

Family Has Mission Duty

Following is an excerpt from the Holy Father's stated missionary intention for this month, "That Christian families be filled with the missionary spirit."

The missionary obligation of the whole Church implies the missionary obligation of the Christian family. This alone would be enough to make our own the missionary intention of the Apostleship of Prayer for the month of August. This doctrine, accentuated by Vatican II and

already an invariable, is ever more explicit and insistent in the documents of the Church.

In "Evangelii Nuntiandi," Pope Paul VI speaks of the evangelizing radiation of the family: "One cannot fail to stress the evangelizing action of the family in the evangelizing apostolate of the laity. At different moments in the Church's history and also in the Second Vatican Council, the family has well deserved the beautiful name of "Domestic Church." This

means that there should be found in every Christian family the various aspects of the entire Church. Furthermore, the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates."

It is difficult to attempt to say more about the motivation and the implications of the evangelizing mission of the family. In its context, it is identified with the mission of the Church. Matrimony is the sign and the participation of the love of Christ for his Church. Someone has noted that this expression with regard to St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, occurs 21 times in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The Christian Family, as a "Domestic Church," the cell and the basis of the Church, the People of God, has the same mission as the Church to evangelize. It has the responsibility to educate in the faith, even in the case of a mixed marriage. "Families resulting from a mixed marriage also have the duty of proclaiming Christ to the children in the fullness of the consequences of a common Baptism."

The Christian Family, therefore, must be aware of its responsibility of being a stimulus for the transformation of society. Pastoral activity must seek to integrate the entire family in the missionary action of the Church, in its universal dimension; because as it is the "Domestic Church," it must be the educator of the local and the Universal Church.

The missionary animation of the family requires the missionary animation of catechesis and of the pastoral activity for the family. Catechesis is the complement of the first announcement of the Gospel and the necessary means for deepening the faith and giving it full ecclesial maturity along with the related missionary implication.

This important catechetical education of the family implies that the family itself also has a concrete responsibility in the formation of the missionary conscience of those to whom catechetical action is directed.

It is (also) evident that the Christian family is the nursery

of vocations. The Christian hearth and home is the place where, to a large extent, the problem of vocations and in particular of missionary vocations, is resolved. Missionary animation which arouses and nourishes the missionary spirit of Christian families; prepares the soil where vocations germinate.

The Christian family, animated by a missionary spirit is not something new. Let us say, first of all, that the vocation of the great majority of the missionary men and women in the course of the centuries-long history of the Church, was formed and developed in the fertile soil of the family hearth. The majority of the catechists, these pioneers of missionary evangelization, what are they, in great part, if not the expressions of families who feel and live in an attitude of missionary service?

The progressive participation of the laity in the missionary activity of the Church is frequently expressed in the missionary service of young married spouses, of couples, of entire families who with their testimony of a Christian and missionary family life are a strong call to a life of matrimony in communion with Christ. In addition, missionary couples are a powerful inducement to all Christian families to a life of missionary collaboration and cooperation.



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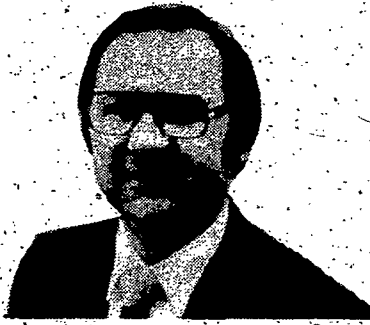
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However, for the bereaved — who are often attempting to deny the death of their loved one — confronting the fact of death by viewing the body is most important. Denial is natural reaction to the death of someone close to us — but if this denial is continued, it can be mentally damaging. The viewing of the body is an important step toward accepting the fact of death.

There are no simple ways to work through the days and weeks after the death of a loved one. But there are steps that can be taken to help release grief and emotion — and, through our years of experience, we are familiar with many of them. If we can answer for you, at any time, please call any member of our staff.

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An active churchwoman, Mrs. Bodnar has taught in the Pre-Cana program of the Diocese of Rochester. In 1976, she was co-author of a report, "Current Roles of Women in the Catholic Church," a project sponsored by the Rochester Regional Task Force on Women in the Church and the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

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