

REPORT OF CFM SRILANKA.

Greetings

On behalf of the Sri Lankan delegates present here and all the CFMers in Sri Lanka I wish all of you in a truly Sri Lankan traditional way. AYUBOWAN! VANAKKAM!

Introduction

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in his address in Brazil at the second World Meeting of Families stated, “**Families are the hope of humanity**”. But today we see how families are severely threatened both by economic and social conditions. Poverty, unemployment, globalization, science and technology can place severe stress on the family. Selfishness, exploitation and callous indifference which are perhaps the most disturbing and challenging moral situations caused by the new economic order, play an insidious role affecting good family traditions and customs. The pontiff referred to these trends when he said; “**A false message of happiness is spreading throughout the world**”.

The Holy Father in his Apostolic Exhortation “**Ecclesia in Asia**” given on this Indian soil itself in 1999, stated that; “**Christian families are today called to witness to the Gospel in difficult times and circumstances, when the family itself is threatened by an array of forces**” (n. 46). It is in this context that all of us who are very concerned about the family, have gathered together from different parts of the continent for the 6th Asian Conference. We have come together as defenders, advocates, promoters and apostles of the Christian family. The conference theme, “**Christian Family- Challenges of the present times**” will afford us the opportunity to explore three areas, namely, as Christian families:

- i. Where are we?
- ii. Where do we want to see ourselves to be? And
- iii. How do we get there?

Profile of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka popularly known as the “Pearl of the Indian Ocean” or “The Paradise Isle” is situated off the Southern tip of India. It is a very small country with a land area of 65,610 square kilometers.

Population

The total population enumerated in the 18 districts is 16, 864, 687 (16.8 million). But according to the 1981 census the total population was 18.2 million.

Ethnic Composition

Sri Lanka society is multiracial, multilingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious, viz. Sinhala, tamil and English are spoken in Sri Lanka. In the 18 districts where the enumeration was carried out, the distribution of population by ethnic is as follows:

Ethnic Group	Precentage
Sinhalese	
Sri Lanka Tamil	
Indian Tamil	
Sri Lanka Moor	
Burgher, Malay & Others	

Religious Composition

The world's four great religions, viz. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are found in Sri Lanka., 6.1% are Roman Catholics.

Profile of Catholic Church in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is divided into 11 dioceses. The highest Church body is the Catholic Bishops Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL)

Family Situation

Unlike in the West, in Sri Lanka there is a peaceful family living and family life is still considered to be sacred. But, we cannot be complacent with this situation. The western influence on family life is beginning to affect the family life. The family gets battered on all sides and in the materialistic and secular trends that influencing the society; the family finds it difficult to sustain moral and spiritual values.

Profile of CFM, Sri Lanka

The Christian Family Movement (CFM) of Sri Lanka began in Negombo, popularly known as “Little Rome” on April 1, 1967 with the establishment of the first cell by Percy and Agnes Silva with seven other couples. In 1969, CFM Sri Lanka became a full member of ICCFM. CFM was formed to promote Christian life in the family, and in the community, keeping in mind the words of late Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, “the family should be immediate apostle of another family”

More cells were formed in the Archdiocese and the Colombo Diocesan Executive Committee was formed in 1978 was the silver jubilee of this celebrated in June this year. Today there are over 25 cells in the Archdiocese and the membership is over 275 couples.

CFM was introduced into other dioceses. In the dioceses of Chilaw it spread very quickly and an executive committee was formed in 1972. But due to various restraints the number of cells fell. Today CFM is confined to just two cells there. Then the seed of CFM was sown in other dioceses namely, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Badulla, Ratnapura and Galle. With the establishment of the diocesan commission for family apostolate, CFM in Kandy became inactive. In the diocese of Anuradhapura there are 4 cells and in Galle just one.

CFM, Sri Lanka is a National Lay Apostolate movement approved and accepted by CBCSL, and it works under the auspices of the Catholic National Commission for Laity. The highest CFM body is the National Executive Committee.

CFM Activities

Our main concern is the family rightly referred to as the “Domestic Church”. The following evangelization programmes are organized at parish level.

1 For Parents

- Marriage Enrichment Programme (MEPs)
- Marriage Anniversary Programmes (MARs)
- Marriage Revalidation Programmes
- Parent-Child Dialogues
- Diriya Hamuwa

This is the new programme designed for single parents, those opted to remain unmarried and those legally separated. A team has been trained and the inaugural programme is scheduled for November 28th.

➤ Awareness Programmes

For parents of candidates for baptism, confirmation and first communion. God Parents and sponsors too attend these.

➤ Workshops on Natural Family Planning

➤ FIRES Original Marriage Encounters (OME)

Though CFM Sri Lanka is 36 years old, OME was introduced to its members only in 1998. Since then we have offered 25 OMEs and hundreds of couples have benefited.

➤ Family Counselling.

2 For Candidates for Marriage

➤ Pre Cana Conferences

In the Archdiocese of Colombo there are 16 Pre Cana centers and one each in Chilaw and Anuradhapura dioceses.

3 For Youth

a FIRES sons and daughters encounter (SADE) SADE was introduced to Sri Lanka in 2000 by Fr. Donnon Murray. Since then we have been able to give 8 weekends in Colombo, Anuradhapura and Galle dioceses. The SADE weekend that was given in Ganegama in Galle recently was very special. Out of the 43 participants 13 were novices of the sisters of Holy Angels and others were candidates and students. An OME weekend was conducted simultaneously for the parents of the novices, candidates and students.

b Life Education Programme (LEPs)

This is specially designed for young boys and girls of 15 and up. A series of talks on stages of human development, love and sex is given. LEPs are given at parish, and school levels and it is gaining popularity.

4 Printed Media

- CFM has regular writers to the two Catholic weeklies namely “Catholic Messenger” and “Gananartha”. Articles on various dimensions of marriage and family life are contributed to these weeklies. This is a powerful agent of evangelization.
- A book on “Natural Family Planning” has been published and it is given to couples who came for Pre-cana programmes.
- A book on CFM, its vision and methodology has been printed and it is available for CFMers.

5 Other Work

1. When the government of Sri Lanka tried to present a bill in the parliament to legalize abortions, CFM publicly opposed it. A letter of protest was sent to the minister concerned and we wrote to all the religious leaders. It is presumed that this timely action prevented this bill being presented in the parliament.
2. To help the families affected by divorce cases, a draft was prepared and sent to CBCSL for study. Several measures are suggested in this draft to help the families affected. But the hierarchy is dead silent about the matter.
3. Now there is an attempt to make prostitution legal. A leading Catholic minister is behind this move. CFM has already voiced its displeasure and protest through the media.

6 Fires Prisons Encounter (PE)

This was introduced to Sri Lanka in 2001. We are once again thankful to Fr. Donnon Murry for his dedicated service.

7 Problems

- A Mixed marriages
- B Overseas employment
- C Artificial birth control
- D Abortions
- E Drug abuse

F Prostitution

G Child abuse

Conclusion

In Conclusion I wish to quote from “ Ecclesia in Asia”, the words of Pope , “ The Christian Family needs to be genuinely “ the domestic church”, humbly loving out the Christian vocation” (n 46). To be able to respond to this challenge, let us make the truth of Gospel the rule of the our life.

On behalf of CFM Sri Lanka, we wish the 6th Asian Conference of Christian Family Movements every success and pray that the Lord bless all of us with his abundant blessing for the benefit of every family in Asia.