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THE AFRICAN FAMILY BEFORE AND  
AFTER INDUSTRIALIZATION

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
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Presented by  
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To educate the Family is to Educate the  
entire Nation and;

"Let him who is taught the Word share all  
good things with him who teaches" [Gal.6:6]

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May God bless them all. Amen.

Student's Declaration

The African Family Before and  
After Industrialization

by

EPAJJA CONSTANTINE

I declare here that this Thesis is my original work and that  
it has not been submitted to any University for academic Credit.

Signed:

fc (E. Pajja)

Date:

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1992

Dedication:

This work is dedicated with much gratitude to:  
All families in the world especially,

My parents

S. Eilor and A. Abujje:

My Brothers and Sisters;

and my friends

who assisted me to develop

the art of Critical Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

I intend in this paper to explore and show how life was lived in the African Traditional family community before the period of industrialization. What the African concept sustained and helped the extended family to survive and fulfill her moral duties.

In chapter four I shall discuss the place of material possessions in the African traditional family. The origin of material things and the role it played in the family community: it enhanced the value, respect and dignity of both the individual and community, of both the poor and rich, and indeed of the stranger. The Supreme being and their ancestors blessed an individual with material property, so it was understood that the property was to be used to help the needy members in the community. Failure to do so would anger the Supreme Being and ancestors. Consequently, people cared for one another and shared their material things. A spirit absent today at the age of industrialization whereby people are more individualistic

Having done that, then I shall also show ways in which the modern view of life is increasingly becoming focused on the acquisition of material things for meaningful life, hence subsequent erosion of moral standards of the past. How material things which enhanced the respect and dignity of the human person, has also contributed to the downfall of the human vocation - to live in the very freedom of the children of God.

When God according to Genesis, created the world saw that it was good, then he entrusted it to the human race, it was to serve

the ongoing development of that race into a community of material exchange and growing complicity.

Yet all material property put into human hands immediately acquire a certain ambivalence. They can be either used to build up relationships as God intended, or they can be turned into instruments of division and violence.

It is true that due to Western influence, the world is becoming more secularized and individualistic, with very little focus, concern paid to the humane and spiritual dimensions of human existence. In the African traditional family community there never existed a distinction between the Sacred and Secular. The basis of traditional morality lay in the firm belief in the unity of the universe. The unity of the universe defied any attempt separate secular from Sacred.

I am also aware in this paper that my recommendations of having a new look back at old attitudes to material things, moral values in African traditional family, is not a romantic call to a return to an ancient form of life. Certainly industrialization is a positive sign that man obeys the commandment of God of subjecting the earth to himself and so improve the standards of living. But because of the daily experience, African families are becoming more and more secularized and the African child is loosing contact with traditional culture and values. It is helpful to re-examine once more the African traditional family values before industrialization to discover what lessons can sustain African family today and enhance concern for others especially those lacking the basic human

necessities of life. Many have values which modern society, family needs and certainly western societies need to learn so as to move towards liberation and more humane modes of life.

Industrialization has caused many challenges today to the African modern family. Challenges such as the weakening of the African Family communal life of the past and replaced it with inhuman structures as I shall show in the following chapters.

Also in chapter three I shall discuss the values with which the extended African family respected and nurtured children with great honour. The life of a child was much loved to the extent that any act of abuse done to the child such as prostitution and rape, was severely punishable. For that reason, child abuse was rarely unheard of in the past family, incomparable to what is happening to the contemporary child. Then chapter five I will give the teaching of the Church on Family, marriage and children which is compatible with my earlier treatise. Finally, I shall offer a critical evaluation on Family as a Universal phenomena, hence drawing some pastoral suggestive guidelines for pastors, parents, leaders and indeed, for all those who are invloped in Family education, catechesis and evangelization.

I would like to sum up my introductory words with a quotation of the Pope's opening homily of the African Synod as a Preliminary insight and Foundation of my paper:

"The sons and daughters of Africa love life. It is precisely this love for life which leads them to give such great importance to the Veneration of their ancestors . The believe instinctively that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them. Is

this not in some way a preparation for belief in the communion of Saints? The People of Africa respect their life which is conceived and born. They rejoice in this life. They reject the idea that it can be destroyed, even when the so-called "Progressive Civilizations" would like to lead them in this direction. And practices hostile to life are imposed on them by means of economic systems which serve the selfishness of the rich"<sup>1</sup>

The Pope continued in these words,

We are pleased to notice that opening up towards life is one of the most beautiful and typical features of the African continent, on the other hand, we are very sorry and worried to see that this continent is torn apart by old tension and bloody wars. We can only be deeply struck and upset by this dramatic contrast between love and hate, between joy to live and terror, between solidarity and fratricide, between life and death"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The African Synod. Pope's opening Homily message of the Synod Message of the AMECEA and IMBSISA bishops 1994 number 3, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. number 4, P5f.

## CHAPTER ONE

### I. THE AFRICAN CONCEPT OF FAMILY

The African understanding of family is more broader than the Western. The African family includes parents, children, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandparents, departed relatives always linked to a common ancestor and also those yet to be born. This concept is what is known as the African extended family, the family at large. The western family concept includes the parents and children only, what is called the nuclear family.

#### (a) Kinship and its Determinant Factors

The African Kinship illustrates the different branches of one's family tree. It shows ways by which one person may be related to another, Kinship bears a profound significance because it reveals a well deep rooted sense of Community life, of togetherness, of interrelatedness existing between people in the African family Community.

So the individual person in the African family community is never isolated. He does not exist alone since the ultimate reason of his being is because others are. Professor Mbiti supports the relationship between an individual and community with his philosophical formula: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am"<sup>3</sup> All relatives in the family community have duties

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<sup>3</sup>Mbiti, J.S. "Introduction to African Religion" (Second edition, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1975), p.108.

and responsibilities towards one another. Also in African family are hierarchical status that are highly valued. The hierarchy is based on age and degree of Kinship. The eldest member for example in the family community, has a higher social status than the youngest member. The hierarchy has assigned duties and privileges such as looking after children, medically, educationally, maintenance of unity and peace within the family clan. These obligations and privileges are dictated often by the moral sense of a family. The children as well have duties towards their parents; looking after their aging parents, give them a descent burial. But on the other hand, children have their rights which their parents should fulfil towards them. Right to education, shelter, good health and so on. In chapter three I shall develop more about the duties and rights of parents and children.

There are factors that determine Kinship:

Consanguinity: It is how one person is directly related to one another by blood bond linked to a common descent which is recognizable in individuals like brothers, sisters.

Marriage ties: Is a type of relationship existing between two people who together with their families agree and so establish many new relationships.

Also in the African context whereby people who are living together at places of work are considered to be related to one another.

Therefore, the African concept of family as kinship is a vast net-work that stretches both horizontally and vertically.

Horizontally it spreads to a given group of people, village by which everybody is related to every one else. Vertically it includes the deceased and those to be born. The understanding of family as kinship gives the basis for naming children after their ancestors in order to perpetuate the relationship, which is an assurance of lineage continuity. It is why the children were taught the customs about the genealogy of ancestry, a tremendous help in building up and elaborating of the family sense of belongingness, of interrelatedness.

The African Family as such, is an active entity of great and central significance to all her members. This is so by virtue of the intimately deep rooted relationships that there is in the family unit and the resultant freedom and chance for spontaneity. The family provides the most basic social entity between man and society. The most considered task and opportunity of the African traditional family, is the comprehensive realization of personal self-reliance, together with the ready acceptance of responsibility for others and the whole family community. That is why Adolph Kolping (who) has been called the Apostle of the Family remarked: "The Family, is man's first experience in life and the last to which he extends his hand, and his most precious possession"<sup>4</sup>

**(b) The Moral significance of African Kinship System:**

The African traditional thought pattern has always comprehended the reality of life within the extended family

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<sup>4</sup>Adolph, Kolping. "Family: the best teacher of humanity (Kolpingwerk, 1959), p.3

community, not outside it. The child who is born to a family community is a gift precious to the parents, immediate brothers , sisters, and to the larger family. The child because was a precious gift to the extended family, was well treasured and cared and protected, unlike in the modern family as shall show where exists child abuse such as rape, prostitution and so on, totally a thing unheard of in the African past family. Kirwen Michael supports the above point I have discussed about the value of a child in the African traditional family in the following words: "The life force of a baby grows and increases only with the care of the family. It is clear to all that the nurture of this one new life is a nurturing of life itself- the great gift of God given to the Family to be shared. Human life and growth are inconceivable without the family community. The family community is the greatest asset to humankind. There is no identity outside the family."<sup>5</sup> That is the reason why always a human person should live in fellowship with family community, for good life is with and among people, your own people.

The birth of a child provides an opportunity for the community to celebrate life, is a family affair and not a Private business. The community leaders for the good security of the life of a child, are given the responsibility of ensuring the sacred character of child's life through different rituals surrounding periods of pregnancy, birth and childhood and adulthood. These

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<sup>5</sup>Kirwen, Michael "The Missionary and the Diviner: Contending African and Christian Theologies". (New York: Orbis 1989) P.72

practices explicitates the reality that for an African essentially, existence is to exist in family community, besides it one becomes a non-entity.

Further evidence of the previous point is that the individual person in the African traditional family, lives in the presence of the Supreme Being, of the living-dead and that of the living community to which he belongs. The point here is that, for an African family includes both the living and what professor Mbiti has called the "Living-Dead",<sup>6</sup> The ancestors in order to carefully retain the relationship, the ceremony called the overcoming of the grave, domesticate the ancestor, bringing home the deceased is resurrected whereby can again participate more in the life of the family.

The African traditional family was basically a life characterized by the spirit of sharing the material property or other goods. Those whom the Supreme Being and the ancestors had blessed with property were morally obliged to share with the needy in their family community. The Spirit of sharing of material things was backed up by the very fact that even the living dead also shared with the living, so the living in turn were obliged to share with the living dead. There existed a real exchange of sharing.

The Africans because they understood life as a community gift, determined by the Spirit of sharing motivated each family member to

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<sup>6</sup>Mbiti, J.S. "African Religion and Philosophy. (New York: Praeger., 1969) P. 83.

be responsible for every other, and is obligated to provide for the welfare of the other member. Again for the same reason that one can not be individualistic and so live in isolation from ancestors or needy community member, since that in itself will be viewed as anti-social behaviour. A behaviour that befits only for either a witch or a sorcerer. Certainly, it was no doubt that, that was a way of living in which members became keepers of one another because ancestors by means of power had demanded it to be effected.

Indeed when a child was born, it was born to a family of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles and so on. It was a large family whereby there was no distant relative and every family member was at home in every part of the family community. This essential sense of belonging together, of being a family of related persons much facilitated family members to share what they had with the needy in the community, such as, the needy cousin, nephew, or aunt even if the parents of these persons are still alive. The ancestors for it were firmly believed would not sympathize with a family member who deliberately would ignore the sufferings or the needs of another member of the family community. It was the reason why that within the extended family system members ate together from the same plate. And even uncles, aunts treated the children of their brothers and sisters as their very own.

The nuclear families in traditional family understanding was thought and considered selfish and individualistic. Whereas in the later it was the duty of the parents to sustain the extended family

together. Family heads ensured that every member of the family had food, clothing, clean water to drink, a piece of land to plough and also the means by which to plough and the seeds for planting. The ideal head of the family fostered the family unity and peace for the welfare, promotion of equality of life for all.

Besides the concern for the members of the extended family community, even strangers were catered for. A complete stranger was possible for him to become a part of the family and in that due respect would be given to cultivate and even be permitted to get married within the family.

Above all else, the family concept and the concern which was extended to the level of either the Chief or King. For that reason, the family community was seen as part of the national family community. The chief or the King Symbolised a common descent for all persons in the chieftainship or kingdom. He linked the entire nation to the ancestors and through them essentially to God. That was why there was in the traditional family community a common usage of property. There was no common ownership of property. The individual who owned a field, cattle, goats and domestic equipment true, but could still share them with the needy. To the very extent that they shared their material things, the reality also that the rich persons became insurance against insecurity for any member of the family community. This kind of loving relationships of sharing as I shall discuss soon, is rare in today's modern families due to a number of factors.

## CHAPTER TWO

### II THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN WORLD VIEW:

In this chapter I shall expound the African traditional world-view because it is the very basis of the traditional family morality. Then in the second section I will deal with the past African Family morals, its education and the underlying reasons why such moral values were essentially upheld.

The eyes of an African sees the world as made up of the supernatural- invisible realities, the world of human beings, that of plants, animals, the earth, stars, moon and other beings. It was believed that all of these different realities together belonged by the virtue of their having been created and sustained by God. They have their unity from the common origin which forms the basis of traditional family morality.

Hence, as already mentioned in the previous chapter and so mention here again for the sake of clarity - that the basis of the African traditional morality is in the belief in the unity of the cosmos. The unity of the cosmos defies any attempt to separate the secular from the sacred. This, Taylor rightly observed: "No distinction can be made between Sacred and Secular, between natural and supernatural, for nature, man and the invisible are inseparably enveloped in one another in a total community"<sup>1</sup> More of this shall

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, J.V. "Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion". (London: SCM press. 1963), P.63

be dealt under the family challenges today, a comparison between city life-style and village life style.

Mbiti on the same point remarked: "Religion permeates all aspects of traditional life, traditional world view is thoroughly religious"<sup>2</sup> Religion determines attitudes and relationships of people towards material things and consequently how they should be used,, it is an integral part of daily life.

The traditional metaphysics has its essence in the belief of the supreme being (God) who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. The spirit of the ancestors, is meant to ensure a justice in the distribution of material goods. Earlier on I stressed the communitarian spirit of sharing of material goods in the African traditional family with those who are needy, which was the will of the Supreme being and of the ancestors. In chapter four I shall deal with the topic of material things in the African traditional family and show how they have posed challenges to the family today. However, from above is understood that the African traditional family morality was sanctioned by the invisible powers that were believed to be a vital part of the community of the living.

#### **(a) The African Family Morals before Industrialization**

The basic concepts of personalization and socialization of the individual in and through the family community is the function of

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<sup>2</sup>Mbiti, J.S. "African Religion and philosophy" (New York: Praeger, 1969), p.48f

the parents and of other family members whose moral conduct was exemplary. A witch or sorcerer for example would never have been allowed to educate the youth in moral life.

The traditional Africa Family morality was strongly based on and supported by the world-view that recognized the fundamental unity of the Cosmos and the corporate nature of human society and of the spiritual realities. The ultimate objective of this kind of moral education was to cultivate an integral society and the individual. The popular belief and expectation of family that it should produce a people who are well integrated with themselves and the environment as well.

(b) The African Traditional Family Moral Education

As I have just hinted above that the traditional African Family moral education imparted to the youth, ensured both the integrity of the society and of the individual. Then one would certainly affirm that the family educated her people for life and for her own welfare. That is to say that it necessarily emphasized the ardent need for people to be the best that they could be. Here, I do not mean that in the past people were completely morally very good. There also existed immoral people, but were sharply dealt with.

On the other hand, I intend to highlight the point that the traditional African family community moral education had a value, unlike our present educational system. They formed and aimed at producing persons who upheld and treasured those values helpful to

the community, society and the individual remain integrated. Since the family is defined by the kind of individuals constituting it. The person reflects the family background he comes from. It was then for this reason and others that the family moral education laboured at inculcating personality values, the kind which enabled both community and the individual to be self integrated.

Some of the traditional African family moral values cultivated for the integration of community, society and individual personality were: Peace and harmony, paying authority due respect, respect for and fear of supernatural realities, no giving and receiving of bribes, children cared for their aging parents, parents cared for their children, no stealing and violent robberies as today, no reckless driving, respect for one another, stressed hard work, since it was highly valued, no promiscuous behaviour, had a sense of personal and public accountability, honesty and reliability, generosity, courage, temperance and humility, justice, charity, trust, truth telling, hospitality to relatives, friends and strangers too.

• The above named basic moral values and duties were taught and practiced in the family community. The nature of their quality was considerably dependent upon the intimate depth of relational network in which a human being found himself right from birth onward.

**(c) Reasons why a Good Moral Conduct was Stressed:**

There were many good reasons besides what I give here as to why the African traditional family community essentially insisted for her members to cultivate moral values such as of honesty, hospitality, charity, solidarity and so on.

The Communal life needed these moral values because they fostered and supported the community spirit of mutual understanding among members of the extended family.

When these moral values were observed well, as a result was the enjoyed peace and harmony in the family community. The observance of law facilitated good governing of both society and family community.

These moral values also helped the promotion of brotherhood Spirit among people, as it was evident in the fact that they cared for one another by sharing material goods, hence this reduced the risks of exploitation in the family community and society. The day-to-day lives of the People were directed by these moral values. People were honest to one another both in word and deed. It ensured equality in material sharing.

For those who desired to become elders in the family community, these moral values were essentially required for effective leadership. A type of leadership that took into account of the values, dignity and respect of the human person and the common good, of the community and of the individual and society.

The fact that there existed in the family community a good moral relationship between man and man, as realized in the

equitable distribution and sharing of the material goods, this also guaranteed good harmony between man and the supreme being and the ancestors, who are the ultimate owners of material goods.

The daily experience in relationships taking place among people in the family community, challenged and motivated people to have a sense of good moral living. They knew that those who were well mannered were highly respected by family members and society at large. For both individual and family community it provided them with a better prestige. Morals essentially motivated and intensified family community into a corporate unity.

By these morals the youth were shaped and sharpened, tuned to being responsible persons in the community and society.

Besides that, a certain aspect of fear was present and experienced among those who aimed at a good moral conduct in the family: the family community had regulations which dealt with social outcasts (immoral) members in the community. Any deviance found, was severely punishable. So people feared to behave immorally lest they be either so-called or excommunicated from the family life. The immoral, that is, the neglects of morals were thus despised and malady could befall them anytime, that it was believed. The community also feared the immoral people because were viewed as social evil for the extended family. And usually at their death immoral people never received any decent burial from their family members and society. What was equally believed was that such immoral people would never join the ancestors in the hereafter, in the world to come.

On the contrary, a good moral life well lived in the family community and society, automatically ensured for the individual a good position in the social, economic, political and above all, in the religious spheres of life. One would be given for example a descent burial when he dies and would in the next world be in total communion with the ancestors. And also such a person would be perpetually remembered among his living members as realized in the naming of children after his own name. He becomes a source of blessing to the extended family and with the passage of time he would also be ranked among the ancestors because he had lived a morally good life and died a good death. For among others, these are some of the criteria used determine one as an ancestor in the extended family.

## CHAPTER THREE

### III CHILDREN IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

It was seen and considered as disastrous for the couple, extended family and the clan, childless marriage. The main aim of marriage was to bear children, for the bearing of children was extensively regarded as a sacred duty. Indeed as a divine will to be carried out by all those who were normal individuals in the family.

The family in itself was crucial, basic in the African traditional societies. The extended family and fertility in marriage was looked upon as an honour in the traditional societies. That is why there were rituals and taboos surrounding fertility, pregnancy and the birth of a child, have existed for ages. Bujo therefore, stresses the African values of fertility in these words: "Another African value to emphasize is fertility. An infertile marriage is almost inconceivable in Africa because the innate reason of marriage is the prolongation of the life of the clan..... The stress put on fertility, gives honour to the mother and father and explains, on the other hand, the disgrace befalling on sterile woman or man incapable of generating."<sup>1</sup>

There were a number of reasons supporting the bearing of

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<sup>1</sup>Bujo, B. "African Christian Morality at the Age of inculturation" (St. Pauls, Nairobi, 1990), p.54

children as the crown of marriage. The children was believed continued the family lineage and prolonged the life of their parents. A family without children was doomed to come one day to non existence. Children especially the heirs had the responsibility and duty to care for their old-weak parents. The duties of parents and children towards each other I shall develop in the subsequent pages.

The children in a family defined the status of a woman. Her entire life was centred on her children. Children were greatly valued because the wealth of a man much depended on the number of wives and children he had. It was the children who sealed the marriage of couples and so would be very rare for such a marriage to disintegrate. That considered, children were natural fruits of love worthy cherishing and nurturing with great care.

(a) The Responsibility of Parents towards their Children

The African extended family structure, had dignity and worth, support and a warm climate, for every person. In order to maintain the relationship network every person was taught important roles. The extended family also had a strict Code of relationships within which parents and children developed special relationships. These relationships much depended on how parents exercised their love for and authority over their children. But generally relationships fostered order and harmony.

The parents primarily cared for the holistic development of

their children that is, psychologically, biologically, socially, economically and spiritually. In all these different aspects of life the parents made sure that their children were well informed and prepared for the different states of life they would engage themselves. But the obvious one was the marriage institution to raise children who would perpetuate the clan lineage. It was the ideal expected of every boy and girl to do and participate in the family life. The parents looked after children, protected them from every harm and provided them with the appropriate education. It was a sacred trust for which parents made great sacrifices for the well-being of their children. The modern family today is being confronted and is experiencing rapid social, economic and cultural changes. The parents are faced with this awful situation because they are no longer able to play effectively those roles of the past family. The traditional principle of pragmatism which governed beliefs and practices in relation to the family life, of sexuality and reproduction is quickly fading away. Kilbrides expresses the dilemma of family life and sexual morality in East Africa in these words: "Practical education in proverbs and folktale, social consensus and contextual consideration by elders of moral rule violation are being replaced by western colonial-derived standards of right and wrong! One of the consequences of such moral delocalisation is ..... on increase of premarital pregnancies and without doubt the now common and largely undesired social situation

of raising children out of wedlock by parents and grandparents.<sup>2</sup> There is today a general lack of Personal discipline in the area of sexuality. This is because the traditional family moral influence of parents and extended family at home has been weakened by the sexual permissiveness caused by technological advancement. This point shall be expounded in details later.

**(b) The duties and rights of Children**

Children growing up in the traditional African extended family were aware of their duties and responsibilities towards their parents, grandparents sisters, brothers, departed, unborn and everyone else for that matter. The children had to pay obedience, respect, love, gratitude and honesty to their parents who gave them life, and other people especially in their old and weakly state of life. The children also had a religious duty of decently burrying their parents after their death, to remember them and taking care of their graves. In this way they were able to maintain a healthy relationship with the ancestral spirits of their dead parents. In return of this the ancestral spirits would bless their children with material goods, good health and death, but above all they would be blessed with many children.

Naturally besides duties to their parents and parents towards children the children have the right to their basic human needs belonging to each in this world. The right to education, a descent

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<sup>2</sup>Kilbride and Kilbrides . "The Changing Family life in East Africa". (USA. The Pennsylvania State University, 1990) p.179.

kind of living such as enough food, medical facilities, right to shelter and to some personal property. It is the duties of parents to try all their very best to fulfill the rights of their children.

As we know today it is the children and the women who are most vulnerable, they are often easily exploited and abused because the Public deprive them their rights to personal property, the right to freedom of speech and of belief and the right to privacy. And yet rightly so every human being, children inclusive, can claim this or that as his own because as a person these are his rights, for rights are inalienable.

**(d) The Child abuse today - causes**

In the previous sections I highlighted that in the traditional African extended family, children were a precious gift that God and the ancestors blessed the couples, extended family and the clan with. The parents had the responsibility to care well for their children in all aspects of life so that they become beneficial persons in the family community and society at large. The care of the children, the parents understood and treasured it as a sacred trust for which they sacrificed greatly. Generally, children in the African extended family were highly respected for what they were understood to be a God given gift to the family. Because of this what is so rampant today, the violence, exploitation and abandonment of children, was totally unheard of in the African extended family. A crime done to children was understood as a crime against the divine law, the law of God, since children were

the blessing of God. The child of today is loosing its value, respect and dignity, they are abused in so many ways legalized rape, sold, abandonment and killed.

Those who are the abusers of children are many, in the families and society. They include mothers (for example a mother in order to earn money decides to sell her daughter for sex to a man) parents, grandparents, stepmothers, stepfathers and the child caretakers.

The causes that lead to child abuse today are many in nature and scope. They originate from both family and the society of the particular child. Causes such as stress, early parenthood prostitution (institutionalized), crime, unemployment, violence, transition and other general related economic hardships.

How does stress be a factor that leads to the abuse of a child? Experience today shows that many marriages are breaking down by either divorce or separation. The mothers in this condition have a tendency to neglect their children. The father who substitutes - the problem of widows inheritance, may be inclined to physically or sexually abuse their stepchildren. Large families facing economic and social stains tend to gravitate stress generation. As their material resources become low and are unable to provide for the basic human needs of the children, this often leads to all forms of child abuse.

It is most often those mothers who live in utter poverty, are not employed and might have moved to towns in search of jobs but eventually fail to be employed. As a consequence, they take up low

paying jobs like beer brewing petty trading without licenses, petty stealing and prostitution. Moverover, all of these jobs done are illegal. If they the mothers succeed in these petty jobs, only can afford to provide children with food, clothing but without education and other basic human needs. But if they are unfortunate and are caught by the police as it happens, they are put in and serve a prison sentence. Their children at home become neglected and abandoned.

Early parenthood where premarital sex is practiced especially many school girls, is a cause of child abuse today. There are many school girls who are drop outs because they are pregnant. They are chased away from school. These are often not skilled enough for competitive jobs. They become unemployed and in their obvious desperate needs, are capable and reliable of doing anything that will give them bread for the day. They may resort to prostitution which results in begetting more children. The unemployment is a contributive factor to all forms of child abuse one world imagine.

Families and societies have various forms of violence to children. Children may experience an aggressive behaviour from either their parents or other children. A father or mother may kill a member of the family before attempting or committing suicide. There are often people with criminal records of violence which are associated with the abuse of children. For a person who is violent can not be a useful person or child caretaker, whilst in rage can easily throw children through windows or doors harming them.

The African modern families today are faced with rapid and yet challenging transitions. Children are experiencing very challenging and threatening existence incomparable to the past. Though today there is an improved infant immortality rate, a better medical care and increased educational opportunities, but children still stand threatened by the human social environment. The environment tends to be more and more aggressive to children. The socio-economic factors are changing the kinship roles and the roles of women as wives and mothers. The modern industrial world has created an unfavorable climate for the children in Africa, and of course, of no less than to the children of the industrial west.

The family structures are changing and are being replaced by new ones. How households today are being headed by women both in urban and as well as in rural areas. The new assumed roles of women are causing much stress, as the support system of the past African extended family is worse. It is no longer available, is absent today. It is therefore, in such process as this that children fall a prey and suffer from the situation they are not responsible for its existence. They are violent victims of these circumstances.

Most mothers often are employed in order to support their children. They fight the poverty situations they are faced with. But they work far away from their homes and their children. While at places of work their attention often are divided between the satisfaction of the employer or of giving proper care to her growing children. As a solution to the dilemma mothers resort in

the employment of a child caretaker, who is to help in the nursing of children whilst they are out for work. Yet the type of relationship existent between the mother of the family household and the child caretaker greatly will determine the quality of care given to the children.

The emerging nuclear family today, is patterned on the western concept of love and marriage. This understanding of love and marriage is selfish and individualistic. It tends to isolate individuals from their extended families and the clan system of relationships. For that reason at a time of crisis today, individuals in the nuclear family have to draw from their own resources, rather than receiving mutual support of the extended family and of the clan as in the past. This is gone. The children are not completely secure in this kind of situation, are at the highest risk and thus, are vulnerable to every form of abuse, forms such as the following.

I have cited Kenya as example since I stay and do pastoral work here "There is in Kenya institutionalized prostitution. The prostitution of children is becoming a problem to get worried. The mean age of child prostitution is 11 years and the perpetrators are above 35 years, are married and with children of their own. Child prostitution, sex tourism and sex trafficking of children are growing in Africa but especially Kenya. The highest incidences of child sexual exploitation in Kenya are:

Nairobi (85%) Kiambu (75%), Malindi (72) Mombasa (81%),  
Kisumu (39%)

Kajiado (27%)<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the pleading words of the standard must be headed: "Prostitution among children aged below 15 years is increasing rapidly in Kenya. The stories of child abuse and teenage prostitution are numerous all over the country.... Our society has neglected the plight of the child. It has actually betrayed the child.... Yes our society, led by politicians, religious leaders and individual grown-ups have betrayed our children the innocent members of the society who once upon a time were so welcomed by the community and protected against abuse. Politicians, religious leaders, elders, teachers, doctors and social workers should all join hands in making sure that children are not exposed to the kind of open sexual abuse in our society today."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Hoiselbarth, H. Christian Ethics in the African Context (Uzima Press, Imani House, 1976) p.3.

<sup>4</sup>Asir, C. "Shame of our times", (The Standard, May 12, 1991) p.14.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### IV THE MATERIAL GOODS IN AN AFRICAN EXTENDED FAMILY

I have in the preceeding chapters already discussed the concept of the African family as being that of the community of human persons who are related. The solid sense of belongingness was vividly represented and realized by the kinship relationships. So because of the existence of the spirit of interrelatedness among people of the family community, this prompted and justified the outstanding African value, the value of shared material property. The sharing of material goods was strongly recommended by the supreme being, the ancestors because it were their blessing to the family members. In fact it was not only the family members who could be provided for, but also those who were strangers. If at all that it happened that the needy widows, orphans, children and strangers were neglected and not cared and provided for, such a conduct often displeased the supreme Being and ancestors. Property for that reason and others, in the African family community were used for the enhancement of the value and dignity of the human person.

The human person as testified by Psychologists have manifold needs such as safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. It is essential and desirable that all of these needs be met, otherwise the individual person will face the deprivation of healthy growth and development which may eventually cause death. All these are basically human needs which are

naturally inherent in human beings disregardment of gender, age, status, colour and geographical location.

That explicates the reality why a needy born baby will cry if it is not attended to, if it is not fed, clothed or given emotional support, in spite of the fact that at its level of development, the infant "knows" nothing about food, clothes and love. It is then for that very reason that most parents will go to great lengths to ensure that their children are well catered for in a move to satisfy their basic human needs.

Material things in themselves when are positively used are absolutely necessary because of their contribution to the growth and development of the human person, enhancing the human person's respect and dignity. Johnson M.T. supports this point in the following words:" for human life to continue at all, a certain amount of food, a certain amount of clothing, and a certain adequacy of shelter is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Just as material goods when positively used develops and enhances the respect and dignity of the human person, so much can it be negatively used contribute to the detrimental growth and respect and dignity of the human person. This situation is what I have termed material things, as a "double-edged sword" That is to say, the means to acquire and usage of material goods are reliable to moral judgement. Are they used for the individual good and common good? Modern approach to life today is increasingly

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson T. "Sharing Possessions, Mandate and Symbol of Faith" (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p.40.

becoming focused on the acquisition of material things for meaningful life but in subsequent erosion of moral standards. In the next section I shall point out ways in which material things have passed and still cause great moral problems to families today.

**a) The challenges of the Family after Industrialization**

African Families have experienced and is experiencing varied concrete changes and challenges in the process of history, industrialization, social, cultural, religious and economic dimensions. The family position and function as such have likewise undergone many changes at different times. Though it was in the past believed and understood that the design and desire of God is that, material things are among the necessary and useful components making his children comfortable, settled and happy, one therefore would anticipate a situation in which most of the material things were available and accessible to all people. Moreover, families, the bear truth that there is, is that a good number of them do lack the basic essentials. Most of them are trapped in poverty and misery, malnutrition, disease, ignorance and illiteracy, high infant mortality and low life expectancy.

The western impact is even gaining an upper hand in the world. The world is more and more secularized and individualistic with very little attention paid to the humane and spiritual dimensions of human existence. The demand for capital has given birth to oppressive and dehumanizing structures. Development is understood in economic terms, and not as a redeeming process in which the

entire person and community are actively enveloped. Because the African family community is becoming more and more secularized, thus the African child loses contact with the traditional cultures and values. This aspect I shall be treating in the forthcoming section when dealing with the changing morals in African family today.

**(i) Urbanization:**

Generally in Africa, urban life emerged with the advent of colonialism. In the cities today exists amalgamation of two contrasting levels of urbanization. Firstly, a traditional almost medieval and pre industrial level. Secondly, an advanced industrial level. These both exist side by side. When comparison is done in all the state of development of African countries, these metropolitan areas are creating danger of over-urbanization which is ahead of process of industrialization. City migration is set in motion more by the rural underdevelopment and less by city-life attraction. The result of it is the many existing slum-quarters around the centres, that even actually lack urban facilities and earning capacities.

The difference between capital and provincial towns since independence have grown and still will grow more in the future. A metropolis is like erratic block which maintain's part of its colonial character which is irrelevant to the needs of the country. There emerges a totally new urban attitude and mentality and behaviour different from the rest of the contrary. For example,

people in Kampala are different from all other Ugandans. Here is a danger of a new type of society being created which believes in technical progress and industrial consumption.

There are many big differences between the urban life-style and that of the village life-style. The city is the creation of man is built and is marked by pluralism and differentiation. There is no one who automatically belongs to the city, for all are strangers. The work of a person is dependent on his skill and talent, he has to work in order to survive in the city. His life is divided up into many parts such as leisure, occupation, religion and family, moreover all of these different aspects of life tend to be unrelated and uncoordinated. Religion seems for many people to have little in common with trade and industry. Man lives far away from nature.

The city is not a community that is depended on either kinship or tribal-clan relationships. It is merely an aggregation of individuals. This is opposed to the kind of relationships found in the African family. The city is a type of an open community. The youth are often eager to promote and hold to modern changes and advance in their own social positions. The city has drastically changed the traditional status of women in the family community, the esteemed position which they had occupied and enjoyed in a village family. This is now gone.

While on the other hand, the family village is the creation of nature and so it grows. It is marked with wholeness and every individual person is born into the family community and rightly

belongs to it. His belongness determines his role in and for the family community. His entire life is blended to that particular village family, but not differentiated from it. His occupation, sex life, religion are all well at home one with another. That is to say there is unity between what is sacred and secular, spiritual and material. For man lives not distantly from nature but as part of nature. Man does not dominate but he adapts to his environment. In the village family the community is based on kinship or tribal coherence. In it every one is related to everybody else by a common ancestry and cultural heritage. The line between "inside" and "outside" is clearly well defined. It is what is known as a closed community.

Having expounded in contrast between the urban life - style and village life-style, I proceed to show how industrialization has and is detrimental to the past African family life and values.

#### ((ii) Industrialization

By positive analysis, industrialization is a sign that man responds and obeys the commandment of God to subject the earth to himself and improve the human standards of living. But negatively, industrialization though is tended to alleviate the toil of manual work, there are as well serious side effects such as these below:

The African Family communal life of the past is weakened. The new living conditions are destroying personal relations. The industrial people as an example often are isolated, they feel lonely and bored especially when work is not creative. The past

customs are often quickly disregarded even when new ones have not yet emerged.

In the African family the freedom of the individual person was so well located and used responsibly as the community guaranteed the security. But today in the modern family community the new freedom of the individual living in between two worlds can not be used responsibly because is divided between the old and the new and which is the best. The time for the family life and socialization is limited by the demands of the job. The watching of television has often been substituted for family socialization. The parents who work far away from their homes and children have had almost no time to socialize with their children. As they come back home when are tired. The result is that, many families of this kind are divided between the loyalty of husband to his wife and between the parents and their children. This loyalty is weakened.

The age of industrialization has brought about a break down of the past African family morals. Today people have acquired bad drinking habits which literally threaten human health and family progress.

The value of the human person in the African traditional family community was highly respected and recognized. Whereas today in the age of industrialization the minds of people are occupied more than before with profit and competition (capitalism). The modern life is associated with money maniacs. Money as such has defined life. All that there is, is directed towards production and consumption and the value of the human

person is neglected. The gap existent between the rich and poor widens as new classes emerge in the ever growing cities. Also the rates of accidents in factories and on roads is appalling. The human person meanwhile is loosing value as profit making is more valuable than the reality of human life.

As I have already treated when contrasting between the urban life style and village life-style, pointed out that the African village in the past was the creation of nature itself. Man did not dominate or destroy nature, but he and nature were intimate friends. But with industrialization ecological problems have emerged and gaining the upper hand. What about the urge to exploit land and resources, this too is increasing and it really overshadows all human considerations. The world of nature is indeed being harmed. The fuel and water consumption, air pollution noise levels, degrees of poisoning by the indiscriminate usage of insecticides, are simply allowed to rise unchecked.

#### **(b) The Changing African Family Morals Today**

Almost everyday when one turns on the television, the mass media calls upon our attention to many different and yet puzzling realities of the world in which we are living: teenage pregnancies, premarital sex, extra material affairs, divorces and separation, child abuse (rape and prostitution), suicide, murder, drug and alcohol addictions, abuse of political power. This list is endless.

Because we are faced with these realities of life, so we often raise some questions like: why is all these. Is it that the African traditional values and virtues of the family such as charity, honesty, hospitality, truthfulness, solidarity, respect for oneself and others, respect for elders, respect for nature and life, respect for the people, likely indicators why the youth are immoral as expression of family? The families to which they are born and brought up?

The elderly people are daily lamenting that they are meeting strange behaviors which do shock them like sexual immorality, affectless relationships and skepticism about religious matters. The middle aged people also lament about the children they fail to control, and the youth complain of lack of example from the older members of the family community and society.

When I carried out this research among these groups of people below about the past and the present education, these were the findings:

An old woman said that "long ago babies were reared long enough. But today it seems like the soil is hot. I don't know if it is because of the tea which has made people repulsive".

A middle aged woman said that a "man will neglect his home. A young man will beat his father over land because he is greedy and wants it. Today even children and women are drinking. Many homes have become impoverished and have run dry of respect".

Old man said that "righteousness is gone indeed. The righteous parent is dying sooner than later from grief. When he steps out of his homestead he sees things he does not want to see".

Middle-aged man said that "everybody is bewildered. It looks like moral breaks are no longer functioning and things are just accelerating".

In the African traditional family life, human sexuality was considered, looked upon and held as sacred as Ansah affirms in these words: "Sex taboos form a code of sexual conduct that is so highly respected that any deviation from it is deeply detested. The code stipulates the time and manner for having sex and also the person with whom one may and may not enter into sexual relationship. The sacredness with which sex is held is so basic an idea that it is a necessary condition for understanding the high premium the people place on sex, and all the regulations customs they have concerning sex in marriage."<sup>2</sup>

The sexual morals in the African traditional family life were important for a number of reasons such as these: sexual morals trained one the virtue of marriage faithfulness, it protected the youth from premarital sex engagement, the value of virginity was highly stressed and recommended, and the sexual morals helped the observance of these virtues needed by the family community and society.

The consequences of the above observance of the sexual morals contributed to the high and good moral standards of the family community for these positive experiential realities: It was rare for the family to experience incidences like prostitution, children abuse, illegitimate children, abortion, rape, premarital and

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<sup>2</sup>Ansah, J.K. "The Ethics of African Religious Tradition" (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1989), pp. 241-245.

extramarital sex. There were incest taboos and anyone who violated them was severely dealt with. It was for similar reasons that each ethnic group considered sexual purity, virginity as an honour to the family and the individual pride. Indeed virginity was upheld as both the glory of a young man and woman and the community; faithfulness in marriage was the crown of a married woman or man, to the entire clan and family. Where polygamy was practised sex with the legitimate partner was considered as a normal practice.

For a girl in the traditional African Family who became pregnant before marriage was held as a shame for her and family as well. She would have broken sexual morals and lost her virginity, a proof that she had lacked moral family upbringing. She would be considered as sexually "loose", sign of prostitution, bad to have illegitimate child, lack of christian teaching. As a result her education would suffer, she would not "Find" a husband, that would be a social scar to her and thus, with no place in the family community.

**(c) Factors Leading to Decline of African Family Values:**

A Communitarian spirit characterized the past African Family community. In it people learned to care for one another by sharing the material property they possessed. No person was totally a stranger to the other. However, today things are drastically dwindling, are changing very fast. The past values are less or no longer being practiced in urban areas as I have already shown in the preceding treatise. The high standard and cost of living in the city, has or is making people to be selfish and suspicious of one another. The spirit of sharing is rarely there among people who

value the worth of human person by economics. It is a pity and shame to our present generations whereby those with plenty shut out those with practically nothing except only what they are wearing. For the selfish and suspicious mentality and attitudes condition many not even to welcome each other, even the closest relative. By this way of behaving, they have acquired the jungle spirit, of survival of the fittest.

As a result competition and other forms of violence has emerged from the high standard of living in the urban areas. As people want to make the very best out of life, which life is no longer, of a communal quality, rather is of individualistic quality.

Mugambi backs up this point in these words: "With modern life, people are individualistic, materialistic especially under the influence of western culture, and are not ready to be hospitable, welcoming people, giving and helping others or being honest. Modern life is so expensive that people feel that they cannot be generous"<sup>3</sup>

If there is materialism and consumerism in society, hedonism as well has an upper hand in it. For both materialism and consumerism evades the family morals. It turns people into objects of pleasure including human sexuality. Other people become merely objects that provide pleasure. The dignity and respect of the human person is overlooked and abused. Human sexuality is the most sacred, intimate and communicative, instead becomes or is reduced to an instrument to be employed and discarded. That is why sexual

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<sup>3</sup>Ed. Mugambi J.N.K. et al. "Moral and Ethical issues in African Christianity" (Initiative publishers, 1992) p.91

violence like rape is rampant and is causing the decline of the African family sexual morals.

The above phenomena is evident and frequent among the youth, not only them but also the elderly people. The youth are caught up in these situations because they are left vulnerable to the mass media. The idols they want to imitate come from the Afro-Western culture. I do agree that music and football idols are existent, but the moral question to be asked is: Can these really teach people morals? And yet amidst of all these confusions the youth feel rejected and abandoned. So they resort to wrong means for learning morals. But whatever morals they want to learn come from peer groups, mass-media, not from their parents, pastors and teachers. It must be kept in mind that the African past family values were taught by those who had a good moral standing within the extended family community.

It would be therefore, unfair and naive to merely dismiss the past as out fashioned and without having any relevancy to the modern family and society. There is a need today for the youth and everyone to look back into the traditional settings to find ideals that may be reformulated to suit our present morals. For example, a new look at the old attitudes and mentality towards material goods was seen as essentially related to morality. This when done is not to say that it is a romantic call to an ancient form of life. It is rather a recognition of the reality that traditional way of life is still viable for us or for many people today. Because the past certainly has many values which the modern family and society needs to learn in order to move towards liberation and

more human modes of life. And not merely the form of life which is ruled by the principle of the survival of the fittest.

**(d) Ways in which material goods are a challenge today to family life**

Just as material things in the African traditional family community were used for the enhancement of the dignity and respect of the individual and community, so is in the modern world have the material things become a detrimental tool to the human person and community.

**(i) Prostitution**

Is today a common phenomenon in African cities and rural areas. The ultimate objective for those engaged in this kind of trade is the acquisition of either material possessions or money. This approach to wealth is definitely a threat to life of an individual and that of the family community and society as well. As the effects of prostitution includes: Pregnancy, thus an increase in population which is an extra burden to the family economy; Abortion which may result to death, bareness or poor health affects productivity; and the likely contract of sexually transmitted diseases especially Aids which is so deadly! This effect is easily contractable and spread to many people.

**(ii) Separation and Divorce**

Finance and ownership disputes stand out being the main root causes leading to separation, divorce and other family problems. Take for example, one in order to get employed and earn a salary

that can be used for purchase of material things, many opt for bribery and other forms of corruption..

The further evidence of the wicked approach employed in a bid obtain wealth or other material possessions is: the present increased rate of crime in form of violence and robberies; break-ins and murder that are a daily and common feature in our midst as highlighted by the media; and the many motor accidents on our roads are caused by over speeding public transport vehicles whose owners and employees are out to make maximum profits without considering the value of human life of the passengers.

(iii) Drug Trafficking:

This is now a wide spread practice among the children in the African families, supported by many arrests of suspects in African and foreign airports, is a clear indication of the suicidal risks and sacrificial individuals can make to acquire wealth. For example, the heroin pellets which are swallowed have caused and do cause painful death if they burst in the carrier's body. Is this then not a deliberate move to obtain wealth by its sale promotion at the very expense of precious life of the human person?

(iv) Technology

With the invention of Video and Channels which operate on a full-time basis, television is today occupying most of the youth's leisure times besides the social evils learned from the screen such as violence, cheap sex, teenage pregnancies, divorces and separations, prostitution and rape, murder, abortion, robbery,

suicide, drug, addiction, power abuse and many others.

A time that would have been used for constructive work is idled away.. It is a negative attribute of a possession associated with material well-being. In this particular case of the television, it does not encourage the youth to transform their respective family communities from misery and suffering, to better places on earth where life is worth-living. That is why Marie Win has called the Television as the "plug-in-drug"<sup>4</sup>

(V) SUGAR-DADDY AND MUMMY SYNDROMES:

This has and still will continue to ruin the lives of young people because of the lure of money and material things. "There is evidence that money and other possessions are used carelessly and wastefully on gluttony, drunkenness and sexual abuse (misuse)"<sup>5</sup> The kind of habits as these have caused many problems like poor health, family tensions and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases especially Aids today. Such a misuse of wealth can be a cause of poverty in other aspects of life. It is important to remember that this is irresponsible and selfish consumption which goes on in the midst of severe cases of poverty.

Therefore, there is a need for each individual person to adopt a sense of personal and communal accountability, responsibility and integrity in the understanding of and approach to and usage of material things. Towards the achievement of this end, the family community has the ultimate task and duty of teaching and setting an example to their children.

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<sup>4</sup>Win, Marie. "The plug-in-drug. Television, Children and the Family" (New York: The Viking Press, 1977) P.30.

<sup>5</sup>Sharkery, B., and F.G. Welch. "Modern Christian Living" (Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 1979) p.137.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **V. CHURCH'S TEACHING ON FAMILY LIFE, MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN**

The Church from the very beginning of christianity has always had great love and concern for the family. She even coined the term "domestic Church" for the family. The family life is "the way of the Church". There are profound reasons that qualify family to be termed as the primordial and most important of all units existent. It is universal because is common to all, particular unique and unrepeatable like an individual person is. The Church at the same time also is aware that a person goes forth from the family in order to realize, effect a new family unit which in itself is a specific task and vocation.

For these reason and many others,, the Church "promotes the dignity of marriage and family"<sup>1</sup>

Despite all that the family ought to be, the Church is well informed and aware that the family is greatly suffering from internal crises. It is exposed to adverse political, social, cultural and economic influences. This threaten the inner life, unity, strength, coherence and stand of the family in the way of its formation.

It was Pope John Paul II when he had visited Tanzania in September said: "A family is a school of prayer of faithfulness and

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<sup>1</sup>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, Part II, Chapter 1.

love, of obedience and trustworthy and a school of mercy" From these words of the Pope, the family then is the real holder, custodian of the richness of all virtues that a person can possess. This point I already discussed in my previous chapters . For example, the pope states in the letter to families in the world: "The self-giving reveals the spousal nature of love, that which inspires the love of husband and wife for each other as the model and norm for the self-giving that must be practiced in relationship between brothers and sisters and the different generations living together in the family".<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, while the church defends and safeguards the family values, marriage and children, there are various programmes backed by very powerful resources presently, which seemingly aim, target at the breakdown of the family, such programmes as abortion, family planning and so on. At certain times it appears that concerted efforts are being employed to present as "normal" and attractive those situations which in truth are "irregular", that is, are opposed to the well-being of the family and the human person.

Such situations do contradict the "truth and love" which instead should inspire and guide relationships between men and women. Rather these situations cause tensions and division in families, having grave consequences especially for the children.

The family has always been seen and considered as the first and basic expression of man's social nature. Because the family as

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<sup>2</sup>John Paul II, Letter to families, p.24.

such is a community of interrelated persons whose proper way of existing and living together is communion. This point also I have already discussed in the former chapters.

It is therefore, for that reason that the New Testament presents us with the challenge that, the primordial models of the family life is to be necessarily sought in God Himself. Because in the Trinitarian mystery of His life, is the Divine "We" which is the eternal pattern of the human "we", especially of that "we" formed by man and woman created in the Divine Image and likeness. So in the Trinitarian model we see family's ultimate relationship to the Divine "we". Again it is only human persons who are capable of entering into living in communion.

The second vatican council described the origin of the family as being in a marital communion termed as a "covenant". In this covenant man and woman "give themselves to each other and accept each other"<sup>3</sup> In this same issue the book of Genesis assists us to refer to the setting up of the family through marriage, that "a man leaves his father and mother but to cleave to his wife and they become one flesh" (Gen.2:24).

Before proceeding, at this point I would like to explicate the concepts: "communion" and "Community" as they are relevant to family life. For "Communion deals with the personal relationship between the "I" and the "thou". While "Community" transcends Communion" as it moves towards a "Society", a "we".

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<sup>3</sup>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

Then that is to say that the family as a community of persons, is the first human "society" Because it arises whenever there comes into being the conjugal covenant of marriage, which opens the spouses to everlasting communion of love and life. And only consummated in a full and specific way with the unitative and procreative dimensions of a marriage act.

As already seen, it is the "communion" of the spouses that gives rise to the "community" of the family. The "Community" of the family is totally pervaded by the essence of "communion" That is why humanly speaking, there can not be any other "communion" comparable to that which is between a mother and a child, the child whom she has carried and nurtured in her womb and then brought to birth!

Ultimately, because the family originates in the love of man and woman, it follows then that the family is a derivation from the very mystery of God. This certainly conforms to the innermost being of man and woman, to the innate and genuine dignity as both human persons, equals necessarily. God hands man over to himself, entrusting him both to his parents, in Contemplating a new human being are to be fully conscious of the reality that God "wills this individual" for his own sake"<sup>4</sup>

For the family always expresses a new dimension of good for humankind, thus creates a new responsibility. The responsibility, for the specific common good in which is included the good of

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<sup>4</sup>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

persons, indeed of every member of the family community. This surely is a difficult good, yet is also an attractive one - the bearing and upbringing of children.

It is entirely the wish of parents themselves to want children. Because in children they see the crowning of their own love for each other. The children are the concrete symbol of their love for each other which love is abstract. They want children for the family as a "priceless gift"<sup>5</sup> The words of consent define the common good of the couples and the family. The common good of spouses consists of: love, fidelity, honour, the stability of their union until death - "all the days of my life". The good of them both is at the same time the good of each, which must also become the good of the children. Marriage as such, is a unique communion of persons, it is the basis of this communion that the family is called to become a community of persons.

On the other hand, contemporary society tends to limit the family units only to two generation simply due to inavailability of resources: limited housing especially in large cities. For that reason, modern families have too little "human life". There is shortage of people with whom to create and share the common good. yet that good by its nature demands to be created and shared with others, that is, by living in truth and charity.

In a new born child is realized the common good of the family. Because part of the genealogy of the person is the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 50.

genealogy of the family. Yet today we can not avoid asking certain questions because of what is in families: is it true that the new born human being is a gift for his parents and society? For parents, it is true, that the birth of a child means more work, financial burdens and further inconveniences. These all may lead to temptation of not wanting another birth.<sup>6</sup> This attitude and tendency in some other Social and cultural contexts can turn out to be very strong. But does it imply that a child as such is not a gift? That a child comes into existence merely to take and nothing to offer? These are some of the puzzling questions men and women today are faced with. For a child comes to take up room, is said, yet it seems there is less and less room in the world. As a result the promotion of family planning, abortion campaigns, yet in themselves are detrimental to the life of the human person.

To expand more the last question is firstly to repeat it: Is it really true that a child brings nothing to the family and society? Could ever anyone deny this reality? All in all, the child to the family community and society becomes a gift to its brothers, sisters, parents and the entire family. The life of a particular child becomes a gift for the same people who were givers of life, who can not help but feel its warm presence. It's sharing and participation in their lives and contribution to their common good and to that of the community of the family.

If the first way of the church is the family, it should also

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<sup>6</sup>Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 Dec. 1987) 25: AAS 80 (1988), 542-544

be said of it that the civilization of love is the way of the Church too. The family for various reasons depends on the civilization of love, and she finds in it the reasons for its existence as family. Therefore, family is what Pope Paul VI called the "civilization of love"<sup>7</sup> This expression obviously crept into the social teaching of the church and is now familiar.

Having outlined the above truths about the Church's position towards family, marriage and children, I say is positive. The Church for those reasons I have given and many others, has and still ceaselessly defends the family life, marriage and children from all those forces that are opposed to the human person. For example, everything that is contrary to the civilization of love, is also contrary to the whole truth about man and becomes a threat to him. Because it does not permit man to find himself and to feel secure, as spouse, parent or child. The so called "Safe Sex", is in itself touted by the "civilization of technology", so actually is in view of the overall demands of the person, which radically is not safe sex at all, but instead, is extremely dangerous to the human person morally. In brief, that is the stance of the Church as presented in the Church's document - church in the modern world (*Gaudium et Spes*) and the Pope's letter to the Families in the World (*Familiaris Consortio*).

I would also like to say in brief of the teaching of the post-synodal Apostolic Exhalation ecclesia in Africa what the Synod

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<sup>7</sup>Homily for closing of the Holy year (25 December 1975) AAS 68 (1976), 145.

Fathers Said about Family, especially African family .

There is an urgent necessity today to evangelize the family. For "the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family."<sup>8</sup> The Christian is both the primordial cell of the church community alive and the basic cell of society as well. For instance, the case of African family, is the very basis upon which the social edifice is laid. It is for this reason that the Synod Fathers stressed and considered the evangelization of the African family as of a primal task and mission, if the family is once more to assume in its turn the role of active subject in evangelization of families through families.

The Synod Fathers also were well informed of the real challenge facing today the African families such as political, economic, social and cultural. So the Father urges the African families that while they try to adopt the values of the contemporary society, they should not lose sight of their own essential values. Rather they should preserve them.

**(a) What the Last Celebrated African Synod said About Family:**

The Synod Fathers viewed the church as family qualified more so by the presence of christian families, these truly make it an authentic domestic churches. The fathers stressed this that, "It is there in effect that you fathers, mothers and children, live in the image of the Holy Family, the richness of the love which is in

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<sup>8</sup>John Paul II. Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (22 Nov. 1981), 75: AAS 74 (1982), 173.

the heart of God and of men. The extended African family is the sacred place where all the riches of our tradition converge. It is therefore, the task of you christian families to bring the heart of this extended family a witness which transforms from the inside our vision of the world, beginning from the spirit of the Beatitudes, without forgetting the various tasks that are yours in society"<sup>9</sup>

On the eve of the Cairo Conference in 1994, a conference whose agenda was opposed to the values of the African Family: life and children. The synod highlighted the current threats of the African Family is faced with and so urgently pleaded for its safeguard: "Do not allow the international year of the family to become the year of the destruction of the family"<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, I agree with Pope John II when he says that, "the family has a vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life - is from the family that they find the first school of the Social values that are animating principle of existence and development of society. It is far from being closed on itself, for the family by nature and its vocation is open to other families and society, and undertakes its social role", In fact, marriage by nature has a special task and mission of perpetuating humanity, transcends couples. Also by its nature family extends beyond individual household, it is orientated towards society.

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<sup>9</sup>The African Synod. Pope's opening Homily message of the Synod, Message of the AMECEA and IMBISA Bishops no.27, 1994. p.20.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. no. 30.p.21

## CRITICAL EVALUATION ON FAMILY LIFE AND SOME PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS

### **(a) Family fears and hopes:**

Already the preceding chapters have dealt with family challenges today. Yet despite of all that different families still have great hopes all-over the world. They tirelessly strive, struggle to find solutions to their problems. They have not given up. As pastoral agent we should where possible join them in their struggles, guiding and encouraging them through organized pastoral counselling programmes. There is no doubt today that families fall victim to false values of those who have deliberately elevated power, wealth, sex, to their own egoistic ideals. The unjust structures, mass-media a complex issue of phonograph propagate immoral behaviors on: Marital unfaithfulness, extra-marital sex, "Premarital sex", abortion, rape and prostitution, separation and divorce. The practice of rape and prostitution of both adults and children is a legalized business today in Kenya. The existent practice of the so called "free love" and premarital relations among the youth today is increasing. The young people see it as being normal, nothing wrong with it. Educators especially families are urged to lead their children into a Sound moral living, the best example being their own good moral lives. These are some of the fears breaking families today, especially the deadly disease - "Aids", has really paralysed families on the earth.

The particular case of Aids, each family has the absolute duty

and right to responsibly educate their children about sexual behavior, the values that accrue such education. By extension schools, religious co-operate in such education of the youth. But again their own moral lives ought to be exemplary. Making a look back into the African extended family, education was imparted to the youth in all fields of daily life. It was a kind that helped an individual to be integrated into community and society. In order to achieve a sound moral success of the youth, parents should discuss with their children openly about these matters possibly without any reservations. Matters dealing with premarital sex, virginity before marriage, mutual fidelity among couples, and dangers of sexually transmitted diseases (STD's AIDS). The overall importance of one holding a good moral standards among all family members and to continue the importance of accepting AIDS patients to avoid stigmatization.

The family should discuss with their members ways in which AIDS is not spread such as: by shaking of hands, sharing of utensils and toilets, swimming in the same pool, and travelling in the same vehicles and many others ways.

Family education should include peer group education too. This can be done by person to person interactions in order to effect behavior change. The risky behaviors may be discussed to raise the level of awareness among the youth today, otherwise, when left alone to learn what they think best to themselves that in itself eventually causes moral problems due to "false learning."

The family also ought to be in a good standing in order to engage the youth in health promotive activities such as: expedition, sporting and religious fellowships, instead of risky behaviour envelopments like, deadly habits of beer drinking and bhang smoking. In a word, the youth should be directed to how utilize well their own leisure hours as mentioned above.

Today many families have experienced and still do experience the destruction AIDS has caused to their family members. For at a lose of either parents or children naturally upset the remaining family members. AIDS patients are with us, but families and for that reason us pastoral agents, should in our relationships reassure AIDS patients that they can still live positively and longer. The authentic love, affection and acceptance should be shown them so that they feel welcome and cared for as human persons, on the other hand, the unaccepting attitude to be avoided. As this saying holds true: charity starts at home. Thus, it is the responsibility of the family to educate its members and the community in the prevention and control of AIDS.

In addition to AIDS as a deadly family fear, today are also many families who face the wide spread problem of unemployment. The chronic and general prevalence of unemployment detracts parents from the stability of their families. The search for work forces many to go far afield, such that parents leave their families and children abandoned and torn apart. This already I have dealt with in the preceding chapter on family challenges today.

### Family Hopes

In spite of all that families are faced with today, yet in some families are gratifying initiatives and experiences. Certainly, there are families on the one hand, which are dissolved and separated due to the lack of courage, love, strength and faith, the inability together find solutions to different family problems as stated above.

But also is evident that some families are proper "home churches", in whose bosom faith, love and hope is alive providing exemplary instances of love, mutual understanding and of outgoing christian charity. Families should by witness of their lives bear contribution to community building.

And so, since both the Church and Society are affected when the family is faced up with such problems, serious efforts should be employed to strengthen the family life. Actually, the realization has been clear that it is the family in which the human being first of all confronts the great challenges of human life. There it is, in fact, where those who will be born and prepared to build up the future society, becoming either laymen and women, or parents, members of an order - priests and sisters, each of course, according to his or her own calling.

#### **(b) Growth and family maturity:**

Eventually times arrives when incorporation reaches its peak. This is when the specific values of individuals and families are

recognized. When there is a strong effort to live up according to the Gospel precepts, and when everything is dictated, ruled by the pure christian spirit of sharing. That is why is necessary to look back to traditional cultures to discover all that is normative for us today as a necessary future condition. The African extended family spirit of sharing is still relevant for the present just as it was to the past society and family. It is essentially a christian spirit of sharing. The christian spirit of sharing is essential to the modern family which is ruled by the spirit of individualism and consumerism. That those with plenty should share with their less unfortunate and suffering brothers and sisters without any discriminations.

To change conditions is necessarily to be in solidarity with those who are marginalised with families who are in an disorderly situations. The willingness for a changed families and societies by recognition of manifold forms of family life in differing surroundings. This leads to: a gradual participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist, marriage of young couples which did not feel themselves called to begin a christian family a wide ranging work for the betterment of the marital, family scholastic and possible political situation. For the community that celebrates the liturgy together, prays, stays and lives together. The celebration of the eucharist necessarily leads to a commitment to social issues of justice and peace for the common good of neighbours. Thus family society maturity and growth.

**(c) Family Evangelization:**

Family evangelization should be holistic in approach, that is, the liberation of the entire human person, who is concrete being situated in different challenging environments, such as: politics, social economics, cultural, and religious. Here are some guidelines with which individual family and together with its pastors may develop in accordance to the concrete tasks: Promotion of family discussion groups encourage family to active participation in community's organization such as marriage encounter to be in solidarity with those whose marriage has failed , to extend help for those who attempt to make a fresh start in the marriage and where this is impossible, to give support in the search for new - meaningful life tasks and structures.

**(d) Family Catechesis:**

One of the basic concerns of the family catechesis is the instruction of good religious educators with the families. It is important that structures co-operate with parents, who have the desire and task educate themselves firstly and secondly, their children. They also would like to discover more for themselves about the teaching of faith.

Gradually, the work that is in connection and relation with the youth and children is build up, so that it can take effect in the whole family community. The production of relevant materials is essential, suitable texts, series of slides and some video films when developed facilitates a participative catechesis which truly may find a home in the people.

A wedding is a celebration of a newly made marriage. It is the birthday celebration of a family. When the two people, husband and wife unite in maturation devotion and the desire to go through life together, being one, follows that in a wedding their wish is openly and ceremoniously expressed and confirmed. When the wedding is over, then a marriage exists and an independent family is established, of father and mother with the birth of children. Together with the children, then it becomes a family of parents and that of children.

It is true that the redemption of humanity starts with the family, with marriage, with the wedding. Redemption commences with the restoration of the most holy, tender, honourable and cherished bond which unifies one human being to another on earth - that is, to say that restoration of the family bond.

This family bond was not only valid in the past, but is still valid for all times certainly ours too, not only for those people, but everyone one who belongs to a family especially for those who intend to begin one. This for sure has deep reasons which I should divine. Salvation starts with the family and it must do so, because the family is the primary educator of the human race, because the womb of the family may contain and bear the greatest earthly unhappiness.

Basically, there is no happiness on earth to compare with the family happiness. And likewise, there is no unhappiness on earth to compare with the family misery. Every kind of either happiness or unhappiness is rather more superficial, it does not affect the

individual more than skin deep. The family happiness or unhappiness however, touches the very heart in its depth, for God has drawn the golden thread of family bonds right through the human heart.

This surely is without reasons. For the inner worth or unworthiness of the individual is gauged by his commitment to his family duties, since he bears his innermost heart in the fulfillment or neglect of such duties. That is the reason God has placed the fourth commandment at the head of all humans, that is, social commandment since in keeping and honouring this, is the happiness of humankind, his welfare and blessed existence are not only assured but the observation of the other commandments is guaranteed too.

This family happiness or unhappiness, family hopes and fears, is the greatest or most bitter on earth - does not depend on rank or standing, wealth or education, but can be found in equal measure in the beggars havel just as in the royal palace. God has made no distinction in awarding the highest and noblest earthly experiences to humankind.

In a truly good family, religion is given the most painstaking and sincere care, whereas a family that has been torn apart this has usually been lost, despite all efforts. The modern tends to ignore anything to do with religion. There is a dichotomy between the secular and sacred. Yet in the past African extended family the secular and sacred were intrinsic, there was no possible way of separation. Religion was the canon for the family and society's

morality.

Virtue is much protected in a good family and evil is repulsed. A good family as a rule provides the environment for the development and strength of the finest personalities, gives the greatest solace to suffering and hardships. It provides the strongest impulse for undertaking difficult tasks, is the most royal guardian of honours and protective of influence verses dishonour. I say this within the context of an earthly social existence.

Today it may be asked: why did our saviour Jesus make his first revelation at the family feast at Cana? All of us who wish to improve humanity should take note of this. What is your family relationships? How have you been fulfilling your family obligations? Should there be one who comports himself like a saviour of humankind but yet neglects his own family or even ignore it all together? In this way , you may be sure that you are betraying the people too. These reflective questions apply to any kind of relationships by extension.

The saviour chose a wedding for the first time performance of his miracles because the family starts with the marriage, is represented by a man and woman, by husband and wife. Their union is the main objective and is of the overwhelming significance. What the husband and wife should be will content ourselves with the saying that upon them will depend, indeed rest the entire destiny of the family. For the foundation of either misery or happiness is normally laid, and often already has been laid, on the day that the

marriage happens. It is a day on which much, if not all, is determined.

But what is that that sustains and unites the family so closely, that which provides its main pleasure and secure its good fortune and existence, imparts its freshness and happiness to life? What makes it revered in its felicity and comforting in misfortune? Surely, it is its soul, it is love. But is all love good? Does all love possess such blessed vigour? By no means as experience has it a thousand times everyday. Yes, there is a love which is absolutely wrong, selfish, is illness in itself and does contain a poison that intoxicates before it finally kills. That is the kind of love with which so much and such damnable idolatry practiced in our world today. A veritable false god, claiming thousands of shameful victims. The poison of sensuous love is repugnant to good, a sinful product of fallen humanity and a veritable misfortune for daily life.

Here I am talking of human love, God's gift to nature, which must itself be good because it is so arranged by God. This love should be nurtured in family life and given growth and expression beyond the family. Again this same love is the soul, life principle and the very fabric, foundation and dimension of the family. Because without it, I would say, no marriage should occur and hence, no family can exist.

Yet often from experience it is barely enough to ensure any good fortune, it in itself (love) is very powerless, despite commanding man's deepest and most powerful force, to bring

blessings into family life. It is after all earthly and bears within itself the shortcomings of the poor human beings. It requires help. For the earthly love basically belongs to a lower level and so must be essentially elevated towards heaven, filled with divine strength and changed into a divine human love. Otherwise, it alone crawls along the ground and can only produce bad and sour fruits.

Finally, family (earthly) love must provide the basis for the happiness of family life. It may not fail in its endeavor to bring the family together, each one the other, into heaven. Earthly love requires God's mercy in order to grow into an authentic (altruistic) love, the love of God and of neighbour, in the "Agape". This type of love carries with it the blessings of God Himself without and within. If marriages have to improve, therefore, families improve too. Then a better resultant human race would be created.

#### CONCLUSION

A family is a social institution whereby social norms are organized to preserve the basic societal values. Marriage produces the basic family group referred to as nuclear family. This unit is made up of parents and children. The extended family envelops other blood relatives living together in the same household or homestead and it extends to include the "Living-dead" and those "yet to be born."

The roles of the family have a profound and permanent impact on the person since they assist to mould an individual during the processes of personalization and socialization. The individual person is capable of picking what has been prescribed. Therefore, it is imperative that the family continue to play and execute her roles on behavior change for example, to help in the prevention and control of AIDS.

Further roles of the family includes: providing the necessary unit for economic co-operation, carries out the responsibility educate her members from childhood to adulthood. This is an on-going process referable to as socialization in and through the family community. The family also secures emotional support through mutual expression of love, affection, sharing and understanding. It provides an environment which is conducive for interdependent activities whereby different roles are spelt out.

A family is also considered as any social grouping of people, who are not necessarily blood relatives but care for the welfare of each other.

The Trinitarian life gives us a model of family life. In it God the Father begets the son. The Son because of the love and the goodness of the Father for the gift of life, turns to the Father saying: thank you father for the marvelous gift of life I have. The Father and the Son facing each other their love become so intense that, this eternal embrace (kiss) causes a third reality to come into being - the Holy Spirit, a fruit of the love between Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit becomes the uniting life

principle of the Father and Son. We pray to God the Father through the God the Son in the God the Spirit. Families ought to always in their family prayers to pray to the Trinity to strengthen their families.

Similarly, in families is veneration of Ancestors (African extended family). So in the family community exist ancestors, parents and children. The existent love that is in between the husband and wife becomes concrete in the bearing of children. The children are blessings of the ancestors to the family, hence, the parents thank the ancestors for this gift. There exists communion between the ancestors and family. Also the children become grateful to their parents for the gift of life for the family and society as well.

Therefore, we see that family is the teacher of humanity because in it are inherent the basic human values modelled after the Trinitarian life. The values such as love, life, communion, unity, peace and harmony and of sharing. If families on earth were to live according to the Trinitarian life and values, families would become "paradises" yet on earth. Unfortunately, the reality is far from it, as I have dealt already in the preceding chapters.

These words summarizes the essence of what a family is: one can rock his brains as much as he would like , over the best state organization, he can even think up of laws which in their cleverness have put the old world to shame, but as long as family life lends no dignity or support to the rest of the society, so long as a sound family does not engender and train a sound civic

consciousness and virtue, and does not arouse the spirit in which your laws are first brought to life, if indeed they are viable in the first place - then you are trying to carry water in a sieve!

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