



# The Family LifeLine

Bulletin of the Family Life Society, Archdiocese of Singapore

## The Christian Family in the Modern World

Highlights from our one day seminar



Archbishop Chia at the opening Mass



Parish family life ministry representatives

In an ongoing effort to provide families with a vision of Christian Family Life and to build a pro-family culture in Church and society, the Family Life Society (FLS) organised a one day seminar on the "Christian Family in the Modern World" on the 8th Dec 2008 at the Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre.

Attended by some 60 leaders of existing parish based family life ministries and also by those intending to start one, the seminar was organised around the themes found in the 1981 apostolic exhortation with the same name which was issued by Pope John Paul II. The day's programme provided an overview of the bright spots and shadows of the family today, discussed both the plan of God for marriage and the family and the role of Christian families and ended with a sketch of what proper pastoral care of families would entail.

### Holy Mass and Homily by Archbishop Nicholas Chia

The seminar kicked off with Mass specially offered by His Grace, Archbishop Nicholas Chia on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. In his homily, his Grace reminded all involved in family ministry that like our Blessed Mother, Christ must be at the center of our work. "Many problems in the world today stem from the absence of God in the lives of many people and a broken

family life." "Restoring and supporting families, the Archbishop added, is to build a world of peace and justice."

Participants were addressed by a passionate panel of speakers which included Dr. Tracey Rowland, Dean of the Melbourne based John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family.

### Keynote delivered by Dean of John Paul II Institute

In her opening keynote, Dr Rowland provided a somber but hope-filled analysis of the situation facing the family today. "We live in the best of times and worst of times" said Dr. Rowland quoting a famous saying from Charles Dickens. "While we have people like Sir Richard Branson of Virgin airlines bragging about his sexual exploits and investing



Dr Tracey Rowland, Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family (Melbourne)

large sums of money in biotechnology, the ethical dimensions of which remain uncertain, we also see how a spirituality of marriage, developed especially by the late Pope John Paul II has impacted the lives of many young married couples." Dr. Rowland shared that at a recent Catholic University of America gathering, there were twice as many students then were adults and many of these students had large families of their own, filling the auditorium with laughter and life. "These young people" added Dr Rowland "would be the key in the building of a civilisation of love."

### The Family Perspective in Pastoral Planning

Fr. James Yeo parish priest of St. Anne's Church shared what constituted proper pastoral care of families. The "family perspective" is important in all our pastoral planning. Very often, our parish activities separate family members from each other. We should instead plan our activities with the entire family in mind. Fr. Yeo, who has recently completed his PhD from the University of Notre Dame, Australia which mined the wisdom of the Church's teaching on marriage and family for the Singapore context further added that the family apostolate is a good avenue for inter-religious dialogue and evangelisation. "Everybody regardless of race or religion would want a happy family. If Catholics are able to live good family lives and reach out as a family to other families, it would not be surprising if non-Christian families begin to make enquires about the Catholic faith."

### Personal Stories of Family Life

Subsequent addresses were heartfelt and personal. Dr Bernard and Ying Thio who are

coordinators of the Couple Empowerment Programme (CEP) shared their own family lives when they spoke on the topic of the "Role of the Christian Family". Theirs was a family of six children with both sets of in-laws living with each other. "We had tough times but we had a lot of joyful moments. Our big extended family is a network of love," shared Ying Thio. Dr Bernard also made a special call to fathers to be emotionally involved in the lives of their children. "Sons need a role model so that they know how to be a gentleman. Also, if a daughter is emotionally distant from her father, she will begin to find daddies in all the wrong places."

There was also no shortage of funny moments. When discussing St Paul's letter to the Ephesians which speaks of the husband being head of his wife, Dr. John Hui, who delivered the talk on "the plan of God for marriage and the family" quipped that "while the husband may be the head, the wife is the neck that turns the head". "As such, when she asks me for something during my favorite football match, I had better drop everything and listen!" said Dr. Hui to peals of laughter.

### Prayer Important

Yet amidst all the inputs provided, the importance of prayer was reiterated by two of the conference attendees. Mr. Jarvis Tan, who is the parish pastoral executive of Holy Spirit Church shared that when he has identified a few couples who can spearhead the family life ministry in his parish, he simply arranged for them to come together and pray

and share their lives for a couple of months before actually plunging into the work. Likewise, Mr. Tony Yeo from Our Lady of Perpetual Succor Church, which runs a successful family life ministry for the last couple of

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years, shared that when members began to neglect their weekly prayer meet due to work commitments or other reasons the ministry began to run into difficulties.

This congress, the first organised for parish based

family life ministries is part of a larger plan of FLS to help start family life ministries within each parish and to support them. Mr. Bernard Yu, who is the Honorary Executive Director, shared that "FLS wants to be there supporting groups at parish level who are interested in promoting Christian family life. They know the concerns of their parishioners best. As such, this seminar serves both as input for those involved in family life ministry as well as an opportunity for networking and further collaboration. We hope to introduce further meetings like this in the not too distant future."



Fr James Yeo sharing insights from his doctoral thesis on family ministry

## Celebration of Life

## (COL) Presentations

Invite us to speak to your youth group, parents group or catechism students and we will be glad to deliver a specially tailored "Celebration of Life" (COL) presentation! Delivered in an easy to understand and down to earth manner, you would discover what love is all about, the truth and meaning of sex, the joy of a virtue driven life, the dignity of all human beings and much more. Go to <http://www.familylife.sg/programmes/celebration.htm> to find out more and to read testimonies.



**Family Life Society**  
Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre

If you have a personal story to share, comments or feedback to give, please feel free to email to [nick\\_chui@veritas.org.sg](mailto:nick_chui@veritas.org.sg)

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