



CONGREGAZIONE DELLO SPIRITO SANTO
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NOVENA FOR PENTECOST 2017

The Holy Spirit Present and Acting in Families



The Church of the Holy Spirit, Hsinchu, Taiwan

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INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVENA:

Dear confreres, and friends of the Spiritans,

This year, the Generalate asked the novitiate community in Vietnam to prepare the novena for Pentecost. We chose to help the Congregation and lay Spiritans to reflect on the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of families. As human beings, we all come from a family that gave us life and most probably love too. For most of us, faith was also given to us through our families. As consecrated people and missionaries, we are called to encourage people to respond to their call to holiness. Our fidelity to our vocation is a great support for lay people, especially families. They need us as much as we need them.

This novena was composed with a contribution from nine families from all over the world who live Spiritan spirituality. The novices themselves have worked together as a family to produce this document. We invite you, and the families who collaborated with the Spiritans, to reflect on the graces you received from your own experience in your family of origin, and to be inspired by this novena to be at the service of families you meet in your pastoral work. To support our reflection, we relied on the Bible, the Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, and a document from the Conference of Bishops of Asia entitled, “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*”.

New bridges are being built between Asia and the rest of the world through the developing presence of Spiritan communities in Asia. We are grateful to the Holy Spirit for this new reality in our Congregation. May the Holy Spirit send his blessing on us all so that our Congregation may continue to benefit from the fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity. Amen!

Day 1

THE FAMILY AND THE HOLY TRINITY

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: CHARITY.

We express the virtue of charity by our unselfish devotion to God and our love for our neighbor.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Genesis 1, 27 – 28

“God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth”.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

“The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon capable of revealing God the Creator and Saviour. The couple’s fruitful relationship becomes an image for understanding and describing the mystery of God himself, the Triune God in which God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love. Saint John Paul II shed light on this when he said, “Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit”. This Trinitarian dimension finds expression in the theology of Saint Paul, who relates the married couple to the “mystery” of the union of Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:21-33”).

A man, a woman and their children become a communion of persons in the image of the union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Begetting and raising children, mirrors God’s creative work. The family is called to join in daily prayer, to read the word of God and to share in Eucharistic communion, and thus to grow in love and become ever more fully a temple in which the Spirit dwells”. (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 11, 29)

Questions for Spiritans:

1. Have I experienced love, respect and unity among my family members? How?
2. As Spiritans, how do we help broken families that we meet in our pastoral work, to be reunited?

Questions for Families:

1. As a family, we are called to live in harmony with one another following the example of the Holy Trinity. What helps us to be more united? What is the cement of our unity?
2. How do the Spiritans help us to live more harmoniously in our families?

Sharing of a family from USA, text of Anne Marie & John Hansen.

As a family, we are called to live in harmony with one another following the example of the Holy Trinity. Throughout our married life of the on-going joys and challenges of raising nine children, we have found that spending time together as a married couple is the glue that unites us. These times together could be a long quiet walk, going to a movie, grocery shopping or reflecting on scripture and sharing with one another how we believe the Holy Spirit is calling us. Most of our major family decisions evolved through a discernment process, searching for how to live our faith in a more radical and transformative way. One major discernment in our married life was hearing God’s call to become Lay Spiritan Associate lay missionaries in Africa for three years.

We have also found that spending time together as a family is the glue that unites us. While our children were growing up, we established a family ritual of taking time during the week, usually Friday evening, to read the Sunday scripture readings together and reflect on how these words challenge us to live more faithfully. Our evenings together included prayer, lively family discussions on how the readings are relevant today, and making a family commitment to one specific collective action for justice such as reaching out to those on the margins, attending town hall meetings, writing letters to legislators or the US President or marching with others for a social justice issue in Washington, DC. Our evenings ended with some type of “family fun” activity. Today, our children are adults and young adults. Because we all live far from each other, we plan get-togethers in clusters throughout the year and try to organize one week together during the summer.

Many aspects of the Spiritan Charism provide a framework for living harmoniously as a family. For example, we strive to live as an intentional faith-filled family/community with scripture, prayer and an openness to the Holy Spirit as the center. Over the years, we have found ways to walk with those on the margins, serve meals at soup kitchens, and offer Spiritan hospitality. As a family, Spiritan hospitality has become our trademark. We strive not only to open the doors of our home to others, but to open our hearts to others, building authentic relationships through listening to one another, building mutual trust and respect. We seek to offer radical welcome whereby we are all transformed by these relationships. Forgiveness and reconciliation are also key virtues for which we strive. We make mistakes as parents, and our kids make mistakes, too. We try to learn from these mistakes, forgive one another and move forward. An attitude of gratitude every day for God’s bountiful blessings is most important. Our family motto was also the theme of our wedding more than 40 years ago: For all that has been, THANKS! For all that will be, YES!

Prayer intentions

* That we might always listen and be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.

* For the grace and strength to walk with those on the margins offering our gifts and talents for acts of charity and justice, we pray to the Lord.

* That we might live as a Spiritan community of radical welcome, recognizing the signs of the times, discerning and responding collectively to society’s most pressing needs, we pray to the Lord.

* That we, as a Spiritan Community, take time to actively engage in prayer, contemplation and reflection on our ministry to refresh, renew and celebrate God’s call and the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we pray to the Lord.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER:

O Holy Spirit, you are one with the Father and the Son. You revealed your love by giving birth to the world and every creature. Give your love to our families and our communities so that we can live in harmony and in unity. Amen.

DAY 2

HOLY FAMILY

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: JOY.

We live with joy when we recognize that true happiness comes, not from money or possessions, but from knowing and following Christ.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Luke 2:43-52

“When the days of the feast were over and they set off home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was somewhere in the party, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere. It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' He replied, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he meant. He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and with people”.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

30. Every family should look to the icon of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Like the Magi, our families are invited to contemplate the Child and his Mother, to bow down and worship him (cf. Mt 2:11). Like Mary, they are asked to face their family's challenges with courage and serenity, in good times and bad, and to keep in their heart the great things which God has done (cf. Lk 2:19, 51). The treasury of Mary's heart also contains the experiences of every family, which she cherishes. For this reason, she can help us understand the meaning of these experiences and to hear the message God wishes to communicate through the life of our families. 66. The covenant of love and fidelity lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth illuminates every family, and enables it better to face the vicissitudes of life and history. Every family, despite its weaknesses, can become a light in the darkness of the world. (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 30, 66)

65. His Nazareth home is Jesus' primordial experience of human family. It began with the divine call to Mary and Joseph to be husband and wife. As narrated in the Gospels [Mt. 1:18-2:23; Lk. 1:26-2:52.] Mary and Joseph had to probe with faith the mystery of their call to be parents and to know the mystery of their only Son. Everyday they had to cope with these profound mysteries. Mary “treasured all these... and pondered them in her heart.” [Lk. 2:19, 51.] Their life together as husband and wife was ordinary, indeed, simply that of a carpenter and his wife. Still they experienced what was extraordinary: their inability to find a suitable place for the birth of their child, yet exultation when finally the child is born. Joy as they offered their child to God in the Temple, yet suffering as they hear prophetic words that indicate future suffering for both child and mother. Joy as the family succeeded in seeking refuge in a foreign land, yet sorrow as children are killed because of their son. Distress and confusion as they “lose” their son for three days, and great relief when they find him in the Temple, yet wondering what

he really means about ‘being in his Father’s house.’ All these simply strengthen the bond of love, of communion, between parents and son, between family and God in the covenant that Mary had obediently and freely accepted in faith: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”[Lk. 1:38].

66. Jesus experienced the love and care of parents and learned spiritual values so characteristic of Judaism: a passion for God and an intense concern for others. “He learned obedience,” [Heb. 5:8.] says the Letter to the Hebrews, that is, how to live in accordance with God’s will – but not without suffering and struggle, like so many families then and now. Up to the very end he would commend the familial way of relating when he entrusts a “son” to a “mother” and a “mother” to a “son.” [Jn. 19:26-27] That mission extends from the limits of the nuclear family to the family of faith and beyond. The way of the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is the way of every Christian family. (The Asian Bishop’s Conference: “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*”, paragraphs 65 and 66)

Questions for Spiritans:

1. How does the Holy Family of Nazareth, through their joys and sufferings, help us to face the challenges of life, especially in our own families?
2. As Spiritans, how do we help families to treasure the love that exists among its members (parents and children, brothers and sisters, husband and wife)?
3. How do we help every Christian family to grow in faith?

Questions for Families:

1. What touches you in the life of Saint Mary, Saint Joseph and Jesus as a Holy Family? How does their example of life help the members of your family to live according to the values of the Gospel?
2. Do you feel encouraged by the Spiritans to live according to the model of the Holy Family?

Sharing of a family in Belgium, text of Jean-Pierre and Agnès Rossignol.

The Holy Family experienced many trials. Saint Joseph could not understand that Mary was pregnant without the intervention of a man. He intended to repudiate her in secret when the angel revealed to him that the Child was the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the ‘*fiat*’ of Mary. He welcomes her and takes care of the unexpected baby. Mary and Joseph are an example for us because they trust in God; they believe that God has a plan for them. They also face many other adversities, such as the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus far from home, the hate of Herod, the escape to Egypt. Joseph takes his responsibility during these difficult moments. Once they are back from Egypt, he looks for a safe place for his family and chooses Nazareth as their new home. The holy family will live there, thanks to the work of Joseph and with the help of Mary. Their presence remains basically unnoticed. Their hidden life in God, their simplicity questions us and invites us to search for the will of God and not to search for glory and honor.

The Spiritans also encourage us to imitate the life of the Holy Family through the example of their lives. They give priority to the poor and choose a life detached from material things. As

missionaries, they live far from their homes and they renounce comfort, the kind of comfort that we enjoy naturally.

Prayer intentions

* Like the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt, many people flee from their countries because of the problems of insecurity and hatred. We pray that we may be welcoming to foreigners. Lord, hear our prayer.

* We pray for the women who, in difficult circumstances, are pregnant. Lord, hear our prayer.

* God has a loving plan for our family lives. We pray that despite the difficulties, we continue to trust in Him. Lord, hear our prayer.

* We pray that families may choose a simple life and share what they have with people in need of their solidarity. Lord, hear our prayer.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: O Holy Spirit, we thank you for your presence and action in the life of Saint Joseph, Mother Mary and Jesus our Savior. Being chaste, they cared for each other, experienced joy in their own family and became a source of Joy for the World. O Holy Spirit, help our families to follow the example of chastity and love of the Holy Family. Amen.

DAY 3

LABOR AND WORK

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: GENEROSITY.

We demonstrate the fruit of generosity when we share our gifts and possessions with others.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Psalm 128:1-6.

“Blessed is the one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots round your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!”

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

“Labor makes possible the development of society and provides for the sustenance, stability and fruitfulness of one’s family. The Book of Proverbs also presents the labor of mothers within the family; their daily work is described in detail as winning the praise of their husbands and children (cf. 31:10-31). The Apostle Paul was proud not to live as a burden to others, since he worked with his own hands and assured his own livelihood (cf. Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12; 9:12). Paul was so convinced of the necessity of work that he laid down a strict rule for his communities: “If anyone will not work, let him not eat”. (2 Th 3:10; cf. 1 Th 4:11)”. “This having been said, we can appreciate the suffering created by unemployment and the lack of steady work, as reflected in Jesus’ own parable of the laborers forced to stand idly in the town square (Mt 20:1-16), and his personal experience of meeting people suffering from poverty and hunger. Sadly, these realities are present in many countries today, where the lack of employment opportunities takes its toll on the serenity of family life”. (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 24, 25)

Most Asian countries are third world countries and “the first major challenge confronting the vast majority of Asian families is massive poverty. It is the tragic reality of poverty that they must contend with every day and are unable to escape from. Many poor young people have difficulty to think of marriage and start a family because of the lack of basic means of support and sustenance.” “Another phenomenon affecting Asian families is the widespread practice of child labor. Driven by poverty and social inequalities, millions of children are engaged in labor. The phenomenon might even stem from a cultural view that parents consider their children as ‘properties’ to be used for the welfare of the whole family. This causes the lack of integral growth and development of children, high illiteracy rates, malnutrition...”. So this economic globalization affects families at the highest level. (The Asian Bishop’s Conference: “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*”, paragraphs: 12, 34).

Questions for Spiritans:

1. Have I ever had any experience of being without bread or unemployed? If yes, how did it affect my family life and my position in society?
2. As Spiritans, do we help people to find sustainable employment? Do we train them? Do we collaborate with local government and companies to develop local jobs? Do we defend the rights of workers?

Questions for Families:

1. How do we put in practice our Christian values in our professional lives? Do we find any support from Spiritans in finding work to sustain our families?
2. Do Spiritans and Spiritan spirituality help us to find some meaning in our professional lives?

Sharing of a family from Portugal, text of Paulo and Manuel Martins.

In his message for the world day of work, Pope Francis writes that “work is part of the loving plan of God towards his creatures. We are called to cultivate and preserve the goods of Creation! Work is a fundamental element that contributes to the dignity of people.” For a Christian, work is a way to collaborate with God, the Creator, and the Lord of Creation. We normally spend more time at work with our fellow-workers than at home with our own families. As Christians, we are called to be witnesses to the truth revealed to us in the Gospel. It is important to enjoy our work and to be proud of the fruits of our work. Confronted by professional challenges, we are invited to be patient and tolerant. We should also be respectful and grateful towards our fellow-workers. Our actions should reveal our love and create a fraternal atmosphere. In the Spiritan family, we encounter witnesses who inspire us through their commitment, through the way they welcome the will of God in their lives. They try to find a solution to unemployment; they help those who are in need: the poor, the migrants, the refugees. We are also inspired in our professional life by Claude Francis Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. Claude Francis surrenders his life, offers his life totally to God when he says: "Lord, I call upon your providence and I surrender to her entirely." Libermann, on the other hand, invites us to be docile to the Holy Spirit in these words: “O Divine Spirit, I want to be before you like a light feather, so that your breath may carry me where it will, and that I may not offer the least resistance to it.” These two attitudes inspire us. We are called to engage on the road that God has opened for us and we trust that God will never abandon us. Like Mary, we rely on the plan of God and abandon ourselves to God without questioning his plan for us.

Prayer intentions:

Lord, teach us to transform our work into prayer and our actions into gestures of love towards our neighbors and to God. May the Holy Spirit transform us so that our work may become a way to live in communion with Christ and to be a sign of the presence of God in our world. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, you, who through divine grace and through the action of the Holy Spirit, gathers many young people, lay and religious, in the one Spiritan family, we beg you that the seed sown by missionaries may bear fruit and be a source of continuous renewal for the movements and lay groups collaborating with Spiritans. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, who gave to Poullart des Places and Libermann the grace of surrendering themselves to your Holy Will, give us also the grace to discern the path you open for us and make us docile to the action of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to the Lord.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: O Holy Spirit, we thank you for the work of our family members and our community members which brings dignity to them and sustains them. Encourage us to find meaning in our work and to be attentive to those who are in need of our solidarity.

Amen.

DAY 4

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: GOODNESS.

We practice goodness when we honor God by avoiding sin and always trying to do what is right.

BIBLICAL TEXT: 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, “that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord”.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

“One of the fundamental challenges facing families today is undoubtedly that of raising children.” The overall education of children is a “most serious duty” and at the same time a “primary right” of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them. The State offers educational programs in a subsidiary way, supporting the role parents must not delegate. Schools do not replace parents, but complement them. This is a basic principle: “all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities in the name of the parents, with their consent and, to a certain degree, with their authorization”. Still, “a rift has opened up between the family and society, between family and the school; the educational pact today has been broken and thus the educational alliance between society and the family is in crisis”. (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 84)

“Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural tradition of the family which favors the good and the dignity of the child; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly.” (Charter of the rights of the family, article 5, a)

“The Christian family has to be a home, a school of holiness and discipleship, where the ways of God and the values of the Gospel are learned and lived. In families, both men and women have equal responsibilities to educate their children”. (The Asian Bishop’s Conference: “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*”, paragraph: 72)

Question for Spiritans:

1. Have I sufficient appreciation for the work of my parents? How did my parents promote their children’s education? And how did they motivate their children to continue their studies?
2. As Spiritans, how do we collaborate with the local church for the Christian education of children?
3. As Spiritans, how can we work together with the local government to improve children’s education? Can we find financial or personnel support to educate t poor children, orphans, street children?

Questions for Families:

1. How does faith help us to educate our children?

2. Do we find any support from Spiritans in the education of our children?

Sharing of a family of Germany, text of Heinz-Georg Soquat

How does faith help us to educate our children? Our Christian faith is the basis for our education: it offers the values which guide our actions and defines our aims: peacebuilding, mercy, forgiveness and attentiveness to others – these touch the hearts of our children and form their characters. Furthermore our Christian faith strengthens us. It gives us the ability to work out conflicts in a peaceful and approachable way and to live with the confidence that God will help our children to find their way in life.

Do we find any support from the Spiritans in the education of our children? Certainly, we do. Spiritans manage schools, for example, the Holy Ghost Grammar School in Würselen, Germany, where I'm working. There, they provide a great service to each one of us, as well as to our families and our society. Every day, in the parish, Christian faith is made concrete thanks to the Spiritans. Faith is an important support in our lives.

Prayer intentions.

Merciful God, help parents to be able to speak with one voice to their children: let us pray to the Lord.

Merciful God, help our families to be a place of welcome for all, where each member can experience safety and protection: let us pray to the Lord.

Merciful God, help our families to find Christian organizations which will support them in their task of education: let us pray to the Lord.

Merciful God, family is a house of love. Help our families to put this love into practice: let us pray to the Lord.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Holy Spirit, You came to teach the hearts of the Apostles the mission of the Gospel. We pray for parents who are the educators of their children. May they reflect the love of God for His Church. Help them to set the example of a life of faith and virtue. Encourage them to spend time with their children. Give them the gift of goodness, so that they can lead their families with responsibility. Give their children the grace of discerning what is right and good.

DAY 5

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: KINDNESS

We live the virtue of kindness by treating others as we want to be treated.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Mt 2, 13-15

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

46. “Migration is another sign of the times to be faced and understood in terms of its negative effects on family life. The forced migration of families, resulting from situations of war, persecution, poverty and injustice, and marked by the vicissitudes of a journey that often puts lives at risk, traumatizes people and destabilizes families. In accompanying migrants, the Church needs a specific pastoral programme addressed not only to families that migrate but also to those family members who remain behind. Every practical effort should be supported which assists families and Christian communities to remain in their native lands”. (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 46)

“Millions of Asians leave their families behind to look for jobs that often are not commensurate with their knowledge and skills. Tragically, migrants often have to work in circumstances of grave exploitation and discrimination. Asia is the great exporter of cheap labor. If it is true that the salaries they earn abroad are significantly higher than what they can earn in their home countries, this comes at a great cost to the stability of their families, the proper education and growth of their children, who are deprived of the presence, the guidance, and love of both parents at their most formative and impressionable age. Peoples who migrate for purposes of work face a great cultural uprooting”. The Asian Bishop’s Conference: “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*”, Paragraphs 15 and 16)

Questions for Spiritans:

1. As a Spiritan, perhaps sent far from your homeland for studies or pastoral work, did you experience any of the difficulties which migrants suffer (culture shock, loneliness, lack of material resources)? How did you cope with those difficulties?
2. How do we help to maintain the traditional culture and faith of migrants and refugees and to protect their dignity where they finally end up?
3. Do we consider migrants and refugees as our neighbours? How can we draw closer to them?

Questions for Families:

1. Have we family members who have moved to live elsewhere within their home country or abroad? If yes, what were the reasons? How has faith helped them to cope with the loss of what they have left behind and to help them settle into a new environment?
2. Have Spiritans helped me to settle in a new place?
3. How do we welcome people who come to live in our own neighborhood? How do our Christian values help us to be welcoming to them?
4. Do Spiritans help us to be more sensitive and welcoming to migrants and refugees?

Sharing of the family from Kenya, text of Susan Kilobia from.

In Kenya, youth unemployment is a key driver of rural–urban migration and of youth emigration. The majority settle in informal settlements and become part of the urban poor. Kenya has a long history of forced migration leading to significant numbers of displaced families within the country. The displacements are linked to: (1) Competition over land and other resources; climatic factors especially drought and floods, (2) Poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization (3) Ethnic intolerance (4) Border disputes (5) Political instigation (6) Terrorist attacks especially in North Eastern and Coastal regions (7) Evictions due to development or conservation projects. Apart from migration within the country, Kenyans migrate to most regions of the world in view of accessing employment and education opportunities. Kenya has also been a host to significant groups of refugees since the 1970s. Kakuma refugee camp, at the Sudanese border, and Dadaab (the world’s largest refugee camp) at the Somali border have been home for thousands of refugees fleeing civil strife in their countries since the early 1990s. The camps have third generations growing up in these settings. In addition, apart from the camps, thousands more refugees live in urban areas. In January 2016, 593,881 refugees and asylum-seekers were hosted in Kenya. Many of them were forced to leave property and businesses with very few belongings. In the confusion of fleeing, families are not only separated, but some even die or are killed during the journey and many are traumatized. Though basic needs are provided for in the camps, living conditions are different from their previous lives and freedom of movement is limited.

The Spiritans are present among the refugees and migrants in the country and within the region, for example the South Sudan international group, Kakuma refugee camp, St. Francis of Assisi parish in Nakuru Diocese (Kenya) where a significant community of refugees from South Sudan, under the care of United Nations, are integrated into the community. The Spiritans working with refugees and internally displaced persons observe that religious faith can strengthen refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants’ ability to cope with trauma; they find support while gradually trying to find meaning in their lives despite the difficulties and suffering of living in new environments. The Spiritans encourage acts of mercy, compassion, tolerance and respect for human dignity, while promoting social justice, reconciliation and conflict resolution.

They set up programs geared towards helping affected families to cope with life in their new homes. This includes integration with the other faithful, Sunday masses, the sacraments, funerals, and visits of the sick, community fellowship through the small Christian communities, peace building and reconciliation. Catechists play a crucial role in teaching and preparing people for the sacraments. In addition to meeting their spiritual needs, the parishes also support their physical needs such as clothes, shelter, food, water and education. For example Kenya is currently experiencing severe drought (the worst in many years) and Spiritan parishes are in

the frontline of mobilizing resources to support affected communities such as East Pokot and Tana River.

Prayer intentions:

Ever loving God, we acknowledge that we are all created in God's image and are worthy of respect and dignity. We pray for forgiveness for the times we have not been welcoming, hospitable and loving to migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons living in our lands. We pray that you help us understand that by welcoming those in need in our country, church and homes, we are welcoming Christ. May your love for mankind lead us to love and care for them. We pray to the Lord. Amen

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families and the joy and love that a family brings. You are the God of mercy and compassion, look upon your people whose lives have been disrupted, whose family members have been separated, in search of secure environments and resources to support their families. Grant your mercy and comfort to these families who have been torn apart by conflicts, injustice and poverty. Through the intercession of the Holy Spirit, we pray that all migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons in the world may receive your healing and that one day they will be reunited with their loved ones. We pray to the Lord. Amen.

We thank and praise you God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for all the nations of the world who have offered a home to migrants and refugees. Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality for all who come in search of refuge. Give us the heart to welcome every stranger as Christ in our midst. Lord, have mercy on all humanitarian workers who have also been separated from their families to provide service to migrants and refugees. Protect them as they work in hostile environments. May they trust You in all circumstances as they bring love and hope to the suffering through Christ.

Our Lord and King, send your Holy Spirit to influence leaders and all those in authority in countries experiencing war and conflict. Grant our political leaders a sense of compassion and the gift of discernment as rulers over your people. We pray that no one should suffer or die as a result of politics, but rather that all may come to know the beauty of peace. We pray to the Lord. Amen

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Spirit of the living God, You revealed yourself to us through the warmth of love. We ask your help to be more sensitive and welcoming to the people whose lives have been disrupted, to comfort and to support the families of refugees and migrants. Let the fire of Your Spirit come upon us, to strengthen us to commit ourselves to follow the path of the Gospel, and to encourage us to defend human dignity. May we experience the kindness of your presence in our lives.

DAY 6

SOCIAL MEDIA

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: MODESTY AND SELF-CONTROL.

We practice modesty by being pure in our thoughts, words, and dress. We exercise self-control by working to overcome the temptations we face and by trying always to do God's will.

BIBLICAL TEXT: 2 Tim 4, 1-5

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

Social media and other new technologies pose new challenges to human culture. The media can be a hindrance if they become a way to avoid listening to others, to evade physical contact, to fill up every moment of silence and rest, so that we forget that 'silence is an integral element of communication; in its absence, words rich in content cannot exist' (Benedict XVI, Message for the 2012 World Communications Day). The media can help communication when they enable people to share their stories, to stay in contact with distant friends, to thank others or to seek their forgiveness, and to open the door to new encounters. By growing daily in our awareness of the vital importance of encountering others, (...) we will employ technology wisely, rather than letting ourselves be dominated by it. Here too, parents are the primary educators, but they cannot be left to their own devices. The Christian community is called to help them in teaching children how to live in a media environment, in a way consonant with the dignity of the human person and for the service of the common good" (Pope Francis, Message for the 2015 World Communications Day). <http://www.familyandmedia.eu/en/media-education/essentials-of-social-doctrine-of-the-catholic-church-on-communications-and-social-media/2/13/2017>

90. For many, particularly for the younger generation, the means of social communications are the chief means for information and education, guidance and inspiration. Hence, the Church has to understand these tools and to have the competence and skills to use them effectively for its mission to evangelize. Yet these same media also have the capacity to do grave harm to families by presenting an inadequate or even deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality. 96. Therefore, it is the mission of the Church to evangelize them, to purify them and bring to conform to the values of the Gospel and of God's reign. Much of the power to evangelize the media lies in parents and their families. (The Asian Bishop's Conference: "*The Asia Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*", Paragraph: 90 and 96.)

Questions for Spiritans :

1. Do I use Social Media effectively and wisely for my own good, for my community, for my pastoral work and for the good of society?

2. How do we inform and educate the Christian community on how to use Social Media? How can we support parents and families to evangelize their members through Social Media?

Questions for Families:

1. As a Christian family, what is our attitude towards social media? How do we use them wisely for the benefit of each family member and for the benefit of families in general? Are Spiritans involved in Social Communication? How does this help us to live Christian lives in our families?

Sharing of a family from the Philippines, text of Carmela Grace T. Flor.

Being born in the early 70's, to have to face up to a technology-dependent, frenetic kind of lifestyle represents a very significant challenge. For us, as parents, our daily reality was one of both conscious and unconscious resistance to this. We are convinced that perceptible reality, valid and reliable facts, ideas, thoughts and reflections can really only be found in books. We believe also that prayerful silence, solitude and relationships are sacred. To nurture this requires a direct line of communication with the other, whether he be a member of one's family or the community or our Lord God. Technological advancement had taken over the 'good old days'.

Social media has become a 'colossus' in the lives of a great number of families around the globe, young and old, rich and poor alike. It seems to have taken control of most of the lives of the modern family. People of all ages and status in life get entrapped or addicted. Engaging in social media takes up most of the family member's prime time leaving other basic and important chores and relationships for granted. Social Media are used to feed personal basic human needs of love, attention, affirmation, appreciation or affection which may not have been met during the formative years, during childhood, adolescence or married life. It has become a temporary refuge for the lonely and a distraction from real life family concerns and issues that need to be addressed. Addiction to the use of social media is evil because it destroys the basic unit of God's bigger family.

On the other hand, letting God be in control of our lives, letting Him be the 'colossus' means finding tangible and real means of expressing our love and affection to our children, husband/wife, mother, father, brothers, sisters, relatives and neighbors, by sincerely listening to them, understanding them, caring for them, affirming their goodness and belovedness. This attitude requires one to forego whatever one is doing (no matter how important it may seem) to be able to attend to loved one's needs. It is more than necessary that we educate our children, our spouse, our co-workers, friends and neighbors to Gospel truths, about the lived reality of the present generation and an awareness about how social media can be of harm to us. But engaging them in family prayer time and communicating to them in an unthreatening way, and understanding and loving them deeply can be more powerful. There is no substitute for an honest and heart-to-heart communication wherein members of the family are willing to listen and understand. Social media has caused the break-up of a great number of relationships, marriages, families; some continue to live silently under the same roof but which can no longer be called home.

Nevertheless, social media has also provided a great deal of goods and services to people who use them. The Spiritan community, along with other religious Congregations and Christian communities had found ways of spreading the Good News through social media. Today, one can find Christian ‘apps’ for all kinds of things: Bible apps, daily devotional apps, daily scripture readings, inspirational verses and songs are now flooding the net. As guardians and stewards of the human family and God’s children, we are all called to be vigilant and wise in the use of worldly goods. As Christians, we are called to have an undivided heart, to be steadfast in our calling as parents, as sons, daughters, and as children of a loving God, and to fix our eyes on Jesus and pray without ceasing.

Prayer intentions :

We pray for families all over the world: May God renew their love for each other, their faith in God Almighty and the commitment of parents to raise their children through God’s mercy and guidance. May families not fall into the trap set by the enemy. May the Lord God pour into their hearts His spirit of humility, patience, understanding and wisdom, that they may seek and find God’s holy will to live according to His plan. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for children and young people: That God may bless them with His spirit of truth and joy and that they find joy in the simple things in life. May they encounter people that help them to discover God’s presence in their lives. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for the healing of people’s wounds: That they may discover how much God loves them and rediscover God’s presence in everything. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for people involved in the production and distribution of social media: That they may have a sense of responsibility and that truth may inspire their actions. Let us pray to the Lord.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Holy Spirit, breath of the love of God, open us up to trust and to simplicity of heart. Enlighten us through your wisdom and guidance to use social media wisely, for our benefit. Amen.

DAY 7

PRAYER LIFE

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: PEACE.

We are freed from worrying about trivial things because of the inner peace we experience with God in our hearts. We work and pray for peace throughout the world.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

“If a family is centred on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in union with the Lord’s cross, and his closeness will make it possible to surmount them. Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening this paschal faith. A few minutes can be found each day to come together before the living God, to tell him our worries, to ask for the needs of our family, to pray for someone experiencing difficulty, to ask for help in showing love, to give thanks for life and for its blessings, and to ask Our Lady to protect us beneath her maternal mantle. With a few simple words, this moment of prayer can do immense good for our families. The various expressions of popular piety are a treasure of spirituality for many families. The family’s communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist, especially in the context of the Sunday rest. Jesus knocks on the door of families, to share with them the Eucharistic supper (cf. Rev 3:20). (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 317, 318)

Families need to be both encouraged and trained to pray regularly as a family, and not only on special occasions such as birthdays and other anniversaries. Reading and reflecting on the Word of God should become a regular feature of family prayer. Likewise fruitful for family life is the regular and prayerful recitation of the Rosary. (The Asian Bishop’s Conference: “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral life*”).

Questions for Spiritans:

1. As Spiritans, how do we encourage our community members to pray together? What benefit do we get from prayer?
2. How can parents be good models of prayer to their children? How do we help families to recognize the benefits of their prayer life?

Questions for Families:

1. Is prayer part of our family life? What benefit does it bring to our family? How do Spiritans help us to pray?

Sharing of a family from Ethiopia: Halake Alex Jarso and his wife Dabo Doyo Galgalo.

The grace and the love of the God are given to human beings, especially to the members of a family through the Church that is holy. Prayer is the source of our family life. Prayer makes us gather together and put ourselves in the presence of God and in communion with Him. This communion is always possible because through baptism we have been united with Him to be one family. He is our Father and our Brother. For us, prayer is very important for our family life. We could not go to sleep without taking time for prayer. Through prayer, God helps us to dedicate ourselves to both public and private religious activities. In our small Yebello town, there are at least four other Churches or religions: there are the Orthodox, Muslims, Catholics and Protestants; all the churches, mosques and temples are full. God encourages us to live out our identity as disciples and children of God. This is why we respect each other in the presence of God, we live in harmony and solidarity as one community. We generously take care of one another.

In addition, prayer helps us to continue our journey in our daily lives. God provides everything we need for living because we put our trust in Him, we put our daily life into His hands as he taught us in the Lord's prayer: "Give us our daily bread." Through prayer, all the members of our families are one in Jesus Christ who loves us and gives us lasting spiritual goods. He gives his love to each member of our family. We love each other more and more, we help each other to overcome the difficulties of life. Parents love and help their children to grow up in the love of God; older siblings help the younger ones to be good at studies, how to behave, having good relationships with everybody and at listening to the teaching of the parents.

In Borana, the Spiritans have been with us for more than 43 years. They have been helping us a lot for the development of our life, for education and spiritual life. They collaborated with us to translate the Christian prayers and the missal; they taught us how to pray. They also helped us to establish small Christian communities in different villages. In each small Christian community, they have taught us how to pray when there is no priest around. They have been going around our villages to visit our families and celebrate mass for us. They gather our children in the church for prayer and catechism to prepare us for baptism, first communion and confirmation because our children will be the future of our Christian families and community. This is also an opportunity for us to say thank you to the Spiritans in Borana and may God bless the Spiritans all over the world.

Prayer intentions :

We pray for all families, may God be with them, give them grace, love, and teach them how to love and respect each other. Bind us together, Lord. Bind us together in love. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for broken families, may God help them to be reunited, may God hear their cry when they face difficulties in daily life and strengthen them. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the young people who plan to marry, may God bless and guide them so that they can take care of their new family. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for the children who are homeless, may God be with them, send some people to accompany them, so that they can experience the love of a family. We also pray for the children who are victims of war, of abuse and abortion, may God bless them all. Let us pray to the Lord. Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Spirit of God, giver of all good gifts, we can do nothing without you, yet you fill with your gifts those who confide in you. We remember the families who are witnesses of the Gospel through their love and unity for each other. Strengthen them with your gift of peace. Remember the families who are suffering for lack of love and peace. May your presence fill their lives and make them radiate peace. Amen.

DAY 8

FAMILY MINISTRY : CARING AND SERVICE

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: PATIENCE.

We demonstrate patience by treating others with thoughtfulness and tolerance. We know that we can overcome the temptations and sufferings of life because God is always with us.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Sirach 7, 32 - 36

“To the poor man also extend your hand, that your blessing may be complete; Be generous to all the living, and withhold not your kindness from the dead. Avoid not those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn; Neglect not to visit the sick. For these things, you will be loved. In whatever you do, remember your last days, and you will never sin”.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

“Led by the Spirit, the family circle is not only open to life by generating it within itself, but also by going forth and spreading life, by caring for others and seeking their happiness. This openness finds particular expression in hospitality. When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is “a symbol, witness and participant in the Church’s motherhood”. The family lives its spirituality precisely by being at one and the same time a domestic church and a vital cell for transforming the world” (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis: # 322, 324)

The task of every family is to reflect the goodness, justice and mercy of God. Family is a perfect instrument to announce the good news among different nations, cultures, languages by their exemplary life. Not only to one another do family members proclaim the Reign of God and Christ’s saving death and resurrection, they are likewise called to do so to others. The actual human relationship within the family in daily life, the harmonious loving and caring relations between spouses, between spouses and their children, and among the children, especially when the family is experiencing great distress, their family journey to full life through suffer and joy – these make communion, solidarity, and mission concrete. The family’s vocation and mission to others extends to the social, cultural, political, and educational fields. . (The Asian Bishop’s Conference: “*The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral life*”, Paragraphs: 75; 78,).

Questions for Spiritans:

1. Have you ever received any material help from public services or from the church? How did you feel about that?
2. As Spiritans, how much do we care for the local people that we are working with, and for our own confreres from other communities? How can we show our care and support to the families of our own confreres?
3. In my pastoral work, do I meet families affected by domestic violence, abuse or poverty? How might I extend my love and service to them?

Questions for Families:

1. Is our family open to the needs of other families in need? How do we reach out to them? What motivates us to pay attention to their needs? How do Spiritans help us to be attentive to the needs of other families? Do we collaborate with Spiritans in charitable activities?

Sharing of a family from Congo Kinshasa: text written by Déo Ulungulungu

Our society is undergoing an unprecedented crisis in many areas. Poverty is deeply rooted and is the source of many problems, such as unemployment, pick-pocketing, robbery, begging (handicapped and non-handicapped beggars), street children living far from their homes, food shortages (undernourishment or malnutrition), murders for little or no reasons. Most families have nothing to eat or not enough to eat. In poor areas, eight family members live in a two room apartment without water or electricity. They take one meal a day, with less than 300 grams of food. Moral poverty is multi-faceted : prostitution, infanticides, abandonment of babies and children, obscenity exposed in dances, in words, in clothing, lack of respect, consumption of drugs, lack of hygiene in open spaces (trash in the streets...), hiring of children and elderly people to work in mining and quarries.

The educational system is inadequate: there is a lack of schools. All school fees have to be covered by the parents; corruption is widespread. People have no social services. Many people don't have access to medical treatment, to clinics and hospitals. There is no health insurance. Former soldiers receive no support to be reintegrated into society; people are tempted by witchcraft. Citizens are not granted equal treatment in courts. (Some citizens are put in prison for years and cannot defend themselves in court). People have lost a sense of patriotism, idealism, Christian values. All these problems are present in many other countries but in Congo it is dramatic.

How do we react to the problems as Christians? We recognize, in their suffering, people are human persons; we consider them as our brothers and sisters, created according to God's image and likeness. Most of them are the victims of an unfair society; they cannot rely on just structures, on competent people. We live in a better situation than theirs', not because we are better than them, but thanks to the grace that God has bestowed on us. As Christians, we are called to have mercy on them. We express our compassion through charitable actions. We pray for them personally and as a family; we pay visits to them and offer some gifts to those who are most in need, the beggars, the poorest. We meet with groups of prisoners, we go to orphanages. Due to widespread poverty and our limited means of helping, we face a dilemma. We have to decide to whom we should give priority: to the members of our own families? to the members of our Christian communities? to strangers? In addition to our Christian faith, Spiritan spirituality encourages us to put ourselves at the service of the poor, following the example of the founders who dedicated their lives to the poor. As lay spiritans, we contribute to charitable projects established by professed Spiritans.

Prayer intentions

We pray for the Pope, Bishops and priests, that God may grant them all the necessary resources to contribute to the liberation and promotion of men and women. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of our countries, for our politicians and for Christian communities in developing countries. We pray that they may act according to moral ethics and justice and consider each person as a brother, a sister, a child, a father or a mother. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for solidarity and to seek the common good in our families. We pray that they may not be discouraged. We pray that men and women be proud of their work and put into practice the evangelical values. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of the western world, that their political engagement may be disinterested, that they may consider all people as equal, that men and women be at the center of all their decisions since they are created at the image of God. Let us pray to the Lord.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: O Loving Spirit of God, come to the aid of families who are in great need of your merciful help. Grant us the grace to be kind and patient in our family ministry of caring and service, and through this ministry, may your abundant blessings be upon families.

AMEN

DAY 9

THE FAMILY AND INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Fruit of the Holy Spirit: FAITHFULNESS.

We are faithful when we live out our commitment to the teachings of Jesus, the Scriptures, and the Catholic Church.

BIBLICAL TEXT: Acts 8:30-38

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him. This was the scripture passage he was reading: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In (his) humiliation justice was denied him. Who will tell of his posterity? For his life is taken from the earth.” Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, “I beg you, about whom is the prophet saying this? About himself, or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him. As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?” Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him.

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENT:

95. In Asia, the birthplace of the world’s great religions, it is in the ordinariness of daily life that the encounter with peoples of other faiths takes place. To fulfill the mission of evangelization, Christian families should always keep before their minds their distinct identity as Christian, be faithful to their Christian commitments, and live by their Christian values. 96. Many are the ways by which inter-religious dialogue can take place at the level of the family. In the first place is the witness to Gospel values that Christian families must give daily in our times. Mutual respect for common values will lead to mutual collaboration to protect and promote them.

97. In particular, solidarity with the poor is a social value that should certainly lead Christian families to act together with families of other faiths in the promotion of social justice, the quest for peace and reconciliation, and in the care for the environment. At a certain point of inter-religious relationship, Christian families could share with others their own God-experience, their religious experience of faith and love of Jesus. Christian families could also bring the Good News of salvation to people who wish to hear and freely welcome it. 98. In a marriage of peoples from different religions, the faithful spouse is the one who witnesses the Gospel to his/hers faithless or otherwise religious spouse. The dialogue of word and of love proceeds through courtship and marriage matures into a loving dialogue of life in the ordinary and daily events of married life. The values and attitudes of such dialogue flow to their children. Despite religious differences, a bridge of love and reconciliation is built, a reality so significant in societies plagued by religious strife. (The Asian Bishop’s Conference: *“The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life”*, Paragraphs: 95-98) .

Question for Spiritans:

1. As Spiritans living in international communities, how do we promote good relationships among the members of our communities? How do we value the differences that come from our cultures of origin?
2. Do we see any distrust, hatred or discrimination between our family members and other families because of religion or cultural backgrounds? How do we urge Christian families to live in harmony with families of other faiths or other cultures?

Questions for Families:

1. Do we see any tensions and distrust between our family members and other families because of religion or cultural differences?
2. How do we try to live in harmony with these people? Do Spiritans contribute to our mutual understanding and love?

Sharing of a family from Taiwan: text of Francisca.

In Taiwan, due to differences in culture, religion and faith, sometimes there is a lack of trust and anxiety that arises especially when a member of a family dies. How to decide which rite to use for the funeral and burial of the departed easily gives rise to friction in the family. Taiwanese traditional culture believes that the heavens have many gods or deities. The greatest in rank is known as the Jade Emperor (玉皇大帝) since he controls all that happens in the heavens. Other deities of note include the Lord Guan (關公), Matsu, a sea goddess (媽祖) and one's ancestors. We, Taiwanese, believe that they strongly influence what happens in our day to day lives. Thus incense is burnt and offered to them as a form of worship. When my elder sister became a protestant Christian, she completely stopped the practice of joining the rest of my family members to offer incense to our ancestors. She is so opposed to it that she regards me, who got converted to the Catholic Church and still offers incense in veneration to our ancestors, as acting incorrectly.

After a long time trying to persuade her to join the rest of the family to continue the offer of incense to our ancestors, we decided to respect her choice. Being myself a Catholic, I thus realized I have found the treasure of life and what human life relies on. God, through the instrumentality of Father Mu, a Taiwanese priest, made it possible for me to become a Catholic. The Catholic Church's inculturation of the gospel into our traditional culture, which allows offering of incense in veneration of our ancestors, and other rites in burial ceremonies, really attracted me all the more to the Catholic faith. If we truly believe that God is love, we then should be able to be in harmony with people of different beliefs. If we realized that as humans our knowledge of the universe is very limited, we should be humble. Knowing also that human history and society constantly evolves, and that individual person's thoughts, beliefs and actions often are one sided, weak and imperfect, we ought to be tolerant.

Moreover, knowing that we are people chosen and called by God's grace we should never attack other people who don't share our beliefs. There is a background to every people's culture and history and peoples' beliefs are intimately connected to their culture. No faith is absolute and perfect, hence we have to mutually interact and understand ourselves. We ought to pray constantly that God, who is rich in merciful love, would make more and more people come to

the knowledge of the self-existing everlasting God, and experience His mighty and overwhelming love.

Prayer intentions:

Lord Jesus Christ, at your Last Supper, you prayed to the Father that all should be one. Send your Holy Spirit upon all who bear your name and seek to serve you. Strengthen our faith in you, and lead us to love one another in humility. May we who have been reborn in one baptism, be united in one faith under one Shepherd. Let us pray to the Lord.

Triune God, you are the origin and goal of all living things. Forgive us when we only think of ourselves and are blinded by our own standards. Open our hearts and our eyes. Teach us to be loving, accepting and gracious, so that we may grow in the unity which is your gift. To you be honour and praise, now and forever. Let us pray to the Lord.

Creator God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus Christ, your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love. And even in our weaknesses, work to accomplish your purposes on earth, so that every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne. Let us pray to the Lord.

Our father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Oh Holy Spirit who is the love and unity of the Father and His Son, make us to be of "one heart and one soul" like the Holy Trinity. We know that You guide every person who lives with honesty and love. Teach us to recognize your loving presence in every person who, despite the differences of culture or religion, is our brother and sister. Amen.

END OF THE NOVENA. HAPPY FEAST OF PENTECOST TO ALL !