

**THE FAMILY AT THE VATICAN COUNCIL II:  
AN AREA OF URGENCY**

Kenduanyi Mirabel Nagei<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

The Second Vatican Council has been described as the greatest religious event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Reading from the intention of the convener, Pope John XXIII, and the intention and pastoral tone employed by the Council expressed in the 16 documents that resulted from the Council, it is said that the Church was here examining herself *ad Intra and Ad Extra*. In both dimensions, the Council set out to present its doctrine positively and constructively, and not merely in the interest of apologetics or to formulate rules of conduct. *Ad Intra*, the Church was answering the question “*quid dicis de te ipso?*”-what do you say of yourself? In answering this question, she had to answer other related questions such as: what do you say of the role of the Church in the world? What do you say of the missionary activities of the Church? What do you say of the members of the Church? What do you say about the Family?

**1.0 Introduction**

Part two of Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (hereinafter GS)<sup>2</sup> is titled “Some More Urgent Problems.” Under this chapter (GS 46) the Council identifies areas which excite general concerns among which are marriage and the family, culture, economic and social life, politics, peace and so on. In considering the family as an area of urgency, the Council was looking at the family and considering it in all its implication for the Christian life, the Church and the society. The Council reaffirmed the beauty and duty of the Christian family but did not fail to highlight the areas where there are “shadows.” The Council in addressing the family set out to do as they stated “we must seek light for this problem from the principles which Christ has given us; in this way the faithful will receive guidance and all men will be enlightened in their search for solutions to so many complex problems”

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<sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 Dec. in *Vatican II Council: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* Volume 1, by Austin Flannery, O.P., Bandra, Mumbai: ST PAULS, 2007. Note: The other Vatican II documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Unitatis reintergratio* are all taken from this version of Vatican II Documents.

In this paper, we will look at the family following the guidance and enlightening proposals of the Council. We shall consider the Council's vision on marriage and the Family, how the Christian family can become a Christian novitiate, the fears and anguish of the family, what the Council calls "areas of shadows" then the joy and the hope of the family then following by a conclusion.

### **The Family: the Council's Vision**

As stated in the abstract above, the Church was examining herself *ad intra* and *ad extra*. The reflection on the Church *ad intra* meant that she had to reflect on issues within her own household. The family as a "domestic Church" within the bigger household of the Church was reflected upon in some of the sixteen documents that came out of the Council. The decree on Lay People in the Church *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (hereinafter AA) the Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (hereinafter LG), the Constitution on the Church in the Modern world *Gaudium et Spes*, the decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Reintegratio* (hereinafter UR) and many others either addressed directly or made reference to the family. While GS considered the dignity of marriage and the family (GS 47-52) AA considered the family as an area of the apostolate of the lay people (AA 11). LG considered the Christian family with the chapter (IV, no 35) which addresses the place of the Laity within the *Self Understanding* of the Church and UR looks particularly at things to be safeguarded and those to be dispensed with regards to mixed marriages.

The family at the Council was considered in its Latin origin *familiaris*.<sup>3</sup> By this consideration, "the family includes all those who are in any way connected to the family: relatives, servants, guests, apprentices who sleep or at least eat with the family, and student Boarders."<sup>4</sup> The family is built on the sacrament of marriage which is the companionship of male and female which produces the primary form of interpersonal communion is God's design (cf. AA 11). Far from being just a companionship of male and female, the married state is also said to be "the beginning and foundation of human society". This implies that "the well being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound with the healthy state of conjugal and family life" (GS 47). The mission of being the primary vital cell of the society is a "mandate" given to the family by God himself (Cf. GS 48) and is "rooted in the contract of the partners" which is manifested in their "irrevocable consent and confirmed by natural law". According to John Paul II, by its nature, marriage which has the special mission of perpetuating humanity though

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<sup>3</sup> Ferdinand Klostermann "The laity" in *Commentary on the Documents of the Vatican Council II*. Volume 1. Trans. Lalit Adolphus, Kervin Smyth, and Richard Strachan, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1989) p.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jordan Aumann, *On the Front Lines; The Lay Person in the Church After Vatican II*. (New York: Alba House, 1997), P.339.

built on the partners transcends the couple.<sup>5</sup> It transcends the couple in that the family extends beyond the individual household: it is oriented towards society. In this regard, "the family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: for it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues.<sup>6</sup> The family is thus a basic community for the society and a basic cell of the society.

The condition of families the Council says has a decisive bearing on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of human society as a whole (GS 48); hence Christian couples are for each other, and for their children and other relatives' "cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith." The Council list a number of things to be done (AA 11): the family then should offer true hospitality, practice justice and other good works that benefit those in want: they should adopt abandoned children, welcome strangers, help with the running of schools, support adolescence with advice, assisting engaged couples as they prepare for marriage, supporting married people and families in material and moral crises and taking care of the elderly by providing their needs and procuring for them a fair share of their of the fruits of economic progress. In doing these things enumerated above, (LG 35) calls on the couple in their married life to be witnesses of faith and love to one another and to their children. For the Council, 'the Christian family proclaims aloud both the present power of the Kingdom of God and the hope of the blessed life" The couple should champion to each other, to their children, to all those associated with the family and to the entire society.

### **The Christian Family: A Christian Novitiate**

The Council writes that "married life is ordered towards the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory" (GS 50). One is not to mistakenly think that the family is only oriented towards the begetting of children. For the Council, married love which is eminently human love because it is an affection between two persons rooted in the will embraces the good of the whole person, and its spiritual and physical expression with a unique dignity ennobles it (cf. GS 49). The family is also the "domestic Church" and as a "domestic Church", it is called to a life of faith. The Council believes that, *primi fidei praecones et educatores* meaning parents shall be the first to proclaim the faith to their children and to rear them or educate them in it. In this light, the family through mutual affection for its members and through family prayers is said to present itself as a domestic sanctuary of the Church; if the whole family takes its part in the Church's liturgical worship. It is therefore the role of the family to bring up children in the

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<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, The Church in Africa, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1995) No. 85.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 166.

faith, which implies to bring them into the world and to bring them to God so that they can become responsible agents of social transformation. The parents have the responsibility not only towards their religious education, but in every aspect of life in society. They should pass values, particularly values of faith. It is their responsibility to provide and inculcate civic and religious values to their children, to form good citizens and good Christians. In this light, religious education become the foundation of a civic education.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Code of Canon Law (1983)<sup>8</sup> which is also a product of the Council, marriage is both a vocation and a sacrament (cf. Can. 226). Married people have the duty to strive for the building up of the people of God through their marriage and family. By virtue of the fact that they gave life to their children, they have the most serious obligation to educate them. They have a serious duty to watch over the education of their children and to ensure that it is done according to the mind of the Church. Jordan Aumann sheds more light on this point. For him, since marriage is the normal vocation for men and women, everyone has the right to marry if he or she is suited for the marriage life except one chooses otherwise to be single. And that the first obligation of the married persons is in their own homes and family which we have said is “the domestic church.” This implies that “a person who neglects his/her family even for apostolic or religious activity is failing to live up to the duties of that state of life.” John Paul II reaffirms this when he says that “the duty of the laity to society at large begins primarily in the family, hence there is need for married people to be convinced of the unique and irreplaceable value that the family has in the development of society and the Church itself”<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the duty to educate their children, emphasis is laid on the fact that it should be according to the Catholic mind, other Canons in the Code makes further reference to the education of Catholic children. Canon 776, 777 reminds parish priests of the duty to provide religious instruction. Canon 778 asks the same of religious superiors and others who staff parishes or schools. Canons 793 and 814 more precisely with Catholic schools and is said to contain important legislation that pertains to parents, parish priests, religious and bishops. Parents are to watch over the education of their children diligently. Ensuring they have a proper education tallies with their role as instructors and formators so to say in this Christian novitiate.

### **The Family: Fear and Anguish**

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Anthony Akinwale, “Strengthen the Family, Secure the Nation” paper presented as Guest Lecturer at the annual Cardinal Okogie Lecture, St Agnes’ Catholic Church, Maryland, Lagos, October 16, 2014.p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *The Code of Canon Law*, New revised English Translation (India: Theological Publications, 2005)

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifidelis laici*, in *John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation* (India: International Publishing House, 2005), no. 40.

In as much as the Council's tone is optimistic, she acknowledges areas of difficulties. It has been said already that the condition of families has a decisive bearing on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of human society as a whole (GS 48). The Council identified "shadows" lingering over the family in the areas of "polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love. The dishonor often brought to married life by selfishness, hedonism, and unlawful contraceptives" (GS 47) Aumann supports this by quoting John Paul II who points out that "signs are not lacking of a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values in the family; a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children, the concrete difficulties that the family experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces, the scourge of abortion, the ever more recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality"<sup>10</sup> In the midst of these "shadows" which perpetrate "fear and "anguish" within the domestic Church and seem to cast a gloomy cloud over the institution of marriage, if the family is properly oriented by the spouses, it can become a kind of novitiate for Christian maturity.

George Weigel spelt out some of the things Vatican missed especially in *Gaudium et Spes*. For him, Vatican II did not foresee the "full measure of the effect of the DNA double-helix" of James Watson and Francis Crick and the new genetics that will follow. It did not foresee the "utilitarianism" of Jeremy Bentham and his followers will challenge the Christian view of the Human person. The Council did not anticipate emergence of "radical feminism" and its consequences on the West, neither did it foresee the "two worker family and the challenges it will effect on the family". The Council did not did not foresee the "immortality project" of the new genetics and the new biotechnologies. It did not preempt that "a drop in fertility" across the globe led by Europe whose lack of children has led to a new demographic term to be invented. It did not foresee the "silicon revolution", the rise of the internet and other new media communications. It did not anticipate the "radical forms of Islam" like jihadism, neither did it anticipate the fantastic "corruption and incompetence of post-colonial governments in the third world"<sup>11</sup> To this, we can add the legalization of same-sex marriage in some Countries. The implication of his assertion is that because the Council did not foresee the above mentioned issues which in one way or the other have an impact on the family, the Council in a way had failed to provide solutions to these problems.

Though we agree with Weigel that the Council did not foresee certain things the way they happened, it is difficult to ascertain that the Council really failed to address them. Our believe is that in the Council's writings, we can find germs of

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<sup>10</sup> Jordan Aumann quoting *Familiaris consortio* no. 6 of John Paul II in *On The Frontlines; The Lay person in the Church after Vatican II*. P, 126

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Gorge Weigel "Recuing *Gaudium et Spes*: The New Humanism of John Paul II" in *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring 2010, pp. 254-259.

solutions to current day crisis in the family. Nonetheless, the family which was a topic of urgency at Vatican II is still an area of Urgency even now. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome to reflect on the “the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization” This was to pave way for the Extraordinary General Assembly which took place in October 2014 which is setting the groundwork for the Ordinary Assembly to take place in October 2015. The family like many aspects of the Church’s life is challenged and maybe will always be, but the Council believed that the principles given by Christ which she laid down could serve as an illumination on that part of the Christian family. The challenges in this area then can only be met in a spirit of true Christian charity and adherence to the Church’s teaching. While people blame the Church for ignoring science in opposing same sex marriage, for punishing the divorced, and for being lax with annulment<sup>12</sup> and given the current challenges the Synod on the Family is discussing with regards to the pastoral care of the divorced and remarried, John Corbett writes

The Church’s teaching on marriage, divorce, human sexuality, and chastity can be hard. Christ himself saw this when he proclaimed it. However, the truth brings with it authentic message of freedom and hope: there is a way out of vice and sin. There is a way forwards that leads to happiness and sin. Recalling these truths, the Church has reason to accept the task of evangelization in our own age with joy and hope.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Family: Joy and Hope**

As we talk of “New Evangelization”, the church continue to believe that the family is at the heart of the New Evangelization, this because the family is at the heart of the civilization of love. If the truth about communion of person in marriage and the family can regain its splendour, the building up of a new civilization of love will begin. In this regard, ministry to families forms an important part of evangelization.<sup>14</sup>

As a primary cell of the society, the family contributes immensely to nation building. Thus strengthening the family leads to strengthening the neighbourhood, the society and consequently the nation.<sup>15</sup> In order to strengthen the family, the

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Holy Taylor Coolman, “proposing a Christian Vision of Marriage: What can the Dominican Tradition teach us?” In *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2014, p. 630.

<sup>13</sup> John Corbett Et. Al “Recent Proposals for the Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried: A theological Assessment. In *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2014, p. 630.

<sup>14</sup> Perry J. Cahall, “The Nucleus of the New Evangelization” In *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2014, p. 54-55

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Anthony Akinwale “Strengthen the Family, Secure the Nation” P. 15.

synergy of family, the Church and the whole society is needed if the family is to succeed at its task. Because the family is by its nature open to other families, and to society, and undertakes social roles, the good health of the society depends on the good of family. As the Church in GS tries to promote human dignity, to combat atheism, to promote social justice, peace and stable political orders that work for the service of humanity, what a better place to start.

Anthony Akinwale observes that a society stands on three legs--education, law enforcement, and the arbitration of justice (school, the police, the judiciary). These three legs are strengthened by values inculcated in the family, the Christian novitiate. To this effect, the priority of family over society and over the state will always be affirmed by the Church. The Church asserts that every social model that intends the good of man must not overlook the centrality and social responsibility of the family.<sup>16</sup> There are “shadow” in the area of the family but there are also hopes and joys. This is because even in the midst of these challenges, some families are doing well. The vision of The Council was that of happy families which will intend make happy Christians and happy citizens of the world.

## **Conclusion**

The Council envisaged healthy families providing a good religious and civic education which will in tend produce good religious men and women, faithful to the ideals of the Gospel. The Council called for a witness of the Christian life which will have a positive influence on the temporary order in the way the carryout their civic duties. A formed conscience, one that is able to discern the dissenting voices of the time can only be one properly educated in religious matters. In this light, there is need for profound theological formation for parents who cooperate with the Church. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod<sup>17</sup>, states that “in her pastoral activity, the Church is called to assist families in the upbringing of children, beginning with Christian initiation. Catechesis and formation in the parish are indispensable means of assisting the family in educating, particularly during preparation for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.”

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 2005) p. 121.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly, “New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith” *Instrumentum Laboris*, (Vatican City, 2012)pp. 132-133.

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**2.0 Introduction**

Part two of Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (hereinafter GS)<sup>19</sup> is titled “Some More Urgent Problems.” Under this chapter (GS 46) the Council identifies areas which excite general concerns among which are marriage and the family, culture, economic and social life, politics, peace and so on. In considering the family as an area of urgency, the Council was looking at the family and considering it in all its implication for the Christian life, the Church and the society. The Council reaffirmed the beauty and duty of the Christian family but did not fail to highlight the areas where there are “shadows.” The Council in addressing the family set out to do as they stated “we must seek light for this problem from the principles which Christ has given us; in this way the faithful will receive guidance and all men will be enlightened in their search for solutions to so many complex problems”

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marriage and the Family, how the Christian family can become a Christian novitiate, the fears and anguish of the family, what the Council calls “areas of shadows” then the joy and the hope of the family then following by a conclusion.

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The family at the Council was considered in its Latin origin *familiaris*.<sup>20</sup> By this consideration, “the family includes all those who are in any way connected to the family: relatives, servants, guests, apprentices who sleep or at least eat with the family, and student Boarders.”<sup>21</sup> The family is built on the sacrament of marriage which is the companionship of male and female which produces the primary form of interpersonal communion is God’s design (cf. AA 11). Far from being just a companionship of male and female, the married state is also said to be “the beginning and foundation of human society”. This implies that “the well being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound with the healthy state of conjugal and family life” (GS 47). The mission of being the primary vital cell of the society is a “mandate” given to the family by God himself (Cf. GS 48) and is “rooted in the contract of the partners” which is manifested in their “irrevocable consent and confirmed by natural law”. According to John Paul II, by its nature, marriage which has the special mission of perpetuating humanity though

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built on the partners transcends the couple.<sup>22</sup> It transcends the couple in that the family extends beyond the individual household: it is oriented towards society. In this regard, "the family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: for it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues."<sup>23</sup> The family is thus a basic community for the society and a basic cell of the society.

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faith, which implies to bring them into the world and to bring them to God so that they can become responsible agents of social transformation. The parents have the responsibility not only towards their religious education, but in every aspect of life in society. They should pass values, particularly values of faith. It is their responsibility to provide and inculcate civic and religious values to their children, to form good citizens and good Christians. In this light, religious education become the foundation of a civic education.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifidelis laici*, in *John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation* (India: International Publishing House, 2005), no. 40.

In as much as the Council's tone is optimistic, she acknowledges areas of difficulties. It has been said already that the condition of families has a decisive bearing on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of human society as a whole (GS 48). The Council identified "shadows" lingering over the family in the areas of "polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love. The dishonor often brought to married life by selfishness, hedonism, and unlawful contraceptives" (GS 47) Aumann supports this by quoting John Paul II who points out that "signs are not lacking of a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values in the family; a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children, the concrete difficulties that the family experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces, the scourge of abortion, the ever more recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality"<sup>27</sup> In the midst of these "shadows" which perpetrate "fear and "anguish" within the domestic Church and seem to cast a gloomy cloud over the institution of marriage, if the family is properly oriented by the spouses, it can become a kind of novitiate for Christian maturity.

George Weigel spelt out some of the things Vatican missed especially in *Gaudium et Spes*. For him, Vatican II did not foresee the "full measure of the effect of the DNA double-helix" of James Watson and Francis Crick and the new genetics that will follow. It did not foresee the "utilitarianism" of Jeremy Bentham and his followers will challenge the Christian view of the Human person. The Council did not anticipate emergence of "radical feminism" and its consequences on the West, neither did it foresee the "two worker family and the challenges it will effect on the family". The Council did not did not foresee the "immortality project" of the new genetics and the new biotechnologies. It did not preempt that "a drop in fertility" across the globe led by Europe whose lack of children has led to a new demographic term to be invented. It did not foresee the "silicon revolution", the rise of the internet and other new media communications. It did not anticipate the "radical forms of Islam" like jihadism, neither did it anticipate the fantastic "corruption and incompetence of post-colonial governments in the third world"<sup>28</sup> To this, we can add the legalization of same-sex marriage in some Countries. The implication of his assertion is that because the Council did not foresee the above mentioned issues which in one way or the other have an impact on the family, the Council in a way had failed to provide solutions to these problems.

Though we agree with Weigel that the Council did not foresee certain things the way they happened, it is difficult to ascertain that the Council really failed to address them. Our believe is that in the Council's writings, we can find germs of

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<sup>27</sup> Jordan Aumann quoting *Familiaris consortio* no. 6 of John Paul II in *On The Frontlines; The Lay person in the Church after Vatican II*. P, 126

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Gorge Weigel "Recuing *Gaudium et Spes*: The New Humanism of John Paul II" in *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring 2010, pp. 254-259.

solutions to current day crisis in the family. Nonetheless, the family which was a topic of urgency at Vatican II is still an area of Urgency even now. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome to reflect on the “the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization” This was to pave way for the Extraordinary General Assembly which took place in October 2014 which is setting the groundwork for the Ordinary Assembly to take place in October 2015. The family like many aspects of the Church’s life is challenged and maybe will always be, but the Council believed that the principles given by Christ which she laid down could serve as an illumination on that part of the Christian family. The challenges in this area then can only be met in a spirit of true Christian charity and adherence to the Church’s teaching. While people blame the Church for ignoring science in opposing same sex marriage, for punishing the divorced, and for being lax with annulment<sup>29</sup> and given the current challenges the Synod on the Family is discussing with regards to the pastoral care of the divorced and remarried, John Corbett writes

The Church’s teaching on marriage, divorce, human sexuality, and chastity can be hard. Christ himself saw this when he proclaimed it. However, the truth brings with it authentic message of freedom and hope: there is a way out of vice and sin. There is a way forwards that leads to happiness and sin. Recalling these truths, the Church has reason to accept the task of evangelization in our own age with joy and hope.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Family: Joy and Hope**

As we talk of “New Evangelization”, the church continue to believe that the family is at the heart of the New Evangelization, this because the family is at the heart of the civilization of love. If the truth about communion of person in marriage and the family can regain its splendour, the building up of a new civilization of love will begin. In this regard, ministry to families forms an important part of evangelization.<sup>31</sup>

As a primary cell of the society, the family contributes immensely to nation building. Thus strengthening the family leads to strengthening the neighbourhood, the society and consequently the nation.<sup>32</sup> In order to strengthen the family, the

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Holy Taylor Coolman, “proposing a Christian Vision of Marriage: What can the Dominican Tradition teach us?” In *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2014, p. 630.

<sup>30</sup> John Corbett Et. Al “Recent Proposals for the Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried: A theological Assessment. In *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2014, p. 630.

<sup>31</sup> Perry J. Cahall, “The Nucleus of the New Evangelization” In *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2014, p. 54-55

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Anthony Akinwale “Strengthen the Family, Secure the Nation” P. 15.

synergy of family, the Church and the whole society is needed if the family is to succeed at its task. Because the family is by its nature open to other families, and to society, and undertakes social roles, the good health of the society depends on the good of family. As the Church in GS tries to promote human dignity, to combat atheism, to promote social justice, peace and stable political orders that work for the service of humanity, what a better place to start.

Anthony Akinwale observes that a society stands on three legs--education, law enforcement, and the arbitration of justice (school, the police, the judiciary). These three legs are strengthened by values inculcated in the family, the Christian novitiate. To this effect, the priority of family over society and over the state will always be affirmed by the Church. The Church asserts that every social model that intends the good of man must not overlook the centrality and social responsibility of the family.<sup>33</sup> There are “shadow” in the area of the family but there are also hopes and joys. This is because even in the midst of these challenges, some families are doing well. The vision of The Council was that of happy families which will intend make happy Christians and happy citizens of the world.

## **Conclusion**

The Council envisaged healthy families providing a good religious and civic education which will in tend produce good religious men and women, faithful to the ideals of the Gospel. The Council called for a witness of the Christian life which will have a positive influence on the temporary order in the way the carryout their civic duties. A formed conscience, one that is able to discern the dissenting voices of the time can only be one properly educated in religious matters. In this light, there is need for profound theological formation for parents who cooperate with the Church. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod<sup>34</sup>, states that “in her pastoral activity, the Church is called to assist families in the upbringing of children, beginning with Christian initiation. Catechesis and formation in the parish are indispensable means of assisting the family in educating, particularly during preparation for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.”

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 2005) p. 121.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly, “New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith” *Instrumentum Laboris*, (Vatican City, 2012)pp. 132-133.