



Newsletter – November 2022

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TAKING CARE OF OUR PARENTS

SEE

When my friend told me that both his Catholic parents, Mom and Dad, passed on in their sleep, I wondered whether that was indeed a great thing. When the right age came, they exited the world peacefully. However, another friend said that this may not be the best way to die because they can be unprepared for death. Did they receive the Anointing of the Sick? (if they needed it). I thought my friend was spared the burden of looking after his parents in their old age especially if they had been bed-ridden or immobile in their old age.

The word “burden” sounds ungrateful. There are many factors that influence our attitude towards our parents in terms of listening to them, respecting them and especially caring for them in their “sunset” age. Our culture plays an important part. Asian culture has, most of the time, engendered filial piety. This filial piety is taught to us from our young age. We not only respect our parents, we usually revere them. Western culture is similar to a certain extent, but is fast changing. An article published in Todayonline dated 7 September 2022 stated as follows (1)

“The “Asian way”, and the “Western way” in generations past, has been for children to support their parents as they grow older. Practices are changing though and children are stretched caring just for themselves – yet are still worried that parents don’t have enough money.”

Another factor is the family situation in each family. While our culture encourages us to look after our parents, in many families the relationship between parents and their children is strained and in some families there is no communication between the parents and children. There is no harmony in the family and the family bonding is weak. Moreover, the so called Generation Y and Generation Z now have a different outlook on life and have a different focus in life.

In addition, economic factors play an important part in persuading children to care for their parents. Those who enter the labour market sometimes struggle to find a job with a decent wage. Some may want to further their education and enter the labour market much later. The high cost of living in practically all countries in the last two or three decades and the mind-boggling

medical costs tear families apart. Added to these factors are the many social distractions and natural calamities.

As a result, many parents who retire do not depend on their children and try to fan for themselves. They take on odd jobs. The above-mentioned article also stated that:

“A paradigm shift in East Asian countries and even in Singapore that share a Confucian cultural heritage is leading governments to take a more pro-active role in welfare provision.”

Many other countries do have welfare programmes of sorts to provide for the needy elderly citizens under their care.

Nevertheless, in Singapore, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) says that (2)

“Families remain a key source of physical, emotional and financial support for the elderly. Grown-up children accounted for the bulk of caregivers of elderly who needed physical care giving. The majority of younger married residents provided financial support to their parents. In terms of emotional support, the majority of the elderly maintained close ties with their families through frequent interaction.”

Finally, the Maintenance of Parents Act is enacted to rein in irresponsible children to look after the needs of their parents. The definition of child in the Act includes an illegitimate or adopted or step-child.

Synopsis by Gabriel

Sources

- (1) Todayonline, “Children taking care of parents’ needs: Changing norms and what to expect” by Richard Hartung, 7 September 2022
- (2) MSF Press Release, “Family Remains Key Source of Support For Elderly As Aged Households Evolve” dated 25 November 2015. www.msf.gov.sg

Causes and Consequences/ Personal Reflection

1. How is my family faring in the above reality? If not good, what are the causes?
Am I doing my part to look after my parents?
2. What happens when we neglect to care for our parents?

JUDGE

1. What would our Lord Jesus say to us if we do not have filial piety?

2. What does the Gospels, the Social Teachings of the Church and the Vatican documents instruct us on the above reality?

ACT

1. How can we encourage and assist our siblings to care for our parents in our families?
2. What can our parish and our Movement do to assist families that face such issues?

NEWS

1. *There will be a Faith Formation Session is on Saturday 12 November 2022 from 2pm to 5pm at the St Francis Xavier Major Seminary, St Joseph Church (Bukit Timah). All are welcome.*
2. *The representatives of the member countries in the Asia Continental Christian Family Movement (ACCFM) will have a meeting from 11 to 14 November 2022 in Thailand. The theme for the discussion is “Interreligious Dialogue: Advancing the Mission of Christian Family Movements in Asia”. Luke, his spouse and Mary E Tan will represent CFSM Singapore at the meeting.*
3. *The representatives of the member countries in the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW) will have a meeting in March 2023. Father Dominique and Clarence will represent CFSM Singapore at the meeting.*