



Newsletter – September 2019

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Young Offenders

There are many interrelated reasons why children and young people break the law. The Children and Young Persons Act defines children as those who are below 14 years old and young persons as between the ages of 14 years to below 16 years. For the purposes of our topic, we can use these definitions. However we can also consider teenagers 16 to 21 years old.

One common and major reason is the lack of family support such as the parental neglect, lack of a father figure, poverty in the family, improper upbringing, etc. These youth commit offences such as mischief, vandalism, petty thefts, littering, underage smoking and drinking. When the relevant authorities such as social workers, probation officers and police examine the family background of the youth, they realise the depth and seriousness of these issues in these families and when we read about some of these issues (some of the information are not allowed to be published due to gag orders) in the mass media we too are rather overwhelmed by the despair and tumult in these families. While Courts are naturally more compassionate and tender towards children and young persons in meting out the sentences, youth who are 16 years old and above would probably end up in jail once convicted. Having studied the various factors in this area of young offenders, especially those families that are stressed and strained in ultra-modern Singapore, our government is proposing changes to the law governing these offenders. Our government wants to help deserving cases especially the young ones who may be developmentally delayed because of adverse childhood experiences (from Straits Times dated 18 August 2019). They wish to extend the provision of welfare, care, protection and rehabilitation to cover those below 18 years old (from Straits Times dated 18 August 2019).

Case 1

Lagos, Nigeria - A 15-year-old Nigerian boy has been arrested for demanding a ransom from his father after staging his own kidnap with his friends in central city of Jos, police said Friday. The teenager and four accomplices aged between 15 and 22, were apprehended by police last week, after demanding a 500,000 naira (US\$1,370) ransom from his distressed father. "It was staged perfectly", Plateau State police chief Terna Tyopev told AFP. "We are detaining them to ascertain why they did it and whether they have been behind other kidnaps that have been occurring in the area," he said. When the boys were asked why they staged the kidnap, they made

"suspicious claims", including that they wanted to buy clothes, Tyopev said. Days before the incident, the boy's father had sold his car to raise money for school fees for his children and to pay household bills. The amount the father earned from the sale is the exact amount that the boys later demanded. (<https://www.channelnewsasia.com>)

Case 2

Singapore - When a group of four teenagers noticed that the lock to a HDB block's switch room was flimsy, they broke in and pulled the switch to the power supply. As a result, the entire block in Woodlands Avenue 6 was plunged into darkness at around 11.45pm. Two of the boys, Megat Muhammad Harith Hairolnizan and Randy Cheang Jia Le, were given 12 months and 15 months' probation respectively on Wednesday (24 July) along with other conditions, including community service and a curfew. Each pleaded guilty to one count of mischief. The cases of their two accomplices Cheok Kai Jie and Brian Ong Wee Leong are still pending before the courts. The four boys are all aged 17-years-old. ([Yahoo News Singapore - 24 July 2019](#))

Singapore Children's Society

Through its various service centres such as Yishun Family Service @ Children's Society, the Singapore Children's Society provides care and counselling when individuals or families are in a crisis or are facing serious difficulties. They conduct interviews, make assessments and carry out intervention plans. They work with the relevant government authorities so that the individuals and families are able to solve their problems and maintain stability.

Counselling in Catholic Churches in Singapore

Family counselling assistance is also provided by the various parishes in Singapore and by Caritas at Agape Village.

Data from the Department of Statistics, Singapore

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2017</u>
New cases of Children Beyond Parental Control	167	140	63	85
New Admissions to MSF Youth Homes	385	475	248	141

*MSF= Ministry of Social & Family Development, Singapore

See

1. What are the causes that lead children and youth to commit offences?
2. How do we discipline our children? What are the positive and negative outcomes that came out of it?

Our Reflection

1. Is there a “right” way of upbringing children?
2. Should parents blame themselves if their children break the law?

Christian Reflection

Ephesians 6: 1-4

“Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ – this is the first commandment with a promise: so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instructions of the Lord”.

Proverbs 29:17

“Discipline your children, and they will give you rest; they will give delight to your heart”.

1. How much do we, as parents, adhere to these words in the bible?
2. How much do we, as children, adhere to these words in the bible?
3. How did our Lord Jesus Christ interact with children during his life on earth?

Act

1. How can I, as a CFSM member, assist families in my neighborhood if they seek my help?
2. As a Movement, how is CFSM contributing to the stability of Catholic families in Singapore?

CFSM Formation Session

Date: Saturday 2 November 2019
Venue: St Cornelius Room, CTIS, St Francis Xavier
Major Seminary (beside Church of St Joseph (Upper Bukit Timah Road))
Time: 2pm to 5pm.
Speaker: Father Bruno (SD of CFSM Singapore)
Theme: Gn 1-3. Do I use the person I encounter as a slave or do I welcome the gift of the other person?