

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Building Our Homes for God

Michael Joseph Paderon (Mike) and Mary Geraldine Paderon (Geeo)

You may start with a very short/sharing about own family or if family is presenting, may encourage one of the children to share. An example of a sharing by the Paderon family is included here.

Please note that concrete experiences in the family would be best to explain each slide. Inserted in this formation talk is an example of a testimony of which may be used for reference.

MIKE: Let me start our talk with an anecdote about the day when I made known my intentions for my wife GeeO.

This was August 25, 1995. Originally, I intended to tell her how much I love her on the eve of the 24th but never had the courage to do so. The following day instead I handed her an envelope and part of it wrote:

Dear GeeO,

Last night I prayed that the Lord honor my intentions for you. I just can't put it all in words what's deep inside me but one thing is very sure – I want you to know that I love you.

GeeO: I was not surprised with Mike's letter. After several months of getting to know each other, dating and being friends, I was confident this man was smitten by my charm. It was an awesome feeling to be wooed by someone you also like.

But I started to panic. I definitely felt the same for this man (Mike). But I wasn't so sure if I was called for married life. One thing I knew during this period of courtship, Mike wasn't just winning me over to be his girlfriend but to be his wife. He was 30 and I was 26.

MIKE: I gave GeeO the time she needed for *discernment*. One time, she informed me that she was leaving on a retreat to clarify things with God. A couple of months after that retreat, *finally, she fell into my trap*. It was like a relationship made in heaven.

GeeO and I were married because it was clear to us that this was what God wanted from us. On May 4, 1996, GeeO and I were married. This marriage has been blessed with three amazing sons – Marc Joseph, Matthew Joseph and John Michael Joseph.

So did our journey as a family started...a union we claimed was made in heaven and blessed with beautiful sons. But like all husbands, wives and families, we are in constant search to finding the best answers to our question: what makes a good husband? A good wife? A good parent? What is the ideal family?

As we speak before you this afternoon, we are not the perfect husband and wife to one another nor the perfect parents to our children. Our married and family life continues to be a work in progress. What keeps us strong? Who inspires us to love more each day

despite the hurts and the differences? The cornerstone of this marriage and this family is the God who made a covenant with GeeO and I when we made our vows to love and to live, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part.

Only in God can we be able to accept the invitation be a Christian family, to build our homes for Him.

(Slide 2)

Thus, allow us to share with you reflection on The Christian Family. *(Read the goals of the talk. Refer from Slide 2 then proceed with Slides 3 and 4.)*

(Slide 3)

Marriage and family are counted among the most precious of human possessions. Families are the basic units of human society.

“The well-being of the individual person, and of both human and Christian society, is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life.” (Gaudium et Spes (GS) The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 47)

(Slide 4)

As an Institution Created by God

A. “The Lord God said: ‘it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.’” Genesis 2: 18

B. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and the two shall become as one.” Matthew 19: 5

C. “Thus they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined.” Matthew 19: 6

D. “God blessed them saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.’” Genesis 1: 28

GeeO:

(Slides 5)

What does the Gospel and the Church say about marriage? In particular, what is the foundation/basis of the relation between the husband and the wife in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church?

A. Marriage is a union made by God. What God has joined let no man separate. (Mark 10:9)

“The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent.” (GS 48)

B. “They receive a share in the divine life and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church.” (GS 48)

Marriage is a union made with God and therefore we share in His call to be holy and inspire others to live a life of holiness through our family.

As St. John Paul II notes, the sacrament of marriage, and the mystery of Christ's union with his Church, are mutually illuminating. On the one hand, the analogy of spousal love helps us to understand the mystery of Christ and the Church. We can describe the Lord's love for us in many ways—it is fatherly, redemptive, generous, and constant—but to understand it as *spousal* captures a unique and profound truth. Spousal love means free and complete self-gift; it means unique and unparalleled intimacy; it means endless and unconditional fidelity. Such an analogy has been used to illuminate God's tender love for mankind.

(Slides 6)

- C. Mutual and loving fidelity presupposes the fundamental equality of the partners in marriage.

"Firmly established in the Lord, the unity of marriage will radiate from the equal personal dignity of wife and husband, a dignity acknowledged by equal and total love." (GS 48)

(Slides 7)

"The Church does not want a subjection of the wife to the husband's dictates. Her teaching is that there must be a subordination in love." (Christian Morals for the Laity)

- D. St. Paul carried this principle of equal rights into the home: "For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does." (1 Corinthians 7: 4)

(Slides 8)

Mike: *The courtship stage is always pleasant. It is very easy for the man to be loving and all-giving. He would even promise the moon and the stars. But the more beautiful journey actually begins after we said the marriage vows "to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part."*

Today, husband and wife, helping one another and sharing the responsibility of household is important. A constant dialogue in sharing the responsibilities, burdens, joys and sorrows strengthen us. Each one of us find our rhythm in our household works and we are happy about this. We try our best to help, console and laugh together.

A very good example is St Joseph – the Husband or any other personalities as good husband

- A. Leadership in Worship (1 Timothy 2:8/ 2 Chronicles 5)
- B. Providing Protection (James 5:14/Acts 20:28-31)

(Read Slide 9)

(Explain this part using your own experience as a husband.)

GeeO: ***(Read Slide 10)***

The role of wife in a family - explain your own experience from a Christian family.

Example: Mother Mary or any other personalities like good wife/mother

IN ACTION: In the eyes of the world, we look like fools. Only in an environment of mutual trust, honor and respect based on the Lord can we make our roles as Christian family a possibility. The end result is husband and wife share responsibilities, there are difficulties, healings and hurts, discouragement and comfort, but at the end, we know who we are and our responsibilities for the family.

But no matter how hard we try, life is not perfect. As for Mike's household, God allowed one disaster after the other to happen...In the eye of those storms, where was I as a helpmate?

I believe the letter I wrote to Mike on August 21, 2004 spells it all. Part of letter reads, "In our dialogue you expressed how exhausted you are to life's sunod-sunod na dagok (*unrelenting life's difficulties*) and you are almost close to saying that God is not a fair God. But tonight, we have heard God's reassurance that when we received the Sacrament of Matrimony, God also made a covenant with us that He will never abandon us. Mike, it wasn't easy at all to see God's intervention in our lives when he allowed those financial disasters to happen to us one after the other. But it was also during these moments of hopelessness and disillusionment that we were closest to Him. When we were ripped off our "worldly securities", we actually began to recognize our dependence on the God who promises that in the end things will be alright. I believe the revolution we are experiencing in our life right now as brought us even closer to Him more than when we experienced those successes." Love, GeeO

As a helpmate, I have chosen to be a blessing rather than a burden, a source of healing rather than of hurt, a source of encouragement rather than discouragement.

(Slide 11)

Apostolicam Actuositatem (Apostolic Activity) (A.A) is the Decree on the Apostolate of the People promulgated by Pope Paul VI. The decree defines the mission of the lay Christian faithful to both "lead non-believers to the faith and to instruct, strengthen, and encourage the faithful to a more fervent life". [6].

"God's plan for the world is that men should work together to renew and constantly perfect the temporal order." [7].

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

God made the married state the beginning and foundation of human society.

- "The apostolate of married persons and of families has a special importance for both the Church and civic society." (A.A.)
- "Christian couples are for each other, for their children cooperators of grace and witnesses of their faith." (A. A.)

- “Parents have the obligation to pass on the faith and to educate them in it. They are to accomplish this by word and example; they offer them wise guidance in the choice of vocation.” (A. A.)
- “To assert with vigor the right and duty of parents to give their children a Christian upbringing.”(A. A.)
- “To defend the dignity and legitimate autonomy of the family.” (A. A.) The mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family by God Himself. This mission will be accomplished if the family, by the mutual affection of its members and by family prayer, presents itself as a domestic sanctuary of the Church.” A. A.: Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People - V.C. II

Marc *Source of Love (Big Heart)*

Marc (eldest) shares his experience in the family as a source of love. His sharing deepens the definition of what a family is supposed to be.

(Slide 12)

Mike: THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY...Pope Francis

The family is important, and it is necessary for the survival of humanity. Without the family, the cultural survival of the human race would be at risk. The family, whether we like it or not, is the foundation.

There is neither real promotion of the common good nor real human development when there is ignorance of the fundamental pillars that govern a nation, its non-material goods: *life*, which is a gift of God, a value always to be protected and promoted; the *family*, the foundation of coexistence and a remedy against social fragmentation.

How precious is the family as the privileged place for transmitting the faith. In mission, also on a continental level, it is very important to reaffirm the family, which remains the essential cell of society and the Church.

(Slide 13)

GeeO: THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY UNDER ATTACK

FROM SECULAR HUMANISM

1. Contrary to some popular misconception, secular humanism is a movement with specific people promoting it and with a well-defined declaration of principles. The secularists, as their name suggests, limit their vision only to this world and refuse to see things in the light of eternity as Christians do.
2. “Refusing to human life any sacred or spiritual character, such a doctrine logically makes of marriage and family life a purely artificial and civil institution, the outcome of a specific economic system. There exists no matrimonial bond of a juridico-moral nature, that is not subject to the whim of the individual.” (Excerpt from *Divini Redemptoris*)

Mike: Dad hardly finds time to spend with the family. Mom is forced to work like dad. Children are being deprived of good parenting. The number of which is increasing geometrically. When a child is denied good parenting, he develops personal disturbances of one kind or

another, he passes these psychological difficulties on to his children and ultimately society loses its vitality as the number of disturbed people increases.

FROM ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Economic pressures have added to the woes of the family. We work hard for the money rather than let money work for us.

“Dear families, you know very well that the true joy which we experience in the family is not superficial; it does not come from material objects, from the fact that everything seems to be going well... True joy comes from a profound harmony between persons, something which we all feel in our hearts and which makes us experience the beauty of togetherness, of mutual support along life’s journey. But the basis of this feeling of deep joy is the presence of God in the family and his love, which is welcoming, merciful, and respectful towards all. God alone knows how to create harmony from differences. But if God’s love is lacking, the family loses its harmony, self-centeredness prevails and joy fades. But the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally.” – Pope Francis

GeeO: *(Slide 14)*

STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

In the words of Pope Francis

The free gift of a parent’s time is so important.

Be present. There is no such thing as scheduling quality time for you children. Planning to set some quality time for your children is not quality time. Quality time is making oneself present and available when your children need you.

Come to me, families, and I will give you rest, so that your joy may be complete.

Life is often wearisome. Work is tiring; looking for work is exhausting. But what is most burdensome in life is a lack of love. It weighs upon us never to receive a smile, not to be welcomed. Certain silences are oppressive, even at times within families, between husbands and wives, between parents and children, among siblings. Without love, the burden becomes even heavier

Do you pray together from time to time as a family?

Prayer is something personal, and besides there is never a good time, a moment of peace... Yes, all that is true enough, but it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God, like the tax collector! And we need simplicity! Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is something all of you can do. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And praying for one another!

John *Source of Hope (the Beloved)*

John (youngest) shares his experience about the power of prayer and the power of a praying family.

Mike: *(Slide 15)*

STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

Some suggestions how to help our families.

- Plan and take the time to build a strong family with Christian values.
- Schedule your priorities to ensure that the family has time together.
- Schedule frequent family recreations, i.e. outings, movies, eating out, etc.
- Pray together. The family that prays together stays together.
- Participate in Church services and activities together as a family.
- As parents, assume your obligation as educators to teach your children Christian faith and morals.

I always believe that values in life are caught – not taught. And more so, I believe that the gift of parental love – the fervent kind that includes caring enough to be there and providing the discipline and guidance until our children are old enough to make good decisions – is the only thing that will get our children through the jungle out there. When children know that they are loved and accepted regardless of what happens, this gives them more confidence and esteem to face life's daily realities. And what is this gift of parental love – it is the gift of yourself.

GeeO: *(Slide 16)*

The Family-in-Mission: Announcing the Good News of Jesus

If the very nature of the Christian family is "good news," everything about its mission is also Good News. As the domestic Church the family is always a family-in-mission. Like the whole Church the family is sent to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to every strata of society and to every dimension of life, social, political, economic, and cultural. If, indeed, the Gospel of the Lord is summed up in the commandment of love, then it is the family's "mission to guard, reveal and communicate love" (Statement from the Philippines Bishops' conference on Family [FC] 17).

The first task of the family is to form itself into a community of love, love between husband and wife, love between parents and children. Marital love must reflect the divine "unconditional steadfastness with which God loves his people" (FC 20).

The second task of the family is to serve life. Husband and wife cooperate with God in "transmitting by cooperation the divine image from person to person" (FC 28).

The other tasks of the family-in-mission are to help renew society and the Church. When parents as the first teachers of their children form in their children the values of Christ, they sow the seed of renewal for the entire society. Respect, justice, dialogue and love (see FC 43) are characteristics of the family centered in Christ.

(Sharing from Mike how...the witness of parents, parents to set the tone and make clear to the children the more important things in life, getting the children involved early on in church activities a community services, letting them lead family prayers. Bible sharing in the family)

Mike: *(Slide 17)*

As the fundamental community in the Church, the family has to participate in the task of the renewing the Church itself. It is the family that must lead in realizing such a formidable vision of a renewed Church.

Matthew: *Matthew shares his experience of how the example in the family (particularly the witness of his older brother) has encouraged and made him commit to youth work in the Church. "The Band of Brothers" (Testimony appears in a youth magazine.)*

Mike: *(Slide 18)*

"Christian families are missionary families in their everyday life, in their doing everyday things, as they bring to everything the salt and the leaven of faith!" The family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is the leaven of society."

- Pope Francis

Allow us one more story as we are about to end this talk. We call it "Our Paschal Triduum, The Family Mission Experience".

GeeO: Even before we could say let's pack our bags for San Antonio de Padua Catholic Mission (an SVD mission area) in Aguinaldo, Ifugao where the family was scheduled to facilitate the Parish's Lenten Recollection, the family mission trip was already threatened by forces we cannot control. THERE WAS THE THREAT OF SUPERTYPHOON MAYSAK which was headed towards Isabela and Ifugao. Of course, Mike's initial reaction was there was no way he was putting his family in danger.

That night, Holy Wednesday and with everyone present, Mike called for a meeting. It was an important meeting since in a few hours we were about to leave or cancel the whole mission trip. It was a tensed meeting. We WERE TORN BETWEEN WHAT WAS REAL AND WHAT FAITH IS ALL ABOUT. The eldest was the most vocal. Given the situation, he said there will always be some other time. Without much thought, I told them that there will be no typhoon. Only God can "turn the tide and calm the angry sea". Since we were going nowhere, Matthew volunteered to draw options to which we agreed and vote after which.

1st Option: We go but we leave right after the recollection to avoid the super typhoon.
2nd Option: We cancel the mission trip and have the parish priest schedule us some other time. The eldest and youngest voted for Option 2. Mike and I voted to GO. It was a 2 – 2 vote and only Matthew was left to decide. He said YES to Option 1. WE WERE GOING ON THE MISSION TRIP NO MATTER WHAT THE ODDS WERE. Later, when we were packing our bags I asked Matthew what made him decide to go. His answer was simple. WHEN I CHOOSE CHRIST, I SAY YES EVEN WHEN IT IS INCONVENIENT FOR ME.

Mike: *(Slide 19)*

CHALLENGE

If the family becomes a school of prayer and holiness, a community of faithful disciples, a nursery of integrity, justice and peace, and a sanctuary of love and life, there is no doubt that the family will create ripples of divine goodness in the neighborhood and in the wider society. It would effectively and credibly witness to the saving and transforming Good News of Jesus. (The Christian Family: Good News for The Third Millennium)

We continue to be God's work in progress. May our Blessed Mother, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ intercede for all of us that our families become what we are supposed to be – the Good News for the world.

(End with the Letter from the Family Retreat)

MIKE

Dear God, if there is one more prayer we ask of you as a family is that you sustain the grace of love, openness, understanding and forgiveness that you have blessed each member of the during the last 2 days of our retreat.

It was easy to sit down, dear God, and respond to your invitation to write letters, to dialogue and to reach out because there was a structure and opportunity provided.

As we go back to life's daily realities, help us to do the same.

Embolden me, O God, as the pastoral head of this family to constantly lead my family to acts and expressions of love, to openness and understanding, to forgiveness and acceptance.

GEEO

Teach me, dear God, to be my husband's light and helper when he forgets and is busy with other things.

TOGETHER

The challenge is bigger now, dear God, especially with all of the world's complications So please send your angels to help us stay focus on your invitation be a Christian Family.

In grateful surrender,

Mike & Geoo