, we will see that although she had a fiancé, Saint Joseph, there was no sexual relationship between them (Luke 1: 26-27, 34). A sexual relationship starts after the man and woman are married through a wedding ceremony where both man and woman recite a vow to God that is blessed and witnessed by the priest [see page -1-].

In addition, Jesus Christ has defined a line between a 'husband' married to a woman and a 'man' who lives with a woman without marriage. While talking to the Samaritan woman (John 4:16-18), Jesus told her that she had five husbands, and the man she had after them is not her husband. The difference is in performing the actual marriage ceremony done at their time; a woman cannot say about a man that he is her husband unless they have the marriage vows in front of a priest.

Time & Family

Time is a very important factor in our lives. It was the first thing that was created by God: Night followed by Light to form a day (a symbol of time). There is time for everything:

1. To raise children and teach them about God where the earlier the better.
2. To resolve a problem where the sooner the better. Jesus Christ said that you should not let the night pass before you solve the issue with whom you have conflict with. In marriage, the faster you ask for forgiveness or forgive the more stable is the relationship between both partners. And, in any conflict, the faster you solve the problem the less bitterness is kept in the heart. With God, the faster we realize our sins and ask for forgiveness and repent the more perfect we will be and the faster we will become followers of Jesus Christ. Just as in the case of illness: The faster the illness is discovered and treatment is started, the higher the chances of healing.
3. To increase love in the heart. In marriage, love between partners should be at its minimum when they get married and then increase by taking care of each

other's feelings. With God, our love should increase in time as we strive to know Him and serve Him.

The time that partners or parents and children stay together would sometimes be an indication of the love between them, i.e. normally if you love someone then you would enjoy spending more time with him/her. With children, the more time their parents spend with them, the more secure they would feel and this will indicate to them how much their parents love them. In the same manner, the more we know God and love Him, the more time we would like to spend with Him in prayer and throughout all our actions.

Love between the children and their parents (similar to the love between us and God) grow in time as follows:

As babies, we just acknowledge our parents without understanding what the feeling of love is. As we grow up from toddlers to infants to children, we start differentiating between the feelings towards our parents and the feelings towards others. We are taught to obey our parents and fear them in the sense of if we don't obey we will be punished, without realizing that this punishment aims at teaching us right from wrong; still love is there. As we grow, our obedience to our parents starts to have a different aspect as it becomes out of love and respect. As teenagers, our obedience is purely out of love not as children but as friends; and because of that kind of love we will obey in order to please them, our fear takes a different aspect as it becomes the fear from doing what might hurt their feelings. The more we grow and understand their love to us and the sacrifice they made until we became what we are, the more our love becomes mature.

When children stop seeking their parents advice; the parents need wisely to find the way to make their children trust them so that they will always seek their advice (That is what God do for us when we astray from Him). Staying away from the children during the time they have problems, anxiety, and depression will make it easier for the children to stay away from their parents. If you give care and love, they will treat you with love and care, respect and trust, and make them feel that you are wiser than them.

We need to remember that time passes and is unrecoverable; only memories are kept, and there are certain things unless done in its correct time then it will be hard to compensate for in another time. In most cases, postponing doing the right thing on time or even not doing it will result in generating problems or it will create a sense of cold relationships.

Children & Marriage

Children are a gift from God and at the same time they are His children as parents are. Their lives are so precious. A husband and wife must not limit the

number of their children or postpone birth through pills and other contraceptives. Abortion, i.e. killing an unborn baby, is considered a sin. And, parents can think that if their parents deliberately had miscarriage, then they wouldn't have lived. According to Jesus Christ in His teachings regarding the resurrection (Mark 12:18-25), in heaven men and women are like angels; they don't marry, accordingly they will not have children in heaven, thus the number of souls that praise God in heaven can only increase through fruitful marriage while people are on earth. God wanted us to be fruitful and it is because of our love to God that we will do our best to be fruitful families to increase the voices that praise Him.

Abortion of an unborn child is not only an act of killing, i.e., a sin, but it also resembles the act of denying God and killing the soul/spirit after it was conceived; where Baptism is the first step of giving birth to our soul (the step when our spirit is conceived) and any deadly sin (i.e., denying God) will be like an abortion to the soul before it can see The Light.

Marriage of the same sex is not approved by God as it does not yield children. This is like the unfruitful branch. Common sense would say that if this kind of marriage is accepted then the human race will not last long not as a result of God's slow anger but of people's own actions.

Healthy, stable and happy personalities (whether bodily or spiritually) of children depends a lot on the environment they are living in and especially on the love between the parents and other members of the family. Many mental disorders as well as spiritual lukewarm love to God or even rejecting God can arise from the behavior of the parents. Children are like dough in the hands of their parents. Children are like a small plant that needs protection from outside effects (e.g. wind, frost, high temperature ...) until it grows and stand by itself. Children are not born with characteristics that are against the Fruits of the Spirit, but these characteristics are born as a response to the actions of the people surrounding them at home and school, and the way they are raised.

In order to have a healthy relationship, both partners should start first with repenting and cleaning their actions from any incorrect behavior. An example of an incorrect behavior that has an effect on more than one generation and both genders is the controlling (domineering) of the woman over her husband, as this will generate daughters that have the same personality, or sons who will not care about their wives' feelings, and this by itself is a wrong behavior that can generate the dominating woman or the sad and depressed woman.

Among the wrong ways of raising children that will generate bad behavior within the child (i.e. plants the seed of evil intentions in the heart of the children which Jesus Christ mentioned to make them spiritually unclean (Mark

7:21-23)), are:

1. The extreme pampering of the children and not using punishment when they make a mistake or covering their wrong doing and putting the blame on someone else, as this will generate a rude, selfish, discontent personality that does not admit its mistakes.
2. Deprivation, and humiliation as resorting to severe reprimand and violence in front of others to please certain people, or having unequal treatment between children will give birth to jealousy, hate and covetousness and maybe the love of revenge in the heart.
3. Subjecting children to sexual abuse or physical (beaten severely) by persons close to them will generate hate against the aggressor and sometimes also to all those related to the offender and whoever did not provide protection to them. Those deep-seated feelings may result in treating their own children in the same manner, or children might refuse the idea of getting married because of the ill treatment they had received.

Also, raising children in a house that has no love between the spouses and continuous problems and insincerity will:

1. Build complex and mutilated personalities due to the anxiety and tension that grows inside them out of: (1) the fear of losing a parent, and (2) the feeling of guilt that they might be the cause behind the friction between their parents. This will generate either:
 - A "low self esteem" personality which put the blame on itself for every problem that occur, thus leading to internal hatred of others, depression and mental psychological disorder, especially if the child heard this accusation from one of the parents.
 - An "aggressive" personality towards others and towards God, tending to use violence and revenge even from itself as a result of the anxiety within themselves.
2. Put misconceptions in the mind of children about: (1) "marriage" and "having children" thus he/she will tend to stay away from them, (2) "sex" thus they will be scared of it and will not be happy while performing it with their partner, (3) "security" [as some children might imagine that security is related to having money as problems were due to the lack of it. Accordingly, they will tend to obtain it by any means even through illegal ways], (4) "wrong-doing" thus they will practice it and justify it because one of their parents was practicing it, e.g. adultery or hatred or disrespect of others or being dishonest, (5) "love" [as they might love themselves more than anything else and become self-centered because one parent liked only himself and did not love the other partner or the children].
3. Children tend to love the disadvantaged weak parent and disrespect the other parent. Also, the unhappy parent might create a relationship with the

children that is beyond the limits of paternal love in order to compensate the love that he/she should have received from his/her partner; a relationship leading to the birth of an unacceptable personality in later stage of life.

To hear the words of Jesus Christ "*In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this [i.e. acts of love and mercy] to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.*" (Matthew 25: 40), and also His saying "*In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.*" (Matthew 25:45) and compare it with the wrong behavior done by the parents towards their children we can see Jesus Christ's deformed body on the Cross as a result of scourging (i.e. our sins) within the distorted spirit of the children formed as a result of the conflict and fights between their parents. On the other hand, when their relationship is based on love, we can see the Transfigured Jesus Christ within the children's pure shining spirit.

If any partner has an inner-self problem and has caused creating hate/vengeance in the heart or mental disorder for any of the children then it is better that he/she would fix his/her problem before any attempt to cure the sick child is done, because if wrong behavior stays the same then there will be no cure. So, he/she needs to examine his/her conscience and asks forgiveness from God and his/her children in order to "*reconcile children to their parents*" (Malachi 3:23-24, Luke 1:17), and turn to God for help to correct the wrong doing. This is true also when we want to evangelize and have new children of God; as before evangelizing we need to repent and clean our actions from any misleading doctrine and then evangelize through the actions of a real follower of Jesus Christ, i.e. as if Jesus Christ Himself is proclaiming the love of God to all.

Children are the heart of their parents (Philemon 1:10-12), so is Jesus Christ, the Heart of God. Children feel the sorrow in their father's/mother's eyes and heart and try their best to please them and try to avoid a separation if any. In the same way Jesus Christ, God's first born child, knew the cause of sorrow and the great love of His Father to the whole world and came on earth to please Him (reconcile us to Him as sin is the cause of our separation from God (John 3:16)) and teach us how to please Him by surrendering totally to Him (John 3:5-8).

As children understand that they have no favor on what their parents provide for them, so children of God understand that all they have are graces from God to be thankful for. And as children never stop asking their parents for their needs, so we should never stop asking and be persistent in asking. Children should understand that they ask but their parents are the ones who decide because they are more mature and wiser in knowing the good and the bad (the consequences as a result of providing what was requested), so we should accept

God's will in providing what we ask.

Also, having children will make us understand the sacrifice Jesus Christ did on the Cross. As it was only 'The Love of Our Heavenly Father' towards us that made Him accept seeing Jesus Christ weak as a result of the pain of self-denial and humiliation. This weakness can be felt with parents who for the sake of their children would accept any hardship to make them happy without thinking of themselves; they accept this because they love their children (Matthew 15:21-39).

Prayer & Family

It is said that "The family that prays together stays together".

As Christians, we understand how prayer plays an important role in our individual life; it is a way of communication with God where we thank Him for what we are and what we have and ask Him for what we need (Sample of prayers is listed in Appendix K). Sometimes it is just a way to remove something from our conscience (i.e., confess our mistakes) and then we will feel happy. Sometimes it is just like speaking to a trusted friend where we complain about another friend's actions towards us or about anything that burns in our hearts and this will make us relaxed to know that someone else (who cares) is listening and sharing our tragedies and problems. Real prayers always come from the heart in the form of thoughts, words or deeds.

One prayer common to all Christians is 'The Lord's Prayer' [see Appendix B]. This prayer is also a universal prayer where it can be recited in words or lived in action by all people who believe that God, The Creator, is One God of all people; as it gives Him Glory and ask Him for His blessings towards the one who is praying it.

As a family, praying together whether by going together to church or praying at home 'The Rosary' or reading the Holy Bible at night or praying before going to bed and reading stories from the Holy Bible is the best way to keep the adults and the children strong in faith and united in facing any problem. Praying together is one of the ways that fulfills the duties of the parents towards God and their children where "**Faith is transferred from one generation to another through Family**".

Let us pray:

Dear God, please keep our house united with the bonds of Your love and Your Spirit so that we can be part of Your Heart and be fruitful to please You as the Holy Family of Bethlehem, we ask this in the Name of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.



CHAPTER TWO

Divorce

Divorce can be defined as: (1) Separation between husband and wife; (2) One of the partners have sinned (committed adultery) and had put a stumbling block in front of the other; (3) A stumbling block in the way of the children's faith (Appendix F).

In Malachi 2:11-17, God, while talking to Malachi, explain how whoever deals treacherously will be cut off from the tents of Jacob (representing Kingdom of God). Though the talk represents also who deals treacherously regarding his/her covenant with God, but God in life, makes marriage covenant an example to the covenant with Him. He gave answers to "Why one?" and how He hate divorce as it covers one's garment with violence (i.e. sin).

Divorce Becoming Reality and Its Consequences, and Avoiding It

Problems, regardless of its reason, start small and can either grow or die according to the faith and actions of both sides. It normally starts with a quarrel occasionally and if kept unsolved, it will lead to fights. These fights will lead to divorce if the love to ourselves exceed the love to God or even to our children. Don't let God say to you what you might say to your partner: "If you say you love me and treat me like this, then what would you do if you don't love me?" or, "Where am I in your life?" (Malachi 3:7-20, PS 1, Luke 11:5-13). As sons and daughters of Israel (Christians), don't let God say to you what He said to the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida: "*Alas for you! For if the miracles done in you (as followers we understand that these are: The Resurrection/Redemption of Jesus Christ) had been done in Tyre and Sidon (non-Christians), they would have repented long ago*" (Luke 10:13).

In our daily actions, we should always stop and ask ourselves "Where am I in my partner's life and where is he/she in my life? Is he/she only there in good occasions (Birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) or always? Is he/she standing besides me in good and bad times? Am I the main concern of his/her life, and is my partner my main concern? Does he/she care for me only when he/she needs something that I can provide?". When quarrels and lukewarm feelings nest in our hearts and actions, and the answer to these questions leads to "Actually, I don't exist", then there is a real problem. The same situation appears between God and us; where He is the One who is asking, and what a hard answer He is getting!

For some reason, some people can't see or admit their mistakes (even though they are faced with what they did) and accordingly won't say sorry rather he/she will always blame others (Remember: The 'Blame' game is one of the worst reasons that can accelerate a problem between any two people as it is Satan's work). In this case, we need to forgive and turn the left cheek, after being struck on the right one, to be struck again and again. From one side, it is pride that makes a person unable to say sorry; and from the other side it is also our pride that makes us unable to turn the cheek. It needs courage to forgive from all of our hearts; and this is what should happen in a real Christian family where love can provide that courage. As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to be able to forgive others (husband/wife, relative/friend or enemy) from our hearts when they ask for forgiveness as many times as it takes, where forgiveness is considered to be an act of mercy if not to be taken as obeying/following Jesus Christ's teachings. Forgiveness, with or without apology, is the best cure for a shaken marriage, and it is the best example given by the parents, about forgiveness, to their children. Forgiveness is a main issue in our prayer to God, our Father, and we simply don't want to teach our children to say something without actually living it, because this will destroy their faith of "God is Merciful and has forgiven our sins so we need to be merciful to others and forgive their sins towards us". Children look at their parents and learn from them. Don't let your children say: "Where is their God and the love they are teaching us? Are their teachings just a theory that they themselves do not follow?"

Our own personality that is in contrary to the concept of love described in the Apostle St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (13:4-7) can lead a lot to accelerating a problem [a kind of personality that is considered as unclean spirit that need to be thrown out of the heart/mind (Mark 1:21-28)], for example:

- A selfish person, without noticing, will lie in order to protect himself/herself and after some time he/she will believe what he/she is saying. He/She will never notice the harm they cause others, while they will enlarge their problems (which themselves might cause to others) in order to seek more attention and sympathy for them from the surroundings.
- A selfish person will also enjoy himself while the other partner sacrifices himself/herself for the family. This is noticeable mainly when children are young and need a lot of effort from both parents together to be raised properly. Sometimes these actions in which the selfish person has leisure are annoying to the other partner which raises the question of "Why am I making this sacrifice? And why should I give up my own happiness?"

- A weak person will stand besides his/her mother, father, brother(s), sister(s) or even friends and will ignore his/her partner's and children's needs and feelings if any argument happens between both sides even if his/her family were wrong and started the problem. It is hard not to see the tears in the children's and the sorrow in the partner's eyes, and even harder is to do nothing to change the sadness into happiness and show concern for them.
- A jealous person (from the surrounding families) does not find it easy to see others happy or enjoying a better life whether monetary or spiritually. Some people can create problems if their partner is not supporting their spiritual life, while other partners do for their loved ones.
- A jealous person (on the person whom he/she loves), with his/her suspicious jealousy, can create unnecessary tension between the married couple. Remember, "Trust" is the solution to overcome this problem.
- An arrogant person would enjoy taking decisions for others and think that he/she knows better.
- An arrogant person will not admit his/her mistake, rather he/she will always blame others (Remember: The 'Blame' game is one of the worst reasons that accelerate a problem between any two people as it is Satan's work).
- A greedy/discontent person can ask more from his/her partner than what she/he can handle and is never satisfied with what God gave them. Remember that Jesus Christ said: "You cannot be the slave both of God and of money" (Luke 16:13).
- A bad tempered person will not be able to practice self-control when being angry. In such situations, he/she will accelerate the problem by shouting, hitting, using bad language, etc. Remember God is known to be a Gentle Spirit and He cannot be found (or His Peace) in a stormy shaky situation (1 Kings 19:10-13).

Note: A selfish person is an imprisoned person by his/her own self; a weak or arrogant person is a person with leprosy whose sickness can be seen by all; a jealous person is a paralyzed person who cannot move without hardship; a greedy/ discontent person is a blind person who cannot see anyone else; a bad tempered person is a person bleeding damage to himself and others. All of the above personalities have some kind of deafness that make them unable to hear God's Word, in addition to dumbness with pinned tongue that make them unable to spread God's Word (Mark 7:31-37). With the power of God's Word; praying and fasting, these personalities can be cured (Psalm 146:6-8, Luke 4:18-19; 10:1-9), but first we need to admit our spiritual sickness.

Sometimes family members interfere and encourage a divorce as a solution to

stop the pain caused by the fights; or even old memories would keep hunting you (where something happened or someone advised that the marriage is not to take place) and make you regret getting married, please don't let these talks or thoughts affect you as they are evil actions intended to take you away from the Kingdom Of God. Remember that 'Unable to forgive and forget' is among the main reasons behind divorce.

Sometimes we say: "It is because we are hurting our children, then we should get a divorce", but this is where the Love of God should come first and a re-consideration to our actions is required. If these fights persist and conquer our feelings, then he/she or even the children can reach the situation where one would shout: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me??" and ask for divorce. This action will not only cause our soul's death but it will help in reducing the faith in our children's heart. It will create such a hate and irresponsibility in their hearts and make them unable to forgive; and parents will find themselves losing their children. Not only that, but it will teach them wrong virtues and habits and make them wonder whether they should have a family of their own or not, thus forgetting God's will. Parents will be putting stumbling blocks in the path of their children, and this is one of the worst things anyone would do for any child of God (Mark 9:42).

Yet to overcome this (i.e. take your soul from death back to life), Jesus gave us the answer on the cross and asked us, in the peak of our weakness covered totally with wrong thoughts (ours and others), to remember Him and put our trust in Him, and cry out loudly the second cry: "*Father, into Your Hands I commit my spirit*". We are asked to be parents of God's children, so we need to learn to bear our sorrows for God's sake and offer these sorrows to His Heart; we need to stand firm in front of any crisis as our Mother Virgin Mary did when she stood beside the cross watching her son's cruel death. Despair is one of the worst enemies to anyone's soul. We should not let anger and pride blow a wind on the candle Jesus Christ lit with His passion and love for us. If one of the partners chose to close himself/herself off and feel nothing towards the other (and sometimes even to parents and children) in order to prevent more hurt, caused by the actions, from destroying him/her, then this act needs healing, and the Healer is always there waiting for us to knock on His door and open our hearts/lives to Him, and He will come and heal. Selecting the divorce (hidden or announced) is not a solution, rather trust and only trust in God and in His promise to us; and no matter what happens just give Him thanks and accept the other partner as he/she is. "As a mother cannot take her eyes off her newborn baby, so the Lord does not withdraw His eyes from those who put their trust in Him".

We need to take a look at our actions and ask ourselves: “what is wrong?” to see our mistakes before seeing the other partner’s mistake; then accept advice from others and work on them. One of the main causes that worsen a quarrel is the tongue and what comes out of it; we need to learn to control it. For example:

- (1) Don’t raise your voice or use bad language,
- (2) Never ask questions that will lead to you being right, because you know that hearing what you deeply feel will only make you mad and in pain and will increase the hate towards the other partner especially if it was not followed by an apology, and
- (3) Never quarrel or disrespect the other partner in front of the children.

In case partners are unable to solve their problems and misunderstandings, then staying silent (which might cause a lot of pain), accepting each other as they are, sacrificing oneself for the rest of the family, and being patient is the best solution so that trials will not put the whole family down. Just as Jesus Christ prayed with deep pain and sorrow in His Heart, and also endured His pain on the cross in silence in order to fulfill God’s Will in Him to destroy death/sin, so should parents be (in case of any misunderstanding) in order to fulfill God’s Will in them, without forgetting to ask God for the forgiveness to the other partner causing the problem. By forgiving others from all of our hearts we complete our understanding of loving others’ souls as ourselves, because we know that (1) God will forgive us as we forgive others, and (2) By forgiving (through wise teaching) we are killing the Spirit of Lie inside them that caused the misunderstanding or sinning against us, and helping in rebuking that evil spirit from them. Keeping hate in the heart will kill both souls. (Note: Every person at any time can be tempted by the Spirit of Lie).

“Do you pray?” is a question that might be asked by the priest if you go to Confession to tell God that you are weak and cannot forgive your partner (or anyone else). Contemplating the question, we find that when we pray “The Lord’s Prayer” we are just saying words without the intention to observe every word in the Prayer and act on it. Part of the prayer is that we ask God for forgiveness as we have forgiven others. Another priest would advise that whenever old memories come into your mind and make you upset and unable to forgive, then, just by thought, you need to train yourself to forgive and stop building up the hate and tell yourself “Forgive them Father as they don’t know what they are doing”. This is how we forgive and turn the cheek to our offenders not once but as many times as it requires as Jesus Christ asked us to do. Such forgiveness and prayer will break the cord that attach the sinful desires with the human nature; it will detach sin from our weak human nature

and make us strong towards obeying God's Word and fulfilling His Will (Everyone is saved; we are His Children: loving and merciful children).

Literally speaking, divorce happens when both partners do not need each other not from the material point of view but from the emotional point of view. As long as the desire for this need is still there then there is hope for a reconciliation, but when this desire is not there in the heart; when that feeling dies then a hidden divorce (i.e., a divorce in thought) is born and is grown until that thought comes to life, like a baby in the womb although he/she cannot be seen but still grows on the food from the mother's blood, so is the thought of divorce as it is fed on the dead-feelings' actions and reactions of both partners until it is given birth.

Remember that we are weak (emotionally fragile), and self-denial is among the hardest things that we can do and accept doing, but this is what Jesus Christ is asking us to do in order to be His followers (Matthew 8:21-22, 19:16-22). If someone went to a priest confessing his/her thoughts of asking for a divorce (knowing that he/she knows that this thought is a sin especially if the other partner did not commit adultery) then the best advice the priest would say that 'no matter what happens you need to persevere in keeping your home united by enduring all obstacles if it cannot be solved'. And, If someone went to a priest asking for a divorce as all feelings are dead between him/her and the other partner and there is nothing that is joining them together, then among the things that the priest would advise is to sit silently in front of 'The Cross' and by doing so you will:

1. Feel the sacrifice that is made by Jesus Christ towards us,
2. Know that without His self-denial you and your partner would not be called 'Children of God',
3. Know that it requires perseverance to continue doing God's Will, and as a Christian/Disciple of Jesus Christ we need to be like Him filled with fortitude and love to God, and
4. Feel Jesus' love to His Father and the unity between Them.

With prayers, God provide the perseverance and strength we need to keep testifying to Him, and to stay honest and loyal to His Teachings. With prayers, God, through His Word and the counseling of the faithful, change our wrong behavior and break the chain of sin.

Again, the love between partners should not be selfish or based on a certain interest, as Christians shouldn't use Jesus Christ only for the forgiveness of their sins, i.e. without showing Him their love through obedience to His Word and doing acts of mercy towards others. For example, an addict on gambling or

smoking should not stop his/her bad habit because it is actually started to affect him/her and his/her health, rather he/she should stop it for the sake of the safety of the people surrounding him/her.

Sin

In simple words: Disobeying God's Word, i.e. sin is: (1) What we know is right according to God's Law and don't do it, and (2) What we know is wrong according to God's Law and we do it.

Most of our problems come from:

- We don't respect God in His Creation, because we cannot fully keep in our mind that He is One God, One Creator, One Father, and bad behavior comes from the evil spirits which can possess everyone of us. Even Saint Peter the Apostle, when he tried to change Jesus' mind from doing God's Will, Jesus told him that he is Satan (Mark 8:31-33). Of course Peter could not realize God's Will for Jesus but he said it out of love to him so that Jesus will not be hurt or suffer (just like anyone who loves someone and doesn't want him to be hurt). It seems that our love to the people nearest to our hearts can be used by the evil spirits to weaken us and make us accept doing things against God's Will, i.e. surrender to sin. We need to be wise in heart and with God's grace (which comes by prayer, studying (listening to) God's Word, and being fed with Bread of Life) open our eyes to distinguish God's Will and act accordingly, not according to our feelings (e.g. to hate those who make our children suffer and not forgive and forget from the heart).
- We worship false Gods; mainly money. With the current world-wide economical situation, greed, envy, ease of putting oneself into debt are all reasons that will lead to an unbalanced financial status that would affect the love that exists between people in general and between family members in particular.
- 'Satan has got a wish to sift us all like wheat', according to Jesus Christ when He was talking to Saint Peter (Luke 22:31). As followers of Jesus Christ we trust in Him 'for praying for us that our faith may not fail, and once we have recovered, we in turn must strengthen our brothers' (Luke 22:32). The evil spirits enjoy our failure but God love us and put in our hearts a living conscience that even if we make a mistake, we will acknowledge this mistake and ask for forgiveness (to rebuke these spirits), repent and not come back to practicing the same sin, and then we will be able to give advice to others.

Sin can be caused by:

- A part of your own body (eye, tongue, hand, heart, leg, etc. (Mathew 5:21-37)). Sin starts as a thought (evil desire or evil thought) formed as a result of seeing, touching, speaking, hearing, desiring things in the heart, etc.
- An act from others (Mathew 5:39) where the pain (emotional/bodily) that results from these acts would lead to sin when we think of revenge (Genesis 34) or we can't forgive. Remember, there is no greater pain (humiliation) than the pain Jesus Christ took on himself, and yet He endured and asked His Father for the forgiveness of our sins, because He, as human, has forgiven our trespasses (Humiliation is not a word that God gave a thought otherwise He would not have done what He did on the cross (Ecclesiasticus 2:5, Wisdom 3:1-9)). And this is how we should destroy the evil spirit that will make use of this pain and turn it into sin (i.e. by endurance and forgiveness). Impatience, which results from repetitive wrong acts by others, would lead to despair which is the worst enemy of the soul.
- Our lack of faith, so that either when another person(s) with little or no faith would advise us with teachings against Jesus Christ's teachings, we will listen and follow, or when we are faced with difficulties we will act according to our desires. This case implies the hearts that heard God's Word but as though the Word of God is sown on patches of rock or in thorns or on the edge of the path (Mark 4:3-20).

In all cases, when we allow evil thoughts (wrong desires) to enter our mind/heart and stay there (i.e. sinning in thoughts), eventually these evil thoughts can spring into action, leading us to sin in words or deeds (James 1:14-15). These sins will make our soul blind from seeing God (even though we know that He is there); and the people around us can either keep us in our blindness by encouraging us to stay away from Him, or some, with God's Love in their hearts, will encourage us to come nearer to Him and ask for His help to be healed and He will happily give us back our vision because we trust in Him, and change us to become just as the second kind of people (Mark 10:46-52, or Matthew 20:30-34 if both partners become blind); i.e. His followers.

In other words, if the heart, mind and conscience are left for evil spirits to conquer them and fill them with anger, hate, selfishness and pride, impatience, greed, immorality, ... etc., then we will sin and become separated from God whose Holy Spirit, if we surrender totally to Him, would fill us with His virtues: love, mercy, humility, and gentleness. By sinning we will become unfaithful, drift away from God, forget His Word and His love, and lose our saltiness, exactly as the Jewish people who were led by Moses in the desert,

and though they saw God's Work, Help and Protection to flee from Egypt were impatient while crossing the desert and abandoned God and worshiped other Gods created by their own hands. Feeling deep sorrow for our sins, and asking for forgiveness will bring back the saltiness, i.e. love of God (Spirit of Jesus) in our hearts. The Holy Spirit touch the heart of the sick soul, and work either through it directly or through other faithful souls by putting encouragement in the heart to come nearer to God without the fear of darkness.

If you know you are sinning (by thoughts, words, or deeds), don't make it a habit because you know that God is Merciful; think of the pain you are causing Him. A fight between husband and wife is like scourging Jesus Christ on His Back (Luke 12:47), as the pain endured by Jesus Christ was because of our sins; divorce is like crucifying Him (the last step that led to His death). If marriage is considered "new life" for the soul as it is merged with another to become one, then divorce is considered "death" of soul as it is committing a sin so it is separated from God.

Remember, when Adam disobeyed God, he felt the shame of standing naked in front of Him (Genesis 3:8-13), and this is exactly how we should feel when we sin and disobey God's Word; as sinners we will stand naked in front of God.

Remember, 'Love' is not just a spiritual healing but it is actually the medicine for the mental disorders (in us or in our children) that are created from the surrounding atmosphere that is filled with hate, revenge and selfishness.

O my God, what have we done? How can we teach our children to love You if we cannot love each other? Please forgive our sin and help us to put things back into order; put clothes on our naked body and with Your Holy Spirit change the stumbling stones (if not a mountain), that we put in the way of our children, to dust to enable them to reach You. Dear God, I trust in what You told the Prophet Isaiah that we should not be afraid and You help us as our Redeemer is You, The Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 41:8-20). Please, come to our hearts, don't lead us into temptation, save us from the time of trial, deliver us from evil, and bless our homes in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



*© God, my soul is my heart, my inner self,
please make it Yours. Amen*

CHAPTER THREE

Priesthood: Generosity in Love

When we give a gift to someone, people would say how generous we are depending on the gift they receive regardless of whether its value affected our budget or not. We can be wealthy and provide an expensive gift (though its value has no effect on us), and on the other hand we can be poor and provide a cheap gift which means a lot for the receiver because he knows that the cost of this gift can affect the food on the table for our children. In the same way, we give gifts to God but the difference between God and human beings is that He always know what these gifts mean to us.

In some countries, people can afford to have servants (mainly maids) who would live with the family, do the housework, take care of the children and prepare food; and in some cases they can work for more than one family. These servants receive very low wages which is just what they need to buy the daily food for their own family. These servants work very hard without envy of what their landlords have. If we want to see a generous person then we need to imagine one of these servants, a widowed one, inviting the families she works for to dinner and preparing for them a meal that would cost her monthly salary and letting them eat first without allowing her own children to touch the food. Such generosity can be seen in the poor woman who gave the two small coins, all she had to live on, into the treasury (Luke 21:1-4) or the woman who bought expensive perfume and washed Jesus' Feet (Luke 7:44-47); they did this because both of them loved God so much. Such generosity in love to God is shown in the heart of the mother who would consecrate her first born child to God (not knowing if she is going to have another one or not), fill his heart from childhood to work for God and become a priest. She does not want grandchildren or to see him as a bridegroom, the dream of every mother, but she rejoices in seeing him marrying Jesus on his 'Ordination Day' and having an unlimited number of children through the people he serves and would be their shepherd to do Jesus Christ's Will, i.e. to make God known to them and heal their souls to praise God, give Him thanks and bless His Holy Name. Of course, Jesus Christ's Will is to heal the sick as He healed the person from leprosy (skin-disease), a sickness that detaches sick people (sinners) from clean people (God's Kingdom) (Luke 5:12-14). His Will is to bring back the sinner into repentance and obedience with love to God and to make all people live together in harmony, love and humbleness, and that is His Father's Will.

Priests, believing that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, Eternal King, Undying Lord and God, and had set their hearts on God's Kingdom (Luke 12:31), as John the

Baptist, would deny themselves so that they will grow less and He will grow greater (John 3:27-36). They are part of the church Jesus Christ wanted to build on His Word and Work (flowing from His Heart); a church started with the work of the Twelve Disciples and will not end until all sinners are called to Him to be saved. Priests know and believe that God is so Merciful; that He forgive sins with His touch when He is invited into our hearts through the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist that represent Jesus' thanks to His Father, His Prayers and Blessings, His Father's Living Bread, His Running Living Water, His Mercy and Forgiveness, and His everlasting Life. Priests are perfumed with Jesus Christ's Blood and are robed with God's Love and Mercy, the gown of anyone who accepts the invitation of God to His Kingdom. Priests are called to change the Literature in the Holy Bible into comprehension to the listener: a believer and a counter. Priests are like a doctor helping a pregnant woman (i.e., a troubled soul) to deliver and give birth to a new born child. Priests are people who would like to fulfil Jesus Christ wish and bring a blazing fire of love to God in the hearts of the people on earth (Luke 12:49).

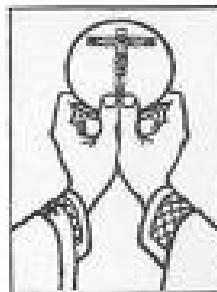
Priests are the ones who were touched/cured by God and started praising and glorifying Him not only by words (Luke 13:10-13) but with their life. Priests are the ones who are touched/cured by God and returned back threw themselves at His Feet and thanked Him (Luke 17:15-16) not once but throughout their life. Priests are the ones who are touched/cured by God and stayed at His Feet for a while then at His request went and spread the Good News to others (Luke 8:26-39). Priests are the ones who knew who Jesus is and are cured by His Call, so they followed Him (Mark 10:49-52, Matthew 20:29-33) forever.

Priests are the ones who knew, loved and adored the sign of Christian's Faith: Jesus Christ dead on the Cross, represented by the twelfth station of the Stations of the Cross that fulfilled the Holy Sacrifice 'Lamb of God' and Redeemer sent for the twelve tribes of Israel and all other nations through the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. The priest, a person who holds The Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ (Who was nailed on the Cross once and only once) every day when he holds The Holy Eucharist; who looks at the pain endured by Son of God for our own salvation, and feels the love of God towards His children that endures for ever, a love that is beyond imagination; and knows God's faithfulness to all generations. No wonder that people pray for priests who are ordinary (weak and frail) human beings everyday as Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus recited:

“O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep all Thy priests within the shelter of Thy Sacred Heart, where none may harm them. Keep unstained their anointed hands which daily touch Thy Sacred Body. Keep unsullied

their lips purpled with Thy Precious Blood. Keep pure and unearthly their hearts, sealed with the sublime marks of Thy glorious priesthood. Let Thy holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion. Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they have ministered be here below their joy and consolation and in Heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown. Amen."

We see pictures of Saints kneeling in front of Jesus Christ on the cross as Saint Rita of Cascia, or holding the cross in their arms as Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus (Saint Thérèse of Lisieux), but it is not easy for us to imagine a priest holding Him every day in the Holy Mass. In the Book of Malachi, God ask the priests to honor and glorify His Name in their hearts, to offer to Him the sacrifice that he is pleased with, that is acceptable to Him, the sacrifice that later on He gave us freely with love and pain: Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son.



My Lord and My God

The call to priesthood is like the invitation Jesus Christ made to Andrew and the other disciple when they wanted to follow Him and asked Jesus to be their Teacher. As a result of the invitation, they stayed with Him till the end of the day (i.e. till death; forever). During their journey, they kept on drinking from the everlasting spring of living water, and they came to the understanding that He is the Messiah. They learned how to be real followers so that they in turn, through their homilies/speech/act, can introduce God to others (as Andrew introduced his brother Simon, and Philip introduced Nathan'a-el to Jesus) and make others understand what God want from us in order to please God and be His Children. Parents need to be like Saint John The Baptist and introduce Jesus Christ into their children's lives by saying: "Behold, the Lamb of God", or like the Apostles Andrew and Philip, and encourage them to offer themselves to God and become priests and live in holiness. Afterwards, God will do the rest.

Answering the call, is like the steps the Apostle Simon Peter took: (1) His brother Andrew told him that they have seen the Messiah and asked him to follow Him, and at that time Jesus Christ renamed Simon to Cephas (Rock) (John 1:41), then (2) when he saw Jesus Christ walking on water he said with the other disciples that Jesus is Son of God (he saw something extraordinary) (Matthew 14:33), and (3) with God's Grace, he believed with faith in his heart and declared with joy that Jesus is Son of God, The Messiah, and this time Jesus Christ told him that on him (i.e. on this faith which is as a solid platform

Rock) He will build His Church (Matthew 16:16). In comparison to a priest's call, the first step takes place when his parents (or guardians) took him to church for Baptism where the Godparents would say "Yes, I believe" instead of him, then on First Holy Communion day he will say with his mouth "Yes, I believe" (though he did not fully understand in his heart what he is receiving or saying), but on his ordination day, his heart filled with the Holy Spirit admit with faith and say "Yes, I believe. Amen".

Looking at the humbleness that John the Baptist had, though he knew that an Angel from God told his father that he was going to be an Angel (selected by God) who would prepare the way for the Messiah, the Son of God and call people for repentance, he did not have any pride in himself but with all humbleness he did what God called him to do. Most priests, seminarians, catechists, and any other religious persons admit that they selected this path because God called them to serve Him. At any stage of their call, this call should not make any of them feel that he is protected from sinning or that all he does or says is correct, thinking that he is nearer to God. Priests, keeping their vows in their heart, as any other person, should be aware of any deception by the evil spirits to pride, loving oneself, squalid greed for money (loving money over God), reaching the state of feeling fully armoured with the Holy Spirit against sin or wrong doing, denying Jesus by accepting any changes to His Teachings to please others, ... etc. In other words, they should always feel in their hearts that they are poor in spirit so that they can receive more spiritual riches from God.

In his second letter to Timothy, Saint Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ is speaking to every person ordained as priest who had received God's gift: A spirit of power, and love and self-control. He urges them to keep the sound teaching (i.e. the faith and love that are in Jesus Christ) and which comes out of a pure heart, a clear conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5), i.e. "conscientious believers in the Mystery", and look after it as though it were something precious and need to guard it from false teachings with the help of the Holy Spirit living in them. Each Bishop needs to hand over these teachings to other priests who would hand it over to their parishioners so that they in turn will be able to teach it to their children and others. To be a good priest, he needs to keep his vows and stay away from sin and from pointless philosophical discussions; he needs to use all scriptures that are inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be holy (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Priests need to do their duties with patience and the intention of teaching, and no matter how people stray to other teachers according to their own taste, they must be brave in proclaiming the Good News, and God will rescue them from all evil

attempts on them. They need to take care about what they do and teach to save themselves and all who listen to them (1 Timothy 4:15-16). Priests and lay people are all in this together; one body that work together to keep the unity of the house.

A priest is like a bride on her wedding day, everyone looks at her with sharp eyes either to admire her or to try and find something wrong to nail her. It must be very hard for a priest when someone comes to him questioning his faith, after leaving everything to serve God. As it is not always on good intentions that a priest's act/word is criticized (for the good of the whole church and God's Holy Name), yet when this happens, i.e. when priests are told by either colleagues or parishioners or outsiders that their words/act is not according to Jesus' Teachings then they need to be the first to put Jesus' words into action: to stay calm, have the courage to listen, and to come into satisfaction and clear any misunderstanding with the oppressor so that they do not become a stumbling block for others and create a situation of conflict within the church. In such cases, if the conflict is not solved then consulting the elderly and obedience to them is required. Remember, it is also hard for the colleague or the faithful parishioner to see an unacceptable act from a priest. Within the same church, there is nothing like the saying "It is his/her problem to understand or not" without clarification. Exactly as in a family, a priest is a father for so many children each with his/her own understanding. The openness between the father and the children is the best way to fix any misunderstanding and clearing the intentions in the heart. Priests need to be a model for others as parents need to be a model for their children.

Nowadays very few parents encourage their children to become priests or to consecrate their life to serving God and His children. Their concern is that life is becoming more expensive and the salary of the "Job" entitled "Priest" does not cover the expenses of living. "What does the priest do" is something identified mainly these days with 'Marriage', 'Baptism and Confirmation', 'Offering a Holy Mass', 'Burial Ceremony', and very few remember that the main thing is that priests stand-in for Jesus Christ as teachers and healers to the soul through Jesus Christ Authority and Power (*This power belongs to Jesus alone; however, God can and does exercise it through priesthood*) during: Confession, the Holy Mass, Holy Bible Studies, and other practices they perform including their visits to the parishioners.

Nowadays people look at their watch to see when the homily or the Holy Mass will finish; this would discourage some priests from giving a lengthy homily though we forgot that people stayed for three days listening to Jesus without feeling annoyed but with love and ambition to learn more about God and

spiritual matters for their own benefit. Nowadays some people try their best to destroy “Priesthood” by attacking the priest and forgetting that he is just as any other human being that can make mistakes and rectify them, or just as any teacher every priest is different from the another and not two can have the same capabilities in providing perfect understandable convincing teachings and explanations of the Holy Bible’s Teachings. Nowadays some people complain and do nothing in order for God’s Name to be praised, and prefer to hear what is pleasing to them from the explanation of the Holy Bible, for example explanations on the teaching of Jesus Christ regarding ‘divorce’ or ‘sinning by thoughts’ or ‘forgiveness’ or ‘entering the Kingdom of God’ or ‘confession’. Nowadays people prefer to say that the Holy Bible was written for other people who were living in different circumstances, forgetting that both human behavior (affected either by God’s Word or evil spirits) and the soul do not change, what changes is the percentage of the ‘believers’ to the ‘non-believers’. This percentage would depend on the number of priests, seminarians proclaiming God’s Word and faithful parishioners who understand their role in passing faith to the next generation (2 Timothy 1:1-8).

Every priest uses a phrase from the Holy Bible and keeps it in his heart to reach God, for example, one would choose “I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man” (Acts 24:16), or “Anyone who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:25), or simply choose to set his spare time away from people and pray in silence as Jesus Christ did after spending time with the crowd (Luke 5:16), or some would prefer to stay their whole life united to Him only as the monks. Once a priest, he become a shadow of the High Priest, Jesus Christ, preaching the Word of God in the church without fear, driving out devils (curing the sinner) through the Holy Sacraments, building the Kingdom of God on earth, and praying to the Father in silence (Mark 1:21-39).

In 2002, Pope John Paul II, announced that on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Church will observe the World Day of prayer for the Sanctification of Priests. On the Feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the Chaldean Catholic Churches and some other churches, and sometimes also during Holy Communion, the parishioners sing the following Hymn:

Today I was kneeling in prayer,
The Lord called me and said:
My Son, give me your heart.
Take it, my Creator and Lord.
My Son, give me your heart.
Take it, my Owner and Love.
Everybody will sure die,



And life like a shadow will be gone.
Who else other than You Lord of Heaven
I give my sick heart to You,
Who else other than You Lord of Heaven
You, You are my generous King.

Who desires the glory of the world is arrogant,
For within earthly glory is lie and pride.
He who desires to serve the Almighty,
Will immediately get what he wants.
He who desires to serve the Almighty,
Receive an everlasting happiness.

The harvest is plenty, but laborers are few, so let us pray to the Lord of the harvest, as Jesus Christ asked us, to send more laborers (Luke 10:1-3):

“Heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, Lord of the harvest Who desire that all may be saved, the harvest is plentiful but laborers are few. Oh Sacred Heart of Jesus who is full of love for the children, we humbly ask You to increase in the whole world the number of faithful and zealous laborers from young boys and men. Please enkindle their generous and pure hearts by the Power of Your Holy Spirit with Your Divine Love so that they may yield unconditionally to Your Divine service. Provide them with Your Divine help so that no earthly desires will stop them from Your service till their death. Amen.”



(2 Timothy 1:6-7)

*© God, my soul is my heart, my inner self, please keep it Yours.
Amen*

APPENDICES

FUNDAMENTALS

Appendix A

Reflection on the readings of Genesis 23:1-4, 19; 24:1-8, 62-67, Matthew 9:9-13, the religious education of the new generation and the new prerequisite for the bridegroom and the bride to attend a course before getting married.

Yesterday and Today

The ways to achieve certain things have changed and hopefully it is according to God's plan because He knows of our weaknesses. 'FREEDOM' a word that has changed so many matters in life including: (1) marriage and its purpose, (2) the way of evangelizing, and (3) why Jesus Christ came to earth. All matters are related to the following slogan whether creating a family on earth or in Heaven: **"Creating a Family is what life is all about"**.

Till today, in so many countries, mainly from what is known of the Third World Countries, parents care a lot for their children and try to find a good husband (from a good family that has a good reputation) for their daughter, and similarly a good wife for their son. Although the marriage is organized by the parents, it does not take place without the approval of both: the bride and the bridegroom. Both sons and daughters are **raised** with one aim in life: To get married and have a happy family that carries the name and beliefs of their parents. This concept has proved its effectiveness in passing faith from one generation to another through family.

Nowadays, due to many inner stumbling blocks (i.e., selfishness, stubbornness, discontent with what is available, jealousy, problems within the family) and global stumbling blocks (i.e., materialism, economy) 'keeping an everlasting bond between family members' comes second after 'achieving one's own success and happiness'. With the new trend of life, it was necessary to remind the bride and groom about their responsibilities towards God and towards each other in order to pass faith to the next generation and keep an everlasting happy marriage. Realizing the danger of 'Freedom and materialism', the Church has made an informative course that needs to be attended by the bride and groom to understand thoroughly what the real meaning of marriage is.

As Christians: Our family is unlimited in number, as God our Father has created all of us and sent His Son for the salvation of all. God asked us to love others as we love ourselves and be the light to others in order for them to see His Kingdom on earth and in Heaven. Evangelizing (to show sinners the way to God and ask them to repent for their sake and ours) is a way of telling God that

we love Him and we love others. On the two consecutive feast days of Saint John Vianney and Saint Dominic (priests), the readings in the Holy Mass remind us regarding: (1) the correct meaning of evangelizing (Ezekiel 3:16-21), (2) how not to be afraid because God is with us and He love us (Jeremiah 30:10, Matthew 14:22-33), and (3) there are so many people who don't know about God or even know Him but have strayed away from Him and they need laborers to tell them about the truth (Matthew 9:35-37, 10:1); laborers who know God and love Him with all their hearts as their hearts are filled through the Holy Spirit with the '**Love of God**' that gives them power to evangelize and testify to the truth with wisdom, love, tenderness, patience and without fear. The '**Love of God**' poured in every soul that will engrave God's Law: "Love God wholeheartedly, and love others as you love yourself" and His forgiveness of our sins in the heart until there is no need for anyone to teach his/her neighbor about God (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Unfortunately, 'Freedom' has put a dark screen between the light (we are supposed to have as Christians) and others. It made us:

- (1) Stop seeking and doing God's Will.
- (2) Afraid to speak out and tell people what's right and what's wrong as it would interfere with their personal rights and accordingly with the new understanding of democracy and human rights.
- (3) Love ourselves more than loving God.

Have we lost our heart?? No. We trust in God and His covenant that He will be with us forever and the gates of hell will not destroy us. Listening to the Leader of the Church, The Pope, in his speech on May 4, 2007, we understand that a problem has been identified and the solution is in our hands (parents and priests) with God's help: "The religious education of the new generation".

O Heavenly Father, You said "Ask and you will be given". We pray and ask for what is in favor of our whole family without jeopardizing the benefit of any member in the family; increase our faith, hope and love; and give us the courage to proclaim Your Kingdom to the whole world to give You glory and thanks through Your beloved Son Jesus Christ who reigns with You and Your Holy Spirit One God forever. Amen.



Appendix B

The Life of Jesus in the Holy Mass

In the church, there is the presence of God in His Word and in the Holy Eucharist. The Tabernacle is His Home; the Altar is His Dining Table, His Tomb and His Footstool. The Holy Mass, where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, represents two of Jesus Christ's gifts for us: Jesus' life on earth and the prayer that He taught us, i.e., The Lord's Prayer, as explained below:

1. **Jesus' Life on earth:** Events in the following sequence:
 - (1) His coming to the world and the announcement of the angels to the shepherds → The priest enters the church holding the Holy Bible and/or the icon of the Cross, and later on the people sing "Glory to God in the Highest, and peace to His people on earth ...",
 - (2) His announcement regarding the Kingdom Of God → Both the sick (in flesh and in spirit) and healthy people gather to praise and thank God, to be healed and filled with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to work in His Field, i.e. the assembly of the believers,
 - (3) His teachings → People surround Him & listen to what He is saying when the Holy Bible is read,
 - (4) Palm Sunday → People welcome Him into the Holy Eucharist before the actual transformation of the bread & wine with the same words: "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord" that were said when He entered Jerusalem,
 - (5) The Last Supper with the Disciples → People confess their sins and ask for forgiveness and forgive others from their hearts. Jesus wash the people's feet (as a sign to ease the pain of sinning during their pilgrimage on earth) and offer them His Body & Blood for the forgiveness of sins, i.e. purifying their hearts and making it humble & meek in order to be able to stand in front of God sinless, since God asked Moses: (1) before coming near the Bush of Fire, "to take off his sandals as it is holy ground", i.e. should stand there with no dust on his feet (i.e., sinless) (Exodus 3:5), and (2) to wash their hands and feet before entering the Tent of Meeting or approaching the altar (Exodus 40:30-32),
 - (6) Defeat of sins with His death → Our sins are washed away by touching and taking the Holy Eucharist (Jesus' Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity) to conquer and feed our hearts, and this will lead us finally to
 - (7) His Resurrection and ours.
2. **The Lord's Prayer:** All of Jesus Christ's teachings, i.e. to love God with all our hearts and to love others as ourselves, are implied within the prayer He taught us. He himself lived it all His life: (1) Glorifying and loving His Father by sanctifying His actions thus reflecting His Father's Holiness to others, (2) Surrendering, with complete trust, to His Father's will, (3)

Appendix C

Who am I to God??

I know I am His child, one of many, He treat us all the same
He will come running for my help if He see me crying in pain
He know that I trust in His Name
He know what I need to ease or cure the pain
He gave me my name and taught me His Name

He protect me from His enemies which mine are the same
He protect me as the pupil of His Eyes with love and pain
And I grow under His wisdom and care
As I am His and I will always carry His Name

He gave me the armour I need for my battle in life
And let me go in my way aiming for life
In the way He designated for me to have a life
With His blessings that lead to eternal life
He is my Father and I will happily carry and glorify His Name

[Note: God's enemies are my/our sins as in Psalm 40 and Psalm 41.]



(Isaiah 40:10-11)

The Sower and I

Thank You Father for creating me on good soil and for making me hear your call.

Thank You Jesus Christ for giving me Your Sacred Heart (Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity) to be the good soil I was covered with when I heard Your Word, and for accepting to water me with Your Holy Water & Blood flown from Your Side to enable me to absorb all the riches of the Good Soil; be strong, fruitful and worthy to be called "Child Of God".



Thank You Holy Spirit for preparing my good soil with all its fertilizers and organic materials; a good soil, rich of heavenly virtues of My Father's Spirit, The Spirit of Truth.

"O Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make our heart like unto Thine". Amen.

St. Alphonsus deLiguori

Appendix D

The Gifts of The Holy Spirit

Throughout the Holy Bible, we can see that there are some characteristics that a human being might have:

- Misunderstanding God's words because of people's love to earthly riches including themselves.
- Jumping into conclusion and ease of becoming furious and indignant with others because of a thought that was said. Inability to sit and resolve problems; everyone thinks of himself.
- Pride in oneself and expectation of high rewards. There is no humbleness when we do our job.
- Unable to forgive and accept others, and easily look for revenge, even ask God to do that; forgetting that everybody is His creation and He is God of Love, Mercy and Forgiveness.
- Unsure of and scared from the unknown: whether we will see God and be with Him forever, or we will not be able to enter the Kingdom of God.
- Unable to listen and understand God's Word; there is a cloud on the eyes that makes blur seeing of the truth that "All things are possible with God".
- Jealousy and selfishness that would remove any mercy from the heart.
- Favoritism of someone over another which might lead to sin. In such situations, for example, people would lie and insist that it is the truth if the lie is in favor to the person they love more.
- Doubting God's Word when facing a difficulty (doing the right thing according to God's Word in a situation that only the wrong thing is acceptable) because of little faith; this will lead to falling into sin.
- Arrogance, ungratefulness (lack of appreciation), disloyalty (unfaithfulness), aggressiveness, presumption, selfishness, greed and desire for wealth are among the reasons for not listening to God's Word (pay attention to Him), love Him above all things, and admitting His Majesty over all.
- People will set for themselves certain laws, rules and beliefs depending on incidents not on God's Words. This will lead to judging others (though it is not correct to judge, but as of a human nature we do) as 'unclean' not on God's Words but on human conclusions and rules.

It is the evil spirits who made this kind of human nature, as in the beginning God created everything good. Our ancestors asked God for help (i.e. to show mercy on them) and He listened to their call by sending Jesus Christ to be the Redeemer for all (Isaiah 41:13-14); and in Whose Name all things are made possible. He take away all our weaknesses and strengthen us with the virtues of

the Holy Spirit whenever we acknowledge Him and we are born again.

Throughout the written Gospel, Jesus Christ want us to know God and come nearer to Him by becoming like Him: Holy. In Luke 12, Jesus Christ teach everyone how to be His friend and not to fear any evil spirit as long as their belts are done up and their lamps are lit; as long as their purse for the journey contains God's Word and Love. In a special gift to Saint John, the Apostle, in a revelation, Jesus Christ spoke to us (Followers of Jesus Christ, living at anytime any place from any nation; all the people of the New Jerusalem who form the whole Body of Jesus Christ (Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians)) through the seven churches where the pure heart of each one is a symbol for one of His own characteristics [collectively form the basis of God's Kingdom] and a gift that He can give as a grace through the Holy Spirit to each one of us (we need to examine ourselves, repent and ask for the grace that we lack). Preaching from Patmos to the seven cities on the facing shore of the island is like Jesus Christ preaching from the boat to the people gathered on the shore in front of Him; amazing is what He said at the first time to the people on the shore, as He is repeating it again but in different words; amazing that His message is to tell people to make sure that they hear with their heart the Word of God, understand it, and yield the harvest through perseverance (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15).



The churches in the seven cities and what gift either it has or lacks are:

Church Of Ephesus [Wisdom: *The importance of understanding God's Word from the heart* (The parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:4-9, 19-23))]: This church has a discerning heart and does not accept false teachings, and used to work hard with perseverance to spread the Word of God and proclaim the salvation for all through Jesus Christ. They love God but they forgot the basis of Jesus Christ Mission and that is to give hand for the needy, to love and forgive their enemies, i.e. to help the poor [who has a spiritual poverty] of all nations without the fear of anyone (Galatians 2:1-14), to put God's love before anything else. This church has part of God's Wisdom but lacks real love to other souls who belong to God as He live among all souls as God the most merciful (Luke 6:27-38).

Church Of Smyrna [Understanding: *The element that will keep the hearts faithful without despair* (The parable of the good seed and the darnel (Matthew 13:24-30))]: This church is spiritually rich and really understands God's love and mercy that was clarified and took on a new meaning with the incarnation of the Word of God that existed from the beginning. This church, to be victorious,

needed to empower itself with God's Word and the understanding that through repentance and Jesus Christ's Body and Blood that sins can be forgiven so that sinners can have life and never die. This church though the evil spirits can affect them and make them forget God for a short period but it is through their loyalty and faith in God's Love that they will repent and God will reign again in their heart and they will be part of God's Kingdom. This is the church of the sinners and the people who are weary and worried; the church that is represented by the boat that was swamped by the waves but through the faith and trust in Jesus Christ will reach safely to the shore (i.e. eternal life with the Glory of God) (Matthew 8:23-27). Through faith they understand that each one of them can act as Jesus Christ; a servant to others in cleansing and helping them with a gentle and humble spirit (Galatians 6:1-2).

Church Of Pergamum [Counsel: *The food that will allow small souls to grow to be teachers to others* (The parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32)): This church listen, believe and follow God's Word and Love (i.e. the two edges of the sword (Ephesians 6:17)): Jesus Christ the One who will come to judge the world and need to be feared. This fear (the Beginning of Wisdom (Sirach 1:12)) should not allow them to have a double-face hypocritical heart otherwise they will be punished as they will be wicked in God's Eyes. Their actions should be based on God's Love and the desire to please Him, as they mourn His sadness, by their complete surrender to His Will without justifying their acts according to their own will, which is led by Satan, even at a time of hardship. This church is guided by Jesus Christ, and by its actions can become a faithful witness to Him and good counselor to anyone in time of trial and to the non-believers.

Church Of Thyatira [Fortitude: *The yeast that is mixed with God's Love and Word given to us by Moses, The Prophets, and Jesus Christ* (The parable of the yeast (Matthew 13:33)): This church, like Their Leader (i.e. Jesus Christ), walk the pilgrim on earth with courage, strength, endurance, patience and perseverance but they lack the zeal to His and their Father as they accept Satan's work to be done without taking any action or care for other people's souls. Their zeal to God would have power against these evil spirits that aim to destroy souls and take them away from God's Kingdom; their zealous love will make them light to others as Jesus Christ was to them. People, who want to stay away from this church, i.e. adhere to false teachings, will live in darkness forever.

Church Of Sardis [Knowledge: *The core of our wealth* (The parable of the treasure (Matthew 13:44)): To say that we know God is not enough without actual actions that reflect this knowledge (The fruit of knowledge is work; we need to have a good intimacy with God based on love as the love of the wife to her husband, The King). This church might think that they know and love God,

but without actions or adhering to what He say is like loving someone vaguely and not wholeheartedly. Their heart has no real feelings of love towards God and His Word; as a result they cannot distinguish God's Word so they do things only according to their desire. This situation can be a result of feeling fullness in knowing God so their hearts stop seeking Him, and with pride the feeling of being sinless can conquer the mind. Hearts need always to be humble (i.e. a poor spirit) in the knowledge of God, and since no one know The Father better than The Son, then people need to come nearer to Jesus Christ, listen to Him and work on His Word with a steadfast heart. Feeling richness and not using the gifts given by God can cause eternal death (Ephesians 2:1-10, Luke 12:13-21).

Church Of Philadelphia [Piety: *The precious jewel we need to wear* (The parable of the pearl (Matthew 13:45-46))]: The house that God build can never be destroyed, and he who walk always with God in this faith and depending only on God's Holy Providence, i.e. God's Word and Love, can never be put to eternal shame and his sins (enemies) will die cause the One who raised the dead will make him live forever. Trusting that Jesus Christ "God's Word, God's Love and Mercy, God's Light, God's Heart: The Eye of God's Wisdom" have opened wide for us the narrow gate of the New Jerusalem will bring a new birth into our hearts and lead us to strive to live a life in faithfulness and devoutness to become God's Children and be perfect as He is. For people who put all their trust in Jesus Christ and surrender totally to Him, at times of trials He will come and save them [Our Lord's Prayer]. At times of trials which can vary from listening to false teachings or sinning or having a certain hardship in life, our trust in Jesus Christ and putting our heavy burden on Him (including our sins as He is our Salvation) will save us.

Church Of Laodicea [Fear of the Lord: *The distinguisher between the upright from the wicked* (The parable of the dragnet (Matthew 13:47-50))]: This church represents the souls that are born from flesh not from Spirit though they think that they are born from Spirit (they have self-righteousness) as they are blind from seeing the truth and their inner-self by their self-confidence of what they know and their self-indulgence, i.e. a materialistic earthly soul. They lack the fear of the Lord and have no consideration of God's Word though He is the Amen, The Truth and through Him they were created. Somehow, they are similar to the souls of church of Sardis. Souls of this church have a proud, arrogant and self-important behavior that needs to be adjusted and reminded that God exist, He is the Creator of all beings, and have asked His people to look after each other in pure tenderness, meekness and humbleness. They need to move away from their own thinking and look again at Jesus Christ's actions on earth and imitate the true riches that His Spirit have; imitate His actions that witnessed to God's Love, Goodness, Mercifulness and Justice; imitate His actions that witnessed that God is Holy.

On the cross, Jesus Christ said that He is thirsty, actually He is thirsty for all souls of the seven churches (i.e. all souls) and do not want any soul to be thrown outside His Kingdom; He want them to listen to what He had to say to the seven churches and try to purify themselves for God's sake. At the same time, as Son of Man, He understand the thirst of the people to His Father and is asking them to come and drink from Him, The Living Water that is given by God, freely (1 Corinthians 10:4, Revelation 22:16-22). The Living Water that was held by the man (representing Jesus Christ) who led the disciples to the house (i.e., God's Kingdom) where the Passover is to be eaten (i.e., God's Table) (Luke 22:7-13) [Jesus Christ will show the way To God The Father; whoever follows Him will reach Heaven (i.e., the upper room) and share His Passover Table]; the same upper room where the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and they became His witnesses. The Living Water that flows from God's Heart is the Holy Spirit that we would receive from Jesus Christ when we believe in Him (John 7:37-39).

Near the cross, there are two kinds of people: (1) The people who have insulted, scourged and crucified Jesus Christ, and (2) The people who have washed away His Sacred Blood after His death as preparation for His burial. Though at that instant of crucifixion these two kinds were different people, but nowadays we understand that it is very rare to see someone live in holiness all his/her life, but rather we move from an innocent heart (at childhood) to live an earthly life (as of the people of Church of Laodicea or Sardis), and it is through God's Providence including (but not limited to) the people who have wisdom, understanding and knowledge to proclaim God's Love and Mercy to others (as of the people of church of Ephesus and Philadelphia) that we start to understand how to come nearer to Jesus Christ (Who descended from Heaven to earth) and buy from Him Heavenly gold; all that we need in our life: His Love with total obedience to God our Father and His redeeming love to all people (Psalm 19). This transformation happens in so many steps depending on the people surrounding us and on our faith, so at a certain stage we can be a soul of any of the seven churches (Ephesians 4, 5, 6). With true repentance and perseverance in Faith, we (parents, children, priests, missionary, people in power, etc.) move from the side of the people who crucified Jesus Christ to the people who wash His wounds and build/restore His Body. Keeping God's Law and Commandments and observing them will show others our understanding and wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:6).

In some cases, when we sin, a fear shadows our heart and makes us stray away from God whether by neglecting Him or by having self-righteousness. This fear can be compared to our feelings when while on a road, a thief comes and steals our bag that has all our money and papers that show our identity, e.g. the passport, our picture and our address; then after a short time, another fear will

arise as we will be scared that the thief will come to our house to harm us even more; we will live in a fear that will make us hide our face so that he will not recognize us among the crowd in any street or any place, and we will end up living in darkness away from every other person and away from the light. This is what Satan does to us; once we commit a sin, our fear makes us prefer to stay in darkness and consider that darkness as light. This is also what ‘Individual Freedom’ does to our soul; our fear to evangelize or even to follow God’s Word, especially if the consequences are losing friends or martyrdom, making us stay in darkness forgetting that all power was given to Jesus Christ and He is the light that all people should not be scared to live in as He is God’s Love to us and He love us. We accept blindness, but which blindness? Let it be the blindness that is caused by having Jesus Christ’s Hands on our eyes. Yes, Jesus Christ is the Hand of God that cover our eyes and we, trusting Him fully, allow Him and His Word to be our eyes that will lead us into eternal happiness, eternal life with God in His Glory (Psalms 23 and 27).

These gifts of the Holy Spirit, in fullness, are The Characteristics of Jesus Christ (His Heart) that keep the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20) in its place on our inner self and make it shine, where:

- Wisdom, and Knowledge identify the **Truth** (*the belt around the waist*),
- Holiness spring **uprightness** (*the breastplate*),
- Counsel, Knowledge and Fortitude support **eagerness to proclaim the good news for all and do good charity and merciful work** (*the shoes on the feet*),
- Fear of God and Fortitude out of zealous love to God keep a steadfast **Faith** (*the shield*), and
- Understanding of God’s Mercy assure our **salvation** (*the helmet*)

And, all of the above gifts will engrave **God’s Love and His Word** (*the sword*) in our hearts to fight the evil spirits. These gifts will make us conquer our battle in life against sin and we will not choose other Gods (i.e. earthly desires). These gifts will fruit/inspire in us: Charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity. These acts will reflect God’s Love to others and witness to His Holy Name (Ezekiel 36:26-27). In Matthew 5:1-12 (i.e. The Beatitudes), Jesus Christ blessed everyone who has the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that make him/her humble, meek, share the sorrow of God and others, caring, pure in heart, patient, merciful, peace maker (spiritually, i.e. leading others to the peace of soul through Jesus Christ, and bodily), and persevere for the Name of God and Righteousness. In his letter, Saint James advise everyone one of us that if we lack a gift then we should ask God without doubt and He will provide freely and ungrudgingly (James 1:5) as Jesus Christ said (Matthew 7:7-11). As what

Jacob (Israel) did when he saw God and did not die, he did not let Him go without receiving His blessings (Genesis 32:26-30); and as Sons of Israel, God's blessings (the gifts of the Holy Spirit) is all what we need in our life.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we understand that the source of the armor of God is the Sacred Heart of Jesus (God's Word)/Eucharistic Heart of Jesus whom we should imitate and invite into our hearts.

Keeping these characteristics in mind (Isaiah 11:1-3), through the Holy Spirit we can see Jesus, Son of Man, to be 'The Truth'; 'The Amen'; 'The Christ; Son of God; Lamb of God'; 'The Word of God'. If we see Him, we will see:

- His White Hair as a symbol of His Wisdom,
- His Burning Eyes that fires love, that fill His Heart, as a symbol of His Understanding and zeal to God,
- His White (Daniel 7:9) or Red (Revelation 19:13) Robe that shines as a symbol of His Holiness and the holiness of everyone who believes in Him that is gained by His death on the cross (where His Voice is a voice of many),
- His Golden Belt on His Waist as a symbol of His Knowledge,
- His Bronze Feet, that are bronze as He is filled with the Holy Spirit (Tongues of Fire; The Chariot of Fire) as a symbol of His Fortitude,
- His Seven Stars (the churches that are under His protection) in His Right Hand as a symbol of His Counsel to all, or we might see His Staff that The Good Shepherd gather His sheep with, and
- His Tongue is like a double-edged sword as a symbol of the effectiveness of His Word and His Love

And, when we have the Fear of God in our hearts, we will see the Crown on His Holy Face that shine as the sun as a symbol of His Majesty (Revelation 1:13-16, Daniel 7:9-10, Daniel 10:6).

Through the Holy Spirit, may our love to God and each other grow more and more with the knowledge and complete understanding that will help us to come to true discernment, so that we will be innocent and free of any trace of guilt when the Day of Christ comes, entirely filled with the fruits of uprightness through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9-11).

Our Father in Heaven, how amazing is Your Love for us though we are sinners; how amazing are Your ways in teaching us Your Love; how amazing are Your precepts that Your Holy Spirit imprint in our hearts, unite us and make us Your children; how amazing are Your gifts that purify us, give us a share of Your Holy Spirit and empower us to be Your witnesses on earth. All praise, all blessings and all thanksgiving is Yours: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit one God. Amen.



Appendix E

Sharing the Meal with a Visitor “Our Master”

Where do we stand from the face of Jesus Christ? Do we see Him clearly as Saint Peter the Apostle, inspired by God The Father, saw Him as “Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16), and as Saint Thomas saw and admitted that He is “My Lord and My God!” (John 20:28)? Jesus asked us to come near Him and not be afraid, to sit in front of Him and listen to Him, and to look deeply into His eyes and feel the love and compassion that comes out of them to know Him.

Considering Jesus Christ is a visitor from another country and we would like to know Him better while He is in our country (i.e. Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist), we need to invite Him to our house (i.e. our heart) more than once and show Him our good hospitality and love in order for Him to invite us to His house when we go to His country (i.e. Heaven). Think about how we would treat a King if he visits our house. Don't we clean the house before he comes? Don't you think we will kneel when he enters the house? Don't you think with our actions we should show him how grateful we are for visiting our unworthy house? In order to understand Jesus Christ and know Him better (so that we can serve Him better) we need to stay with Him and listen to Him regularly. And, the more we invite Him to our house, the more our hearts will be attached to and the greater will be our love to Him. We invite Jesus Christ to our hearts when we share with Him the meal in the Holy Mass and when we listen to His Word in the Holy Bible. How would we behave, when we know that He is not only a King but Our God?

In Matthew 25:30, Jesus said that if a person is spiritually unprofitable (i.e. worthless servant) then he will be thrown into outer darkness, where weeping and gnashing of teeth. And, in Luke 12:39-59, He said: “*And that servant who knew His master's will, and did not prepare himself or do accordingly to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*”... “*You shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last*”.

The whole Holy Bible teaches about God and obedience to Him; about a covenant with God and attitudes for every worker and its rewards/punishment; and about the love of God and to each others' soul so that no one is lost. And it is because of the punishment's place (Hell) for sinners and God's Jealous Love & Mercy, that God from the beginning has planned and sent us Jesus Christ to be the everlasting pleasing sacrifice for whoever believes in Him from sinners and repents (Isaiah 9:5-6, Colossians 3:1-25, 4:1-2), trust Him, put His yoke on him/her and become His follower/friend, i.e. a child/servant to God (with all that this title entails from passion, acts, sacrifices and responsibilities towards God, to oneself and others).

In Mark 10:24, Jesus Christ told His Disciples that Children of God, including Himself, are all servants/slaves to each other. As followers of Jesus Christ, the best words we can hear from Jesus Himself are what He said to His disciples: *“A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ... So do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul ... Whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven”* (Matthew 10:24-33, Luke 12:4-9). We need to have a Humble Spirit within us just as Jesus Christ is so humble as He is a servant to all while He is the King. And, God is so humble to accept taking our human nature and live with us. As followers of Jesus Christ, He is our Good Master (The owner of the house, and to Whom we say: Here I am, use me) who came and as He knew that He was going away for some time, He taught us, His servants, how to keep His house clean, tidy and everything in its place according to His will until He come back again. He did what He had to do, and we have to do what is required of us to do, i.e. what He taught us.

Followers of Jesus Christ, the servants who wait for their master to come, will:

- Reflect the glory of Christ, who is the Image of God (Colossians 1:15).
- Enlighten others with the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory on the face of Christ; thus renewing human nature day by day (2 Corinthians 4:1-7).
- Proclaim the message of reconciling the world to God through Jesus Christ (Luke 9:60).
- Stand firm to every kind of hardship guided by the same Spirit of Faith (James 1:22-27).
- Wash themselves clean of everything that pollutes their body and spirit (i.e., turn the desire of heart and eye towards Heaven, fill their hearts completely with God’s Love, give themselves to God and His Children, and become spiritually profitable), bringing their sanctification to completion in the fear of God (Romans 6, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Mark 7:20-23, Matthew 12:33-35, Galatians 5:13-26).
- Be filled with encouragement and overflowing with joy (Colossians 1:9-12). And by doing so, they will have their belts done up and their lamps on (Luke 12:35-40, Matthew 25:1-13), and become a fruitful tree (Luke 13:6-9).

As in any organization, there are different positions in order to collectively achieve the goal of the organization, so is our spiritual work in the Kingdom of God that can be either simple (living the rules and spreading love/harmony between individuals in simple ways) or initiative where it requires more effort and sacrifice for the sake of all. In order to know whether we are working efficiently, we require a good monitoring system and feedback to compare between what is achieved and what is required, and a rectifier to improve on what is achieved to eliminate/prevent the differences (make it nil!). The

monitoring system is our conscience, the feedback is our relationship with the people surrounding us whether it is good or bad, plus our actual relationship with God, and the rectifier is God's Providence. Confession, admitting mistakes, repentance, and reparation are the best way to improve our relationships. Our goal is to sanctify ourselves.

For some followers, God gave them the grace to understand that Jesus Christ's Sacred Heart is God's House that have many mansions where the dead in body are asleep in peace enjoying the warmth of such compassionate Heart (John 14:2). Jesus Christ is the servant who came and cleaned our hearts (made it holy) to be ready to invite God and His love for His children to come and stay in our heart (God's Kingdom) while we are on earth and reign on it and change our love to be 'the love of a child to his father' or even 'the love of a faithful wife to her husband', so that when we go to His Kingdom in Heaven, He will invite us to His House (heart). Just as in life on earth, people invite their friends and the people they love to their houses to share a meal together. When Jesus Christ felt the desire of Zacchaeus to see Him, He called him and told him that He wanted to stay at his house that day, and what happened?? Jesus Christ stayed in his heart and changed him (Luke 19:1-10); and from that moment God will see in him His Son and will love him as His Son because Zacchaeus will love God now as Jesus loved Him: "A Father, Upright One" and act accordingly (John 17:25-26).

This new heart will make us repent, give away everything considered earthly riches, and follow Jesus to be servant for others. Our actions shall be a reflection for His goodness, an image of God's Love to be seen and felt by others. This new heart will make us as new born children who put all their trust in their Father. Just like Jesus Christ, a servant will never say "what about me?", but surrender totally to his Master's Will, and give himself willingly always for his children, and have perseverance to fulfill God's call to him and say "Here I am".

O Blessed Mother Mary, your "I am the Lord's servant" is our first lesson from you in teaching us how to give Glory to Our Father in Heaven, Our God. Your act of obedience to His call and actually fulfilling His will in you resembles what you said "My soul glorifies the Lord" as His Word and Commands are to be obeyed above all considerations.

"O God grant us to speak as You would wish and conceive thoughts worthy of the gifts we have received, since You are both guide to Wisdom and director of sages; for we are in Your Hand, yes, ourselves and our sayings, and all intellectual and all practical knowledge. O God of our ancestors, Lord of Mercy, grant us Wisdom, consort of Your Throne, to be Your children, Your servants; we ask this through Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen"

Appendix F

A Call For Holiness

In Jesus Christ teachings regarding divorce (Matthew 19:3-15), which one of the following is true?

- Jesus Christ assumes all men have hard hearts.
- Prior to His time, all men have hard hearts and He will change them to being meek and humble.
- Men need to change their hearts, and the disciples found it hard to change.

How hard is it to change? And do we change our behavior by our own will or with God's interference?

The history of God's chosen people clearly put God's Hand (Providence) in every move they did without any effort from their side other than their belief in Him and their will to follow God and obey His Word (Joshua 24:1-29, Psalms 16 & 136).

Divorce seemed to be a very common thing to do that the disciples found it hard to accept that there should be no divorce, although it was the first thing God forbade in His speech with Adam and Eve; and Jesus Christ (wanting all things to go back to how they were in the beginning: Everybody in the Image of God, an image that can be found in the pure hearts of little children) wanted to make the marriage a sacred sacrament lived with holiness from both: the husband and the wife, so that they can be fruitful.

In the Old Testament, Leviticus (19:1-19, 20:8-16), God spoke to Moses and asked him to tell the whole community to "be holy for God is Holy". In the Gospel, (Matthew 5:1-48), Jesus Christ (God's Word) said to the whole community the same words with higher standards. Such holiness is understood in the following aspects:

1. Relationship between people and God: Not to worship another God; keep God's law and put them into practice; fear God out of love to Him, to ourselves and to others; keep His Sabbaths and reverence His sanctuary.
2. Relationship between children and their parents: Respect.
3. Relationship between people: Love of neighbor (friend or enemy) as oneself (treat them with justice, fairness and kindness, love and mercy), no hatred for anyone in the heart and be open in telling others about their offenses.
4. Sexual Relationship: Only between husband and wife. In Deuteronomy 22:13-29, virginity before marriage and faithfulness in marriage is a must otherwise the sinner will be stoned to death (i.e., commit a sin (adultery or rape) that he/she will be judged before God).

Jesus Christ explain that it is the Mercy of God that allowed Moses to allow

divorce as God knew the weakness of men and their hard hearts (where blindness and stubbornness of the heart is one of the reasons of division as it creates ignorance that will lead to separation from the life of God (Psalm 81, Ephesians 4:17-18)). This hardness of heart is shown in Jesus' parable (Matthew 22:2-14) regarding the invitation of the king for his son's wedding feast where some of the invited people, caring only for their desires and wealth, they preferred to reject the invitation and spend their time in things that will increase their wealth while others stopped the servants from going to other people and give them the invitation. They were ungrateful to the king, in addition they didn't care for his feelings and share his happiness [this act just shows that they did not acknowledge the king (God) and love him above all matters or even fear him, accordingly they didn't want to work for God to spread the good news and build His Kingdom in the hearts where the food in the feast is to do God's Will (John 4:34)]. Again, in this parable, Jesus Christ is calling the people to ignite God's Love in their heart, not to close their ears and harden their hearts when they hear His Voice (Psalm 95:7-8, Hebrews 3:15, 4:6-7), repent and wear holiness/righteousness being the garment required to attend the wedding.

In another parable (Matthew 13:1-23), Jesus Christ explain that there is more than one kind of heart in the human race:

- (1) A dull heart who doesn't understand God's Word so he cannot be fruitful,
- (2) A stumbling heart who cannot stand firm to God's Word especially when faced with difficulties and becomes unfruitful,
- (3) A selfish heart who because of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches make him ignore God's Word and become unfruitful, and
- (4) A humble and compassionate heart who acknowledges God and His Word and wishes to please Him and become fruitful.

Again, Jesus Christ is opening our eyes on ourselves and asking us to identify the nature of our heart and act on changing it to become holy.

In Luke 15:7, Jesus Christ tell His followers (the people who came to listen to Him who were mainly sinners) that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. Jesus Christ explained that He came for sinners to repent. In Saint Paul's first letter to Timothy 1:12-19, he said with full confidence that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as he was a sinner and was saved. How does a sinner repent and what happens to him? He believes in God's Word and acts accordingly (James 1:22-25); his love to God and others will come from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith (Acts 24:15-16, 1 Timothy 1:5). In other words, a sinner will repent and leave the life of sin as Jesus Christ declared (Luke 13:3,5 & John 8:11), and try to become holy and compassionate so that he will be called God's friend (Matthew 5:1-12, Psalm 101, Romans 6:12-23, 8:1-17).

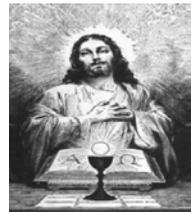
Our behavior and the way to holiness are determined by answering:

- Do we understand who is talking to us (who is inviting us to the wedding?) (Isaiah 43:3, 11-12), and what is he asking us to do?
- Do we realize that Jesus Christ is the Word of God?
- Do we understand “God’s Love and Mercy” in relation to Jesus Christ being our ‘Redeemer: The Holy One of Israel’ (Isaiah 41 & 42)?

What are we but a mix of feelings in the heart and the mind: happy, sad, secure, insecure, love, hate, jealous, thirsty, hungry, full, greedy, humble, arrogance, pride, clemency, anger, anxiety, fear ... etc. Our actions and behavior are results of these feelings; and God’s graces to us is to give us faith, wisdom of heart and mind, courage, perseverance, self-control, patience, kindness and gentleness, modesty, holiness as the virtues of the Holy Spirit. In Saint Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians (12:20-21), he urged them not to have the following among them: wrangling, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, intrigues, backbiting, gossips, conceits, disorder; and had stayed away from uncleanness, fornication and lewdness; in other words he is calling them to holiness by acts.

As Christians we come to understand that God’s gift to us, God’s Love & Mercy, i.e. Jesus Christ, is our means and His providence to change our hearts and put on us a new self (Ezekiel 36:26-27), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Though it seemed hard at that instant for the disciples to understand how is it possible to change the state of the heart, but nowadays as followers of Jesus Christ we know that it can be achieved through our belief in Him (by giving Him thanks, praising Him and trusting Him), and our will to follow God, obey His Word, and attach ourselves to Him in Heaven and in the Holy Eucharist, this is our strive to enter from the narrow gate, the gate of virtue (Psalm 118), to be holy in our families and with each other. Consecration of oneself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (The Spirit of Truth) with contrite heart (Romans 8:1-17, Psalm 51) is the first act of adoration to God and sanctifying ourselves.

Thank You Father for in Your Mercy and Clemency You didn’t let us die. You took our hand and led us through the narrow gate since no one can be holy, but by admitting our mistakes and weaknesses You strengthen us with Your Providence in what Jesus Christ did for us throughout His life, and with the guidance of Your Holy Spirit.



O Holy Soul of my Savior, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, transform me. Water flowing from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus hear me. Within Your wounds hide and shelter me. Suffer me never to be separated from You. From the evil enemy defend me. At the hour of my death call me, and bid me come to You, that with Your saints, I may praise You for all eternity. Amen. (✠ Saint Ignatius of Loyola)

Appendix G

Jesus Christ: The Light of the Universe

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the Light of the Universe, and how can we, as His Followers, be a light to others?

It is a fact that human beings cannot see with their eyes unless there is light surrounding them, and the brighter the light the clearer is the vision; as for God, the light that God need to see things with is **within Him**; i.e. His Son Jesus Christ, His Heart and The Light whom God sent to us so that we can see.

- Jesus Christ is the Light of His Father's Eyes (Son of God) sent to us to lighten our way to the Kingdom of God, and change us to be light for others. The Book of Tobit (in the Old Testament) tells us that **'the child is the light of his/her father's eyes'** [this is a very common nick name for a child in the Arabic world]; and how much this statement is true for Jesus Christ, Son of God.
- Jesus Christ is the light to our hearts/eyes; through Him we can see how God see His children and accordingly feel what He feel for His children and act accordingly (Ecclesiasticus 17:7-10). This Light will give us the necessary strength to walk the path of salvation with perseverance and without fear or care for oneself.

When Jesus Christ said that His Followers are the light of the earth, and asked them to love others as they love themselves, He wanted them to be the light of their Father's eyes (i.e. to become God's Children) and spread His zealous love to everybody else in order for them to believe, and establish God's Kingdom on earth. It is God's zealous love that the apostles had in their hearts when they evangelized (2 Corinthians 11:1-2).

In actual life, scientists discovered and proved that when the white light breaks through a prism, it will generate the rainbow colour gamut, i.e. show the true colours and beauty of the white light. They also say: The 'whiter' the white light is, the more colours the prism will produce, i.e. wider and brighter colour gamut. The same concept is true in our life: The light within us (i.e. the knowledge of God's Love within our heart, soul and mind) requires actions (Prism) to show God's Holiness (Rainbow Colour Gamut). The more sincere our Love to God is, the better are our actions that will witness to Him. So, how white is the light of our lamp?? How well do we know "God's Love" to us?? And, how much of our actions reflect God's Holiness?? Do we really understand His Love, Sacrifice and Forgiveness in order to love, sacrifice ourselves to others and forgive them when they make a mistake?? Do we really

understand that The Crucified/Resurrected Jesus Christ is the Bow (Bright White Light) in the Clouds God gave us as a sign for His Covenant with all creatures (Genesis 9:12-17)?? How do we increase the Whiteness of our light??

Jesus Christ came to witness to us God's Holiness and Divinity, and His will to make us God's Children and be perfect (Transfer our weak humanity into divinity and conquer sin) and become the light to others on earth as He is. **As witnesses, we will be able to show God to others through our speech, thoughts & deeds.**

A Follower of Jesus Christ is a person who sees the needs of himself and others (body & soul) and acknowledging the power of Jesus Christ (Lord and God) ask for help with full trust. A Follower is the one who has God's Spirit dwelling in him (i.e., in his heart) so he becomes the light and the salt of the earth. At baptism, or Pentecost (i.e. receiving the Holy Eucharist through the Holy Communion), The Holy Spirit will attach our heart with Jesus Christ's Sacred Heart who become our lamp that lighten for us the darkness so that we, in turn, will enlighten to others. We will start to see things through this Sacred Heart ("The eye is the lamp of the body") that hold all the love and mercy for every one of us.

All people need to go through their lives from sinful stage to holiness and the way is Christ Jesus; the Light that enlightens the way is Christ Jesus; the Spirit of Truth is in Christ Jesus; and our souls are eternally alive through Christ Jesus. In Psalm 80, people prayed and said: "God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved". And God listened to their prayer through Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ appeared to Saint Paul, or when He transfigured at Mount Tabor, His garment was whiter than snow and reflected all the Light we need to see in the darkness (Just as the whiteness of the snow reflects light at night). The Light is so bright, and we will follow the light blindly without hesitation.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army encamps against me (sins created by evil spirits), my heart shall not fear. There is one thing I ask of the Lord, for this I long: To live in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord, and to look around in his Temple. For God makes me safe in His tent in the day of evil, God hide me in the shelter of his tent; on a High Rock I am secure". Amen.

My Lord and my God, You are our life which morning started with Your Light; and Your Light is always our daily dawning brightness. O God, give us the courage to witness to Your Light and evangelize the Good News (Our Salvation through Jesus Christ) to the end of the earth. Amen.

Appendix H

The Outcome of Faith

From the First Book of Maccabees and Luke 19 & 20, we see the following:

- God exist; all glory is His.
- God call people either through His Prophets or His Son Jesus Christ and the worthy become obedient to what He ask them to do no matter what sacrifices they offer (e.g. the mother of seven, Zacchaeus ... etc.) to live with Him forever.
- Not everyone recognizes God's Love & Mercy. Some would recognize God for some time then tend to forget and follow their own desires. This will lead to disasters firstly to their soul and secondly to others' lives. May God open our eyes and minds to accept His invitation to His Kingdom by staying faithful to His teachings (obedience with zeal, love & trust).
- Faith or disbelief goes from one generation to another through the actions of the elderly. It is the responsibility of the elderly to keep in their hearts a steadfast faith and obedience to God's Word, and to stay away in action from whatever is not accepted by God (not only in words), as the wrong actions of the elderly are the worst enemy to spreading the true faith.
- Peace has different meanings to people. Some think that peace is achieved by pleasing the people in power or the people surrounding them even if it opposes God's pleasure; others know that the real peace is the peace in the heart knowing that by loving God wholeheartedly the soul will return back to its Creator and live with Him forever and this love will make people live together peacefully (Mark 8:34-38, 9:50, Luke 12:51-53, John 14:27).
- Death of body is a fact, everybody dies, even kings (no matter how powerful or rich one can reach in life), and after that comes judgment time. It is the state of a "living soul" that everyone should aim to reach, before that day comes, through the obedience to God's Word; as Christians, it's through listening to Jesus Christ's teachings, putting it into practice, praying and trusting Him with joy and patience.
- Heaven is something unknown to people. The pleasure of kneeling before God and praising Him is not always acceptable by people especially who can't see pleasure other than the pleasure of the body (i.e. through power, money, sex ... etc.). These same reasons of pleasure can lead to Heaven if used correctly complying with God's teachings (Luke 16:9).
- At their deathbed people recognize their mistakes towards God and others and they see clearly the plank in their eyes. May we all see our mistakes and feel God's Love and Mercy and ask for forgiveness before the time comes otherwise we will need to pay it all before seeing God's Glory, Love & Mercy.

Teach me God to kneel in spirit and body to Your teachings and Your Will according to the work You designated to me (a father, a mother, a leader, a priest, a missionary, etc.) while I'm alive in order for my soul to kneel to Your Glory in Heaven. Amen.

Appendix I

The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ

God, The Father say: “This is My Son, the Chosen One, the Beloved. Listen to Him” (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:35); and the Son say: “Love Him, worship Him and give Him thanks; He is My Father and Your Father; and We are One”.

To understand the saying of God to Moses: “But My face, you cannot see, for no human being can see and survive” (Exodus 33:20), then we need to listen carefully, understand what we hear, and obey and abide by Jesus Christ’s teachings starting from: (1) Love God with all your heart as a Father and don’t worship other Gods, (2) Love everybody as you love yourself; call them to holiness and don’t become a stumbling block to others, i.e. cause them to sin, (3) Always forgive others, (4) Do God’s Will not your own desires, (5) Be faithful to God: Do acts of mercy, and fast on sin, and (6) Trust Him and ask Him for all your needs.

In all of the above, you put God’s Love and obedience above everything else including yourself. You can’t hide behind your “human nature excuse” and tell God when you sin for instance:

- (1) Because of my dignity, my self-respect, my position, my feelings, etc., I cannot forgive others so many times, and who do they think they are to keep on hurting me after all I have done for them??; or
- (2) If it was me who was hurt then I would have forgiven, but it’s the dearest person to me (my father/mother/daughter/son ...) who was hurt so I will not forgive; or
- (3) My intelligence and wealth or even God’s love, promises and gifts to me make me superior above others; or
- (4) I desired what is not mine (a man, a woman, money ..) so bad, I must have it; or
- (5) I don’t love my wife/husband anymore, we must get a divorce, and I don’t care about the children or what our fights would do to them; they will forget; what is important now is my happiness; or
- (6) I was scared of other people’s opinion or about their feelings that I did not tell them that they were doing something against God’s Will.

With these excuses you are putting yourself at the same height of God to look into His Face (no longer a child that bows in respect) and say to God: “I’ll act how it suits me rather than what You have asked me to do”. Certainly by saying this you become a wicked person who is asking for eternal death. Also, if by your actions you caused other children of God to sin, then you really don’t deserve His Love.

Failing to obey Jesus Christ’s teachings is somehow a failure to recognize Jesus Christ as God. I cannot imagine that Jesus Christ will ask us, His Followers, to do something we are unable to do, especially as He asked us to repent, put our trust in Him and put our burden of sinning on Him, and ask our Father through Him for all what we need and He will provide if it is His will.

My Lord, my God, You are our life which morning started with Your Light; and Your Light is always our daily dawning brightness. Amen.

Appendix J

Salt of Earth

‘Better To Be Safe Than Sorry’

In Mark 9:41-50 and Matthew 18:1-35, Jesus is talking to His disciples as well as to anyone who wants to be His follower, i.e. want to put in himself a real salt that works as preservative material for his soul as well as for others' souls and give taste and meaning to their lives, that was created by God to do His will, and be example to others to follow. Jesus show them the reward/punishment to any **act** and give them the advice so that their salt will not lose its saltiness towards themselves and others (Matthew 5:21-48).

1. A salty act towards yourself and others at the same time

From the Holy Bible, we come to understand the Justice and Love of God and how He teach us to love Him, love others and treat them with justice. To understand ‘Sin’ we need to understand that: In the Ten Commandments, if the first four are not obeyed then the person has sinned against God only by being disobedient to God’s Commandment(s); the rest of the Commandments have two aspects regarding sinning:

1. Against God by disobeying God’s Commandment(s), and
2. Against the person(s) whom we performed the sin on (affected by the act thus affecting the purity of his/her soul) because we didn’t love them as we love ourselves; e.g. adultery will affect the wife/husband and the children if any and the other person involved in adultery, killing of body will affect the relatives of the dead, killing of the soul will affect God (all souls belong to God) and the person himself, ... etc.

Knowing that (1) God is the Creator of our bodies and He blew in us from His Spirit to give wisdom and life to our souls, (2) when we sin our soul dies, and (3) God is Just, then we will understand that it is because of His Love and Jealousy for us (Isaiah 9:5-6) He don’t want to lose any to Satan: He forgave our sins by Jesus Christ’s death on the cross (i.e. His Love) provided that we should NOT:

1. Hold any soul from the reward of returning back to God by holding their sins against us, and
2. Cause others to sin, thus their soul will not return to God. By applying Justice of God (shown in his command: Love to others what you love to yourself), then our own soul will not also return to Him.

Accordingly, God will forgive the sins of whoever forgives others (for the sake of God’s love to all as Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins) for the sin they’ve committed against him/her. And by forgiving others, you will also be saving their soul from being condemned for that sin,

as people will be judged according to the sins that other people hold against them.

The act of mercy in giving water to others in Jesus' Name symbolizes forgiveness, mercifulness, purity and life. He who does that act is considered to be a follower of Jesus Christ and his reward will be great: Forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Being merciful and forgiving others from all our hearts is like receiving the Living Water from God's Hands, understanding fully His Forgiveness and Love, and giving it to others.

2. How to put salt in ourselves and keep its saltiness

Jesus tell us that everyone will sin and pass through the process that either leads to holiness (become followers of Jesus and be salt that provides saltiness to others) or evilness (salt that loses its saltiness has no use). To abide to Jesus' teaching (To love God and love each other), a struggle in one's conscience to do right will create in himself a **set of actions and behavior based on his/her love to God** (i.e., salt) that would return his/her soul back to God and stay away from the fire of the feeling of losing God forever.

Sinning is an act that happens when we are poor in spiritual love, i.e. poor in the knowledge and love of God, so that when we are faced with trials we let Satan control our minds and hearts and makes us forget God's Word to keep us away from God. Satan uses our weak human desires for that purpose.

Acknowledging our sins, and knowing the cause of them (thinking or actual doing), asking God and whoever we sinned against for forgiveness, and having true sorrow for them and a firm purpose of amendment will keep the saltiness of the salt in ourselves and put us on the right track for eternal life with God; in other words: it will put back our love to God in our hearts above all things. Otherwise, when our bodies die we'll find our souls burning in Hell (where sins cannot be forgiven anymore) by the fire in the hearts of our souls for not seeing God forever.

'Forgiving others from all of our hearts' is one of the acts to tell God that we love Him from all of our hearts. To 'ask for forgiveness' is to walk humbly with God as He is the only one who is Righteous.

In the Middle Eastern tradition, people say to anyone whose pride they feel makes him think he is better than others: "You will not lose any of your body's parts if you come down from your high place as God is the only One in High".

Dear God, have mercy on me and make me understand that I am worth nothing in comparison to others, and my heart will be pleased to walk humbly by Your Side to serve You through others. Amen.

Appendix K

Prayers

O God, You filled our Mother Immaculate Mary with grace and allowed her, as You have allowed Your angel Raphael, to be our companion and offer people's supplications before You. Please, let Her be the eyes that I'd see the needs of others with; to help me do what I can do, and where I can't physically help to put on my tongue the right prayers to You at the right time with full trust in You and acceptance of things according to Your Will. Also, allow Her, to make me see clearly the needs of the soul of mine and others in order to have eternal life; and to increase in my heart the love to You, and to others as myself (to make it as much as Her Son Jesus loved us: He prayed to You for us until blood sweat out from Him and sacrificed Himself for our salvation) as this is what summarizes Your Law given to us through Your prophets and fulfilled by Your Son Jesus Christ, My Lord My God. Let our love to each other be based on loving and caring for the body as well as the soul of each other. And this is also how other people would know that I am my Father's child, a follower of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear God, Your Love for us is so great, and our relationship is so deep; we are in Your Heart as You are our Father even before we become Your children by Your Grace. Please enkindle our heart with love and jealousy towards Your Holiness, and cover us with the Shadow of Your Power. Change our hearts, and let Your Word (undoubted) be the platform on which it is built, while 'putting Your Word into practice' as the actual work and material required for building it. Amen.

Spreading the Word was Your last wish, so please Father help us to give You glory and thanks by fulfilling it with our sincere repentance from sin, and our actions of love and mercy towards Your children; we ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Please God, fill our lamp with necessary olive oil to keep the light on during our journey on earth, and embrace our heart to feel the tenderness of Your love till Your Light shine for us forever. Amen.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army encamps against me (sins created by evil spirits), my heart shall not fear. There is one thing I ask of the Lord, for this I long: To live in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord, and to look around in his Temple. For God makes me safe in His tent in the day of evil, God hide me in the shelter of his tent; on a High Rock I am secure". Amen.

I shall give thanks to You, Lord and King, and praise you, God my Savior. I give thanks to Your Holy Name for You have been my guard and support and redeemed my body from destruction

O Heavenly Father, You said “Ask and you will be given”. We pray and ask for what is in favor of our whole family without jeopardizing the benefit of any member in the family; increase our faith, hope and love; and give us the courage to proclaim Your Kingdom to the whole world to give You glory and thanks through Your beloved Son Jesus Christ who reigns with You and Your Holy Spirit One God forever. Amen.

“We give You thanks, O Lord of all; we glorify You O Jesus Christ, for You are the giver of life to our bodies, and the Savior of our souls”. Amen.

Teach me God to kneel in spirit and body to Your teachings and Your Will according to the work You designated to me (a father, a mother, a leader, a priest, a missionary, ...) while I'm alive in order for my soul to kneel to Your Glory in Heaven. Amen.

My Lord, my God, You are our life which morning started with Your Light; and Your Light is always our daily dawning brightness. Amen.

O God, Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. Your instructions are my eternal heritage; they are the joy of my heart. I devote myself to obeying your statutes, their recompense is eternal (Psalm 119:105,111-112). Please open my eyes, ears, mouth and hands and strengthen my legs to please You. Amen.

O Jesus Christ, when I take Your Holy Body and drink Your Sacred Blood please put my sins onto your Body, cover them with Your Blood, baptize me and wash them away. Then, please put me as a seed into Your Heart and feed me with the water and blood that came out from Your Heart and create in me a pure heart (having the power of God's Love that The Holy Spirit pour into our hearts), just like Yours worthy to call My God “My Father”, please Him and do His Will. Just as Your flesh was formed from the pure water and blood in Immaculate Mary's womb (as she was conceived without sin) by the power of The Holy Spirit, My Lord, let Your Holy Heart be the womb that give me new birth. Amen.

O God, thank You for Your free Precious Gift to us. Please, give us the courage to build our temple, to clean our hearts and the actions that come out of it by following Your Beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us and give us peace. Blessed be God! Blessed be His Great Holy Name! Glory be to The Father, and to The Son and to the Holy Spirit One God for evermore”. Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, thank You for the everlasting precious gift that You have provided: “Your Love”; the source of my life and the reason for my being. Thank You Father for creating me with freedom of choice; and I ask You O Sacred Heart of Jesus, as followers of Yours, to imprison my freedom of speech, thoughts and deeds with this love and fill our hearts with the love that You have for Your Father and His Children, and grant that we may please Him as You did. Amen.

O God, please shine in our hearts so we can in turn be light for our children and make You known to them as the Light of the universe, we ask this in the Name of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Jesus Christ, The Word that came not only from our Father’s Mind but also from His Sacred Heart; O meek and humble of Heart, make our hearts like unto Thine. Amen.

O Jesus Christ, every time I come to You in the Holy Eucharist, I invite You into my heart and ask You to share Your meal with me at my house until You invite me to Your house in Heaven. I ask You to fill my hunger as Your meal is satisfying and everlasting, and remove my thirst as You are the Living Water. O God, fill us with Your Holy Spirit and let us stand firm in our faith in Jesus Christ Your Beloved and only Son. Amen.

My Lord, Your crown of thorns is a crown of flowers with beautiful aroma as the aroma of the Myrrh on my sinful body. Thank You. Amen.

O God, Heavenly Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name, I kneel before You as Saint Paul did and pray to You as Saint Paul prayed for the Ephesians: “In the abundance of Your Glory may You, through Your Holy Spirit, enable us to grow firm in power with regard to our inner self, so that Jesus Christ may live in our hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, we will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; so that, knowing the love of Jesus Christ, which is beyond knowledge, we may be filled with the utter fullness of You. Glory be to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to God from generation to generation in the church and in Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.”

O God, increase in our hearts our love to You and make us worthy to pray Our Lord’s Prayer in words and deeds every day of our lives. Amen.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Lord of the Harvest, Who is thirsty for our souls, please kindle more hearts to work into Your field wholeheartedly. Amen.

O grain of wheat, a dicotyledonous seed yet one, O seed, fruit and food all in one, which came down from heaven, fell into the earth and became the capstone and corner-stone that was rejected by the builders, the First and the Last, be my spiritual food and the platform of my house, and make me yield the fruit that is accepted by my Father and is pleasing to Him. Make my heart a home for His Word that happily sings the hymns of His Glory. Amen.

Please God, don't let the anger and pride in me blow a wind on the candle You've enlightened with Your passion and love. Lord, You are the flame of my candle that provide me with light and warmth through my journey in this dark tunnel until I reach the end of it where Your Light and Glory shine forever.

Teach me Lord to accept others as You accepted me, a sinner, and to deny myself and carry my cross and follow You into Heaven. Strengthen with Your pain my personality not in the way the world see a strong personality (becoming a wolf), but in the way that pleases Your Eyes to become one of Your children: merciful, meek, humble, compassionate and offer myself for the sake of others (becoming a lamb). Amen.

“O Holy Soul of my Savior, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, transform me. Water flowing from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus hear me. Within Your wounds hide and shelter me. Suffer me never to be separated from You. From the evil enemy defend me. At the hour of my death call me, and bid me come to You, that with Your saints, I may praise You for all eternity”. Amen.

Dear God, have mercy on me and make me understand that I am worth nothing in comparison to others, and my heart will be pleased to walk humbly by Your Side to serve You through others. Amen.

Our Father in Heaven, please fill our hearts with a steadfast love to You so that we can say as what is written in the scroll of the book about Your Son/Children: “My delight is to do Your Will; Your Law, my God, is deep in my heart”. Amen.

O Eternal Father, earth is full with dry wood and requires water to become green to stand in the way of the fire of the evil spirits. Pour out heavy rain to strengthen our faith, and unite us with the pouring of Your Holy Spirit who make us prisoners to Your love. We ask this in the Name Of Jesus Christ Your beloved Son who reign with You and The Holy Spirit One God. Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, Your Breath is the origin of all creation; help us to be faithful to You by pouring into our hearts Your Love that gives us the power to be Your Children, Followers of Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Holy Mary, Mother of God, please pray for me that I would love others from all my heart, and turn my enemies (if any) into relatives and friends by forgiving, so that we all become one body with Jesus Christ Your Son as the 'Head of the Body' and its 'Pure Heart' glorifying God by word, thought and deeds. Amen.

O God, make me a feather in Your Hands and a feather in Your wind not knowing what to say or write or where to go but completely surrender to Your Will for Your Glory. Amen.

O Lord, turn our hearts towards Your love and make us surrender to You as it is through Your Sacred Heart we will go into Heaven. All praise and thanks is Yours now and forever. Amen.

Our Father Who are in Heaven, I wish if you make me one of the angels who are serving you; but if there is no place for me, then I wish if You accept me as one of the uncountable souls who kneel in front of Your Divine Throne; but if there is no place for me, then I wish if You make me a servant for these souls; but if there is no place for me, then I wish if You make me a sacrifice to be fed by all these souls so I can be part of each one of them and You will see me in everyone of them and I will see You through everyone of them. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the 'Meek and Humble Heart' that you have given us to look at and adore, and with this Heart we will praise Your Holy Name forever. Amen.

O Jesus Christ, come and fill our hearts with Your Unconditional Love so that we can all pray: May Your Sacred Heart be blessed and praised at all times and in all hearts; O Sacred Heart of Jesus we trust in You. Amen.

Dear God, through the actions of the Saints real meaning of Christianity is demonstrated to the lost lambs and non-believers, may You provide us with true commitment to follow Your Word and proclaim Your Holy Name to all nations. Amen.

O God, through Your Holy Spirit, let us bless one another with words of peace, merciful thoughts and actions of love; we ask this in the Name of Your Beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Your Mercy I put my trust, O Lord; I trust that You can cure both the victim and the killer before it is too late cause You are so Merciful and You don't want any soul to be lost. Arm me God with Your Holy Spirit to be one of Your children and a good shepherd leading my children to happiness in Your presence rather than taking them to sadness in the slaughter. Amen.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the Precious Gift You gave us on Christmas Day. A Gift that we have started unwrapping when Your Beloved Son was born, and day after day we come to see its beauty and enjoy the unending springs of Living Water that came out of it; day after day we are amazed and delighted by receiving the promise You gave to Isaiah. As, with faith, we can see in the Holy Eucharist the Transfigured Jesus Christ standing with a bowl of Living Water in His Hands, giving His "Holiness and Love", "Wisdom, Mercy and Divine Providence", "Forgiveness, Counsel and Peace", and "Power over Satan and evil spirits" to each one of us and asking us to give it to others.

"O God grant us to speak as You would wish and conceive thoughts worthy of the gifts we have received, since You are both guide to Wisdom and director of sages; for we are in Your Hand, yes, ourselves and our sayings, and all intellectual and all practical knowledge. O God of our ancestors, Lord of Mercy, grant us Wisdom, consort of Your Throne, to be Your children, Your servants; we ask this through Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen"

Our Father in Heaven, how amazing is Your Love for us though we are sinners; how amazing are Your ways in teaching us Your Love; how amazing are Your precepts that Your Holy Spirit imprint in our hearts, unite us and make us Your children; how amazing are Your gifts that purify us, give us a share of Your Holy Spirit and empower us to be Your witnesses on earth. All praise, all blessings and all thanksgiving is Yours: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit one God. Amen.

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever Amen."

My God, Heavenly Father, by the power of Your Holy Spirit lead us to the fullness of Light and Truth and let us taste the sweetness of the true wisdom of Your Word and be embraced always with Your Divine Providence in Jesus Christ Your beloved Son Who reign with You and The Holy Spirit One God. Amen.

O God, some people cannot love You as a Father, so I ask you to let Your Holy Spirit dwell in our heart, so that we can call You with full confidence and with all our heart say: Father, I love you and look forward to seeing You and living in Your House forever. Amen.

O God, give us the grace to enter Your House on earth and enjoy being one of 'The Family' without looking at others how they are coming. Enlighten us until we see Your Love & Mercy above any action and become blind by Your Light to start seeing others through Your Eyes, through Your Sacred Heart. Amen.

O God, Your Sanctuary is the pride of our strength, the delight of our eyes, and the joy of our soul as You told Your prophet Ezekiel. Amen.

O God, give us the honour to be ambassadors to Your Love and Mercy and be a mirror to Your Glory, we ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

O God, You are Holy; create in us a new self, a new heart, and help us to become holy, we ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

O God, in my life I carry three vessels in one. I ask You Father to take the vessel of my being (pride, envy, self-seeking glory, vanity, and possessiveness) and empty it and fill it with Your own glory, power, and love. I ask You Jesus Christ Son of God to fill my vessel of my purpose in life with love to sacrifice oneself for the sake of God and His children (similar to the vessel that You drank from if it is Your will) to drink it and follow You. I ask You Holy Spirit to fill the vessel of my heart with good charity work (for body and soul) that would show others my Father's Love. Amen.

O my God, what have we done? How can we teach our children to love You if we cannot love each other? Please forgive our sin and help us to put things back into order; and with Your Holy Spirit change the stumbling stones (if not a mountain), that we put in the way of our children, to dust to enable them to reach You. Dear God, I trust in what You told the Prophet Isaiah that we should not be afraid and You help us as our Redeemer is You, The Holy One of Israel. Please, come to our hearts, don't lead us into temptation, save us from the time of trial, deliver us from evil and bless our homes in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear God, please keep our house united with the bonds of Your love and Your Spirit so that we can be part of Your Heart and be fruitful to please You as the Holy Family of Bethlehem, we ask this in the Name of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

“O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep all Thy priests within the shelter of Thy Sacred Heart, where none may harm them. Keep unstained their anointed hands which daily touch Thy Sacred Body. Keep unsullied their lips purpled with Thy Precious Blood. Keep pure and unearthly their hearts, sealed with the sublime marks of Thy glorious priesthood. Let Thy holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion. Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they have ministered be here below their joy and consolation and in Heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown. Amen.”

“Heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, Lord of the harvest Who desire that all may be saved, the harvest is plentiful but laborers are few. Oh Sacred Heart of Jesus Who is full of love for the children, we humbly ask You to increase in the whole world the number of faithful and zealous laborers from young boys and men. Please enkindle their generous and pure hearts by the Power of Your Holy Spirit with Your Divine Love so that they may yield unconditionally to Your Divine service. Provide them with Your Divine help so that no earthly desires will stop them from Your service till their death. Amen.”

Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, King of kings, have mercy on me a sinner, and grant me Your pardon. Amen and Amen.

O Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Creation, may every soul cry to You and say: “In You we find our delight”. Amen.

© God, my soul is my heart, my inner self, please make it Yours. Amen



© God when people prayed to you: Pure heart create in me O Lord, and a resolute Spirit renew within me as in Psalm 51:10, You responded as in Your promise to Your servant Ezekiel and gave us a heart of flesh and let Your Spirit dwell in us. Thanks, Amen”

“Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, so that you will love Yahweh with all your heart and soul, and so will live.”

Deuteronomy 30:6

“What we have heard and know, what our ancestors have told us we shall not conceal from their descendants, but will tell to a generation still to come: The praises of God, His power, the wonderful deeds He have done, He instituted a witness in Jacob, He established a law in Israel, He commanded our ancestors to hand it down to their descendants, that a generation still to come might know it, children yet to be born.

They should be sure to tell their own children, and should put their trust in God, never forgetting God’s great deeds, always keeping His command.”

Psalms 78: 3-7

Amen and Amen. Alleluia. 



"O Lord, My Strength is from You. Amen"