

FAMILY, WORK AND PARTY

Testimony on the festive Day of the families within "the Christian Family Community" Association

1. It is a great honor, for our couple, to testify in front of this august assembly, of a life experience which goes well with the topic adopted for this 7th World meeting of Families.
2. We are at the origin of the Congolese laymen association. It was created in October 1984, and its objectives are to be a community of prayers and life. It is recognized by the State as a non-profit association; and is in the Church of DR Congo, a private association of the faithful ones.
3. This association called "Christian Family Community" (CFC), which has the principal objectives like the sanctification of couples and families. Given for us laymen, our sanctification passes by a Christian engagement and a testimony of life in our family, parish, professional environment and even of entertainment.
4. We aim for harmony and marital happiness. In a society where marriage is seen as a place of suffering, we dare say that it can and must be a place to build happiness. We live this experience with our children.
5. A survey shows, at the present time, that ten thousand couples in DR Congo, in Africa and even in Europe, are responsible for almost fifty thousand children of all ages from elementary school to University.
6. A structure we call "Commission of Framing the Christian's Family Children" is specialized to guide our children. This structure divides the children in junior, youngest, young of the Christian Family (JFC) and senior children. Thanks to this that, our children are followed and protected against temptation for so many young people to attend new churches and various evangelic currents. It organizes many activities throughout the year, in favour of our children, such as conferences, vacation camps, a school, academic and spiritual accompaniment, mediation in relations with the parents. Men and especially women who agree to act as guides of these young girls and young boys, and who are trained for this purpose, play an immense role for our families' balance.
7. Within the framework of this testimony, we will limit ourselves to an activity: **the festive day which gathers us, once a year, with our children.**

8. In our country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), the economic situation is difficult. Parents have serious problems to manage and tie both at the ends of the month. Family life is more and more sacrificed for economic survival. To remind families the importance of having a family's time, we decided together to institute one day festive which we call "Day Christian Family". This day ceremony takes place in a venue fixed in advance, every 1st Sunday of August, during the school and academic holidays.
9. On that, an average of five thousand people take place, parents and children included. It contains several significant parameters. Each relative, father and mother, if occupied, does himself the best to be present all the day with his children. He/Her thus, does not have any other engagement this day. Each family prepares a simple meal which will be taken in common with other families, brought together according to affinities'. All activities of the day, from the reception to the closing prayer, must be entrusted by the children themselves, guided by the oldest ones. Each parent commits himself to respect this organization.
10. For the day as such, this one starts with a mass, in the open, animated by the young people choral. This for saying the families' recognition to God which knows that the children are, for them, a gift of its love and that they are only of simple guardians of these lives in full blossoming. Generally, during the homily, the celebrating put the emphasis on the importance of the **harmonious relations within the family**.
11. Once the mass is over the program itself can start. It is generally about a series of plays which put in competition the young people between them (jumps out of bag, basic races and various competitions). But, the key of the meeting is in fact, the sports activities that oppose young people to parents. Let us quote, as an example, the football opposing a team of young people to a team of dads; specifically female sports activities opposing girls to their moms; whole in a very great environment of friendliness.
12. In fact, the main characteristic of this day is this environment of single exchanges which make it possible for young people to be in contact with any parent, for a joke, an exchange, a discussion, or simply to share a cold drink together.
13. It should be known that, generally, the African society is rather structured in "age groups". The adults live together, according to their ages. Better, men live between men and women live between women. Children do not form part of the adults' society. Parents, especially fathers, are respected and even feared. The convivial relations between the generations are thus not an ordinary thing.

14. However, thanks to this day that, we gradually manage to allow young people and adults, parents, to speak freely together, without ulterior motives, play, laugh and celebrate together. In short, they talk each other without a shame. There is climate of dialogue between all of them.
15. Indeed, around thirteen hours, the families share the meal. As said above, this meal is shared and taken together without being specified. As all occurs in an outdoors, we have the environment of picnic in additions to this impression of a party.
16. After the meal, an orchestra of animation takes over. Parents and children find themselves then on the floor to celebrate the joy of being united families.
17. According to testimonies received from the families, children are particularly expectant of this day. They praise themselves to have, there with them, their father and mother, only for them, during a whole day.
18. It is thus really the family in a party. A break from harsh realities of family life, in a country where the requirements to fight for survival do not leave a great margin to a reciprocal attention between family's members.
19. It is true that, in the family, the work has its place, like the means of providing for its needs. But, it is as true as, in the family; the festival must have its place, like means of reinforcing family links, of exchanging for better knowing. The Day Christian Family is a means which we found to make this junction between family, work and party.