

## Cultural Influences vs. Religion.

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With the advent of globalization and the use of new information technologies such as the Internet, people all over the world are more exposed and influenced by the cultural changes taking place in other countries.

These cultural changes have had a profound influence on Christian marriages and families. Their behaviour and their religious practices have undergone a serious transformation. Many formerly fervent Catholic couples and families have abandoned their faith to embrace a materialistic lifestyle. God has been replaced by the pursuit of material wealth. Profound Christian values such as social justice and solidarity have been discarded in favour of new attitudes founded on greed and egoism. The negative consequences of this selfish and unscrupulous behaviour are very obvious. The current global economic crisis has caused great sufferings to countless families in every corner of the planet. What can Christian families, and especially the Christian Family Movement, do to defend the values of the Gospel which are love, social justice, forgiveness, and solidarity?

As members of the Christian Family Movements, we have been called by God to bear witness to the sanctifying grace bestowed upon us through the Sacrament of Marriage. We are thus enabled to confront with faith, hope, and charity the most difficult challenges in our life. This grace moves us to transform this world, dominated too often by greed, hatred, racism, and intolerance. I am convinced that the members of the Christian Family Movements must not remain passive spectators to the untold suffering of so many families, both Christian and non-Christian alike. We have been called upon by God to bear witness to the sanctifying grace we received through our marriage. Our role is to assist those families in their material and spiritual needs and transform this world in accordance with Christ's message of love for all men.

Some people may reply that all this is too ambitious for Christian couples and families to take up. Many Christian families have enough problems of their own to solve. Others may cite the examples of numerous NGO's which do a praise worthy role in alleviating suffering in this world and the claim that the world's problems can only be solved through international co operation. Much of this is true, at least in part. However the only institution capable of assisting people of every race and creed in all their needs is the family.

Christian families can transmit love to the forgotten, hope to those who have lost all hope, and provide food, clothing and shelter to those who have nowhere else to turn to. Christian families can only grow in faith, hope, and charity by loving and assisting other families.

Specifically, what can our families do to help other families in need?

Firstly, we must learn to be more tolerant of cultures, customs, and traditions, different to our own as long as they do not contradict Gospel values.

Secondly, it is our responsibility to openly denounce materialistic and egocentric attitudes that undermine core family values such as love, forgiveness, dialogues, etc. Thirdly, the social doctrine of the Catholic Church should become an integral part of our families' religious education.

Lastly, as Christians, it is our moral obligation to approach distressed families and enquire about their needs. This will enable us to assist them through our own efforts by referring these families to appropriate Church or Public services.

This is the exciting vocation to which all Christian families have been called, and the Christian Family Movement must respond to this call with a profound commitment and effort.