

THE FILIPINO FAMILY – LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

Challenges to the Domestic Church

Levy Lara Lanaria[♦]

University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines

Introduction

Vatican II's retrieval of the notion of family as domestic church in its landmark document *Lumen Gentium* (n. 11) has provided impetus to the production of magisterial and theological reflections on the ecclesiological motif the last several decades.¹ In the Philippines such titles attached to the Christian family as "the basic unit of Christian life," "subject and object of evangelization," "the primary community of Christ's disciples," "the church of the home," or "the church in the home," and "agent of renewal" have found their way in pastoral and theological discourse.²

[♦]**Dr Levy Lara Lanaria** is a Filipino family man and Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines. He finished his M.A. in Religious Education at the University of San Carlos in 1993 and Ph.D. in Applied Theology at the De La Salle University, Manila in 2008. His last published article was "The CBCP Statement on the Reproductive Health Bill: A Looking Back and Postscript," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 50, no. 1 (2013). Email: levria@yahoo.com

¹Much of what is written in this essay particularly on magisterial statements about domestic church and sociological appraisal of the Filipino family, is culled, in its edited and slightly updated version for this purpose, from my Ph.D. in Applied Theology dissertation entitled "The Church as *Sambahayan ng Diyos*: Towards a Discernment of Ecclesial Elements Constitutive of the Filipino [Christian] Family" (Ph.D. dissert., De La Salle University-Manila, November 2007).

²See for example Bishop Arturo M. Bastes, "Focus is on the Family for National Bible Week Celebration," in *The CBCP Monitor* 6, 1 (January 13, 2002) 6; *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines 20 January-17 February 1991*, Pasay City: St Paul Publications, 1992, art. 48, henceforth referred to as *PCP II*.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II) avers that the family serves to model relationships in the Church and to form one family is the plan of God. The Council identifies the Church as the *household of God* which should be oriented towards becoming a family of families.³ For Jose de Mesa, a respected Filipino lay theologian, the Christian family is not merely a functional unit that contributes to the building up of the BECs for it is “(m)ore basic than basic Christian communities,” hence is “the foundational setting of mission.”⁴

The Eighth Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC VIII) in its document *The Asian Family towards a Culture of Integral Life* has reaffirmed the ecclesial character of the family (n. 4) while recalling that the faith in the early times was spread “from house to house” (Acts 20:20). In the document the bishops highlight “the place and role of the family in the building of Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities toward a new way of being Church” (n. 46) and emphasizes at the same time the family as “the basic cell of society and the fundamental ecclesial community, the Church that is the home,” the “Church (that) begins in the home, not in the parish (n. 46). In another part of the reflection they remind us that “(t)he domestic church is the most fundamental community form of the Church and must be taken seriously as an ecclesial reality,” hence it “must be part of the total ecclesial reality of the locality” (n. 99).

One can say that the “Church of the home” expression is more of a prescriptive or heuristic, not a descriptive, statement, more of an “idealized” not yet a “real-ized” view of the domestic Church in its most explicit form in the country. In any case, the unequivocal ecclesiastical affirmation on the ecclesial character of the family serves as a potent inspiration for Christian families to consider seriously their church-ness, sustain and nourish its growth.

To be sure the growth to becoming church of the home does not happen once and for all; neither it does in a vacuum. It is an ongoing process which takes place through ups and downs and in the ambiguities of relationships and existential realities. Like the bigger local/particular churches or the universal Church that is *simul justus et peccator* and *ecclesia semper reformada* — an ecclesial reality that is

³PCP II, n. 22.

⁴Jose M. de Mesa, “Re-rooting Mission in the Family,” *Mission Studies* 19/1-37 (2002) 149, also 139-142.

always in need of reform with all its historical failings and faith-driven achievements, the family too is both sinner and 'saint', always in need of reform. The Filipino family is not immune to both internal and external humps which get in the way of the church-in-progress project.

This paper will expose what I consider as the 'lights' and 'shadows' internal of the native kinship system. I will bring this to a close by sketching a number of challenges apropos to the churches of the home in addressing the actual intra-family situation. I acknowledge that the family is not impervious to outside influences for better or for worse and are, in fact, being conditioned and shaped by them. The reality of external environmental factors is beyond the scope of my article.

The Filipino Family: Central and Deeply Entrenched

The Filipino social organization, like any traditional Asian culture, is essentially *familial*.⁵ A local sociologist poetically describes the native network of relationships as one which "stands at the heart of social life."⁶ It is the only 'corporate unit' in the society that serves both as the bond of group decisions/actions and source of personal

⁵F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization: Traditional Kinship and Family Organization. Anthropology of the Filipino People III*, Metro Manila: PUNLAD Research House, 1998, 62; Francis Gustilo, "Towards the Inculturation of the Salesian Family Spirit in the Filipino Context" (Ph.D. diss., Rome 1989), 65. The social and historical significance of the family is formally acknowledged by the 1987 Philippine constitution where the family is enshrined. Section 12, Article II of the document declares: "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution." Concomitantly the importance of marriage is also recognized in Section 2, Article XV to quote: "Marriage, an inviolable social institution, is the foundation of the family and shall be protected by the State." The promulgation of the Family Code of the Philippines has reaffirmed the family's foundational value for the state (see Joaquin G. Bernas, *The 1987 Philippine Constitution. A Reviewer-Primer*, Manila: Rex Book Store, 1997). Other pertinent provisions are the following: "The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development" (Sec. 1, Art. XV); and "The State shall defend... the right of spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood;" and "...the right of families of family associations to participate in the planning and implementation of policies and programs that affect them" (Sec. 3, Art. XV).

⁶Niels Mulder, "Filipino Culture and Social Analysis," *Philippines Studies* 42 (1994) 81.

security.⁷ Beyond the domestic confines familial solidarity can be felt in the larger community and society: in politics, business, and even in the ritual practice of religion. The native notion of kinship system “lies deep in the heart of Filipino community social organization. It is its nucleus. It affects, if not dominates, the shaping of local institutions, values, emotions and actions.”⁸

The Hispanic etymological origin of the English word ‘family’ which is *pamilya* is taken for granted by the Filipinos. The different ethnic groups in the country have their own indigenous rendering of the ‘family.’ *Pamilya* is the only word that is used – and commonly used – by probably all major regional groups all over the country. The word thus serves as a generic term to encompass the variety of ethnic renderings of family in the native socio-linguistic context. Notwithstanding morphological differences the sociological meanings and practices attached to the concept of *pamilya* reflect fundamental similarities, hence we can speak of *the* Filipino family system.⁹

A very recent research on how Filipinos view a home has shown that it “is not just a place that we live in (*nakatira*), but a place we return to (*uwian*),”¹⁰ which represents memories. More than memories, a *tirahan* (home) is a shelter; an *uwian* provides security, “a feeling one can stay on, one can come home, go home, everyday,” a place where to “find solace in, but of having someone who will listen to you, who offers a shoulder to cry on, or who’s ready to boogie with

⁷A scientific study administered to Filipino students disclosed emotional closeness and security of the family as a major Filipino value (Jaime C. Bulatao, “The Manileño’s Mainsprings” in *Four Readings on Philippine Values*, ed., Frank X. Lynch and Alfonso de Guzman II, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1972, 50-86). Another study showed that of the top ten most important components of the good life identified by the Filipino respondents, six of these represent emotional support provided by the family (Ly Sycip, Maruja M.B. Asis, and Emmanuel Luna, “The Measurement of the Filipino Well-being,” Technical Report, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 1999. In a most recent Philippine Happiness Index (PHI) study conducted in 2010, “family” topped the list of things that made Filipinos happy (“Pinays Rank Food at 5th, Sex Life at 18th, Says Poll,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 11, 2010) pages A1 and A8.

⁸F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Worldwide: Ethnography of Local Knowledge*, Metro Manila: PUNLAD Research House, Inc., 2001, 66.

⁹Cf. Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization: Traditional Kinship and Family Organization*, 1-4, 153; also idem, *Social Organization in Three Philippine Villages: An Exploration in Rural Anthropology*, Manila: CEU Research and Development Center, 1988.

¹⁰Michael L. Tan, “Coming Home, Going Home,” *Sunday Inquirer Magazine* (23 November 2008) 5.

you as you bring home good news.”¹¹ And for those being away from home, whether working inside or outside the country, to build a home and to return to it as well someday is their dream. A research informant has put in a nutshell what home basically is: “*Ang bahay mo ay buhay mo* (Your home is your life).”¹² That is why “*Gayung pumapasok ito sa opisina or sa pabrika o nagtitinda araw-araw, bahay pa rin ang pinakamahalagang karanasan nito... Ang maka-uwi sa bahay ay isang pang-araw-araw na pangarap*”¹³ (Even if s/he goes to work in an office or factory or to sell everyday, home remains his/her most significant experience... To return home is a daily longing).

Regardless of changing economic and social situations, Filipinos attach a high premium to ‘living together’. In fact, they live much of their lives as members of households.¹⁴ That is why whether urban or rural residents, they greatly aspire to own a house and lot they can call their own, or at least a house where to live together.¹⁵ In this sense family is not family unless it is latched on to the idea of a household.¹⁶ As a readily identifiable social unit, it is within the

¹¹Michael L. Tan, “Coming Home, Going Home,” 5.

¹²Michael L. Tan, “Coming Home, Going Home,” 5.

¹³Estela P. Padilla, “BEC Spirituality,” in *BECs in the Philippines: Dream or Reality A Multi-Disciplinary Reflection*, Taytay, Rizal: Bukal ng Tipan, 2004; printed by Lexicon Press, 271.

¹⁴F. Landa Jocano, *The Hiligaynon: An Ethnography of Family and Community Life in Western Bisayas Region*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Asian Center, 1983, 220. Households in the Philippines are predominantly nuclear with larger nuclear families being found in rural communities. Extended families are found more in urban rather than rural areas due to urban in-migration (Belen T.G. Medina and Eliseo de Guzman, “Filipino Families and Households in Three Selected Philippine Areas,” *Philippine Sociological Review* 42, 1-4 (January-December 1994) 110-118). A 2002 profile of the Filipino household contains the following data on the household: average household size - 5.16; nuclear & single families (parents and children only) - 84 percent of the households; husband and wives living together - 85 percent; multigenerational/extended families - almost 13 percent; households with single parents: 5 percent (Amor B. Pedro, “A Profile of the Filipino Family 2003,” in *Globalization and the Asian Family*, 1, University of Sto. Tomas Social Science Research Center, 2003, 24.

¹⁵Pax Policarpio Mendez and F. Landa Jocano, *The Filipino Family in Its Rural and Urban Orientation: Two Case Studies*, Manila: Research and Development Center, Centro Escolar University, 1974, 206-207.

¹⁶A household can be literally more inclusive than the nuclear family in the sense that it can “house” grandparents, grandchildren, parents-in-law, siblings, cousins, house-help or anybody else living in the same house (Mendez and Jocano, *The Filipino in Its Rural and Urban Orientation*, 43). A household may consist of “two or more descent-related families, the members of which share a common kitchen;

household and from it that “family relationships even beyond a particular household are defined”¹⁷ and the concept of human welfare examined as the latter manifests itself at the household level.¹⁸

Family-Rooted Traditional Socio-Ethical Values

Anthropologists trace the origin of the kinship system as an institution to pre-colonial times, one whose enduring character has been tested by time. Three empires (Spanish, American, Japanese) and five republics in the past century were not able to decimate it.¹⁹ Today historical changes are occurring at an unprecedentedly rapid pace marked by ongoing socio-cultural transformations, yet Filipino family and its cherished values have relatively remained intact.²⁰ The movement, for instance, towards a more complex, urbanized and industrialized social order which is a major threat to the family solidarity has failed to undermine the centrality and salience of the family. Modernization may have “imposed on Filipino institutions the legal rules and norms of behavior,” yet “many of the conventional ways of cognition, expression, and evaluation continue to intrude into the local ways of thinking, believing, feeling, and doing things.”²¹ To be sure even before the advent of modernization (and globalization), colonialism has somehow diluted the pre-Spanish

contribute to the procurement of household necessities... prepare and eat their meals separately; exchange cooked food; and sleep in their chosen corners if the house happens to be a one-room dwelling” (Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization*, 71). Very often close relatives, especially unmarried siblings and cousins, are taken into the household for affective reasons (Jocano, *The Hiligaynon*, 154).

¹⁷Gelia T. Castillo, *Where Food and Population Meet: The Filipino Household among Other Households*, UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies in cooperation with the University of the Philippines Press, 1993, 7.

¹⁸Gelia T. Castillo, *Where Food and Population Meet*, 7. In another study Castillo puts forward the sociological importance of the household (Gelia T. Castillo, *Beyond Manila: Philippine Rural Problems in Perspective*, Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 1979 reprinted 1980, 104).

¹⁹Robert B. Fox, “Prehistoric Foundations of Contemporary Filipino Culture and Society,” in *Readings on Philippine Culture and Social Life*, ed., Amparo S. Lardizabal and Felicitas Tansuan-Leogardo, Manila: Rex Book Store, 1990, 31-62; Alfred W. McCoy, “An Anarchy of Families: The Historiography of State and Family in the Philippines,” in *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*, ed., McCoy, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1994, 7.

²⁰Maruja M.B. Asis, “Family Ties in a World without Borders,” *Philippine Sociological Review* 42, 1-4 (2004) 16; Virginia A. Miralao, “The Family, Traditional Values and the Socio-Cultural Transformation of Philippine Society,” *Philippine Sociological Review* 45, 1-4 (1997) 208.

²¹Jocano, *Filipino Worldview*, 85.

traditional Filipino social behaviour. But the change is more veneer than in-depth for Filipino values have endured and have continued to influence his lifeways.²²

It is very unlikely that indigenous values which have withstood the vagaries and contingencies of history for centuries are about to be phased out in contemporary times by the forces of modernization and globalization. Referring to the lowland indigenous culture in particular, de Mesa is confident that were past experience be made a gauge, then chances are that they will survive.²³ If waves and waves of foreign intrusions across the centuries did not destroy the highly stable character of the family as an institution that the Filipinos can count on for their economic and affective needs, there is reason to be optimistic of its future. As a Filipino sociologist has keenly perceived, the "(p)eople have not lost faith in the family as an institution."²⁴

The internal socio-ethical structure of the Filipino *pamilya* embodies traditionally cherished values which mirror the structural and cultural orientation of social behaviour in the immediate community and the larger society. If a child is seen to be violating a socially-cherished value taught in the home, he is sanctioned by rhetorical expletive like *iyang ba ang turo ng magulang mo?* (Is that what your parents taught you?) or *hindi ka tinuruan ng magulang mo* (Your parents did not teach you).²⁵ The ideals, norms and values of group life are initially acquired at home before these are enriched, modified, or frustrated by other institutions "out there". They manifest themselves in patterns of behaviour that, at the same time, can be better considered as "patterns for behaviour." One may not have to call on an outside element to offset what may be presently negative in the native culture.

Pamilya preeminently stands for persons, for relationships. In a family survey conducted some years ago to determine the values that are taught and encouraged at home the first three values that got the

²²Jocano, *Towards Developing a Family Corporate Culture*, 132.

²³Jose M. de Mesa, "Attending to the Cultural in Contemporary Theologizing," in *Liberation Theologies in Shifting Grounds*, ed., George de Schriver, Uitgeverij Peeters, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998, 216.

²⁴Belen T. Medina, "Issues Relating to Filipino Marriage and Family," in *The Filipino Family: A Spectrum of Views and Issues*, ed., Aurora E. Perez, with a foreword by Corazon Juliano Agrave, Quezon City: UP Office of Research Coordination, 35.

²⁵Mendez and Jocano, *The Filipino Family in Its Rural and Urban Orientation*, 178-179.

nod of the most number of respondents are all relational values: good manners, obedience, and respect for the rights of others.²⁶ This is an indicator pointing to the core-value of *pakikipagkapwa* in the native culture. *Pakikipagkapwa* rendered as 'relationalism' or 'personalism' by Jocano²⁷ literally means "personally relating to each other." Its root word is *kapwa* (fellow human being). The prefix *pakikipag-* immediately connotes relationality or personal interaction as in *pakikipagsundo* (agreeing with) or *pakikipag-usap* (talking with). An alternative word is *pagkamapagkapwa*²⁸ which connotes a condition or a conviction of (*pagka-*) of preferring for something or someone (*mapag-*), in this case a fellow person. To be *mapagkapwa* connotes the preference of a relationship that is personal.

For Virgilio Enriquez, *kapwa* is shared inner self or the unity of the "self" and "others." He regards it as a core or superordinate concept which covers both the categories of *ibang-tao* ("outsider") and *hindi ibang-tao* ("one of us"). Under each category are subsumed various levels of recognizable behaviour like civility, "mixing," participating, conforming, and adjusting (outsider-category) and mutual trust, getting involved, and fusion or full trust (insider-category).²⁹

The core value of *kapwa* that demands recognition of human dignity and equality may account for the egalitarian tendencies and structures in the home. This is borne out in concrete conjugal situations. Decision-making in the home is not monopolized by the husband but is conjugally shared:³⁰ the wife may decide on matters

²⁶Pedro, "A Profile of the Filipino Family 2003," 29.

²⁷Jocano, *Towards Developing a Filipino Corporate Culture*, 127.

²⁸Jocano, *Towards Developing a Filipino Corporate Culture*, 127.

²⁹Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Theology: The Philippine Experience*, Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1994, 41-47.

³⁰See empirical studies cited in Adelamar N. Alcantara, "Gender Roles, Fertility, and the Status of Married Filipino Men and Women," *Philippine Sociological Review* 42, 1-4 (January-December 1994) 95. Examples of these studies are Anna Mirren Gonzales and Mary Hollnsteiner, "Filipino Women as Partners of Men in Progress and Development: A Survey of Empirical Data and a Statement of Basic Goals Fostering Male-Female Partnership" (Research Report), Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1976, 12-13; Jeane Frances Ilo, "Involvement by Choice: The Role of Women in Development" (final report submitted to USAID, Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1977), 263; Mendez and F. Landa Jocano, *The Filipino Family in its Rural and Urban Orientation: Two Case Studies*, Manila: Research and Development Center, Centro Escolar University, 1974, 49; W. Liu and E. Yu. "The Lower Class Cebuano Family: A Preliminary Analysis," *Philippine Sociological Review* 6, 3-4 (1968) 122.

dealing with household budget and expenditures, childbearing and household management, family health, food preparation, money and child control; while the husband on loan acquisition and extending monetary aid to relatives. A more recent study reveals that both husband and wife jointly decide on the number of children they want to have and on resource allocations while in fertility decision slightly more husbands than wives make the principal decisions.³¹ The Filipino household-decision-making appears to be even impervious to economic variations, like income of husband and wife. Regardless of differences in income rates, making decisions in various areas that pertain to the family remain the joint responsibility of the couple.

A denigration of the women's childbearing function can even lead to disenfranchisement since a strong pro-natalist ideology is seen to contribute to social and economic stability of the family.³² A Filipino sociologist has suggested that "power attribution in the private, not the public domain, may assume primary importance"³³ in the family. From the emic perspective to speak of the Filipino women's liberation, if anything, in the home is to advocate for more liberation towards a more equal sharing of domestic responsibilities, not simply a "promotion of economic factors and the degradation of the women's childbearing function."³⁴ Another Filipino sociologist agrees:

Perhaps it would be wrong to equate the hope for changes for married Filipino women with the liberation from the home and domestic-centered responsibilities as in the West. Considering Filipino society and the realities of marriage for the urban Filipino wife, liberation perhaps should come in the context of the home and the family with the male sharing of the responsibilities.³⁵

Nowadays the concern that fathers must share in the task of child bearing and child care is meeting less and less resistance and

³¹Adelamar N. Alcantara, "Gender Roles, Fertility, and the Status of Married Filipino Men and Women," *Philippine Sociological Review* 42, 1-4 (January-December 1994) 101. Cf. Judy Carol C. Sevilla, "The Filipino Woman and the Family," in *The Filipino Woman in Focus: A Book of Readings*, ed., Amaryllis T. Torres, Quezon City: ORC-UP Press, 1995, 44-46.

^{32,32}Adelamar N. Alcantara, "Gender Roles, Fertility and the Status of Married Filipino Men and Women," *Philippine Sociological Review* 42, 1-4 (January-December, 1994) 106. In addition it has been shown that increasing the women's monetary contribution does not significantly result in more egalitarianism.

³³Adelamar N. Alcantara, "Gender Roles, Fertility...", 106.

³⁴Adelamar N. Alcantara, "Gender Roles, Fertility...", 106.

³⁵Joseph Vancio, "The Realities of Marriage of Urban Filipino Women," *Philippine Studies* 28 (1980) 20.

becoming more and more accepted. Whether this is due to the feminist advocacy or parenting seminars or changes in economic landscapes, the fact is that today *pagkalalaki* or masculinity is being redefined. A very recent study has revealed that masculinity is not merely associated with siring a child but with the husband-father's responsibility to be able to provide for the basic needs of his family such as food, clothing and education.³⁶

Beyond economic considerations masculinity as substantiated by other studies also means spending quality time with his wife and children and doing household chores, the latter being a non-issue particularly among Cebuano men.³⁷ Still a relatively recent study on the conjugal roles in the home conducted in 2003 definitely reveals changing roles.³⁸ Fathers are no longer seen as the figurehead of the family or the major provider of family needs, and their tendency to dominate and monopolize decisions is no longer acceptable. Instead the women actively participate in household planning and decision-making. Moreover "household chores are no longer seen as the exclusive work for mothers and daughters but the "(f)athers and sons

³⁶Elmira Judy T. Aguilar, "Rethinking *Pagkalalaki* among Married Cebuanos Choosing Non-Scalpel Vasectomy" (Ph.D. diss., University of San Carlos, Cebu City, March 2006). A much earlier study done in 1984 in Laguna revealed that men, whether of lowland, upland, or coastal settings, actively participated in child care and household chores (Myrna U.Garcia, "Role Perception and Behavior of Filipino Families in Various Ecological Settings" (paper presented at the 10th National Congress of the Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino on 'Ang Pamilya sa Lipunang Pilipino', Faculty Center, University of the Philippines, October 24-27, 1984). See also Jeane Frances Illo, "Involvement by Choice: The Role of Women in Development," (final report submitted to USAID, Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1977), which shows that husbands of working women tend to help in the household chores more than those of non-working women; Florita Santiago Escudro, "The Roles of Husbands and Wives as Perceived by Rural and Urban Married Couples" (D.Ed. dissert., Centro Escolar University, 1980), which confirms a prevailing view that husbands of unemployed women should help in household chores.

³⁷An endearing TV advertisement which was popular in the mid-90s shows a burly stocky man in the night tossing a bag of disposable diapers to his male neighbour cradling a weeping infant. The scene treats in a remarkably casual way the nurturing role of Filipino males (Rina Jimenez-David, "Redefining 'Pagkalalaki'," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* [30 October 2005]). Another striking advertisement around that period shows a father singing lullaby to a sick son.

³⁸Pablito A. Baybado, Jr., "The Religious Socialization of Selected Families in Diffun, Quirino Province, and Santiago City: A Descriptive-Analytical Study," in *The Filipino Family Survey 2003 Globalization and the Asian Family*, Social Science Research Center, University of Santo Tomas, 2003, 239-240.

have to contribute in keeping the house clean, including doing menial things such as husking the floor, washing the dishes, sweeping, etc."³⁹ In discussions, altercations, and other misunderstanding women "should not always give in... if it is the fault of the men."⁴⁰ Moreover the women share in the obligation to help earn a living for the family survival. The study clarifies that the modernist inclination is significantly stronger in the urban than in the rural setting.⁴¹

Pakikipagkapwa is intimately linked with the personalist trait of the Filipinos. To a villager, there is no such thing as impersonal relationship, only highly personalized one. This is not to be equated with the American concept of "individualism" where autonomous individuated self takes precedence over inter-relations. Filipinos are oriented to relating to one another as *part* of the collectivity. The expression, *pine-personal*, (taking things personally) captures the essence of *pagkamapagkapwa* as an element of value orientation."⁴²

A related relationalist-personalist cultural trait is the *pagkaramdamin* of the Filipinos. *Pagkamaramdamin* (being sensitive or emotional) is derived from the root word *dama* (feeling). Filipinos are "feeling" people, easily moved to tears as they are to laughter, easily provoked to anger as easily pacified. A raised voice can easily offend them while a gentle voice can easily touch their hearts. Blunt or confrontational language is offensive to Filipinos. The following proverb says it all: "*Mas mahapdi ang sugat ng pangungusap kaysa sugat ng itak* (The wound from unkind words is more painful than that caused by knife)."⁴³ The standard of *pagkamaramdamin* prescribes that as much as possible, one must refrain, like a so straightforward a language, from hurting other people's feelings. In order not to sound offensive Filipinos resort to *pahiwatig/pasaring* (an indirect way of communicating through the use of hints or clues).

In the home the premium given to feeling is passed on to the child in the most natural manner as its earliest age. The personalized care of the child, the continuous cuddling, talking, touching and feeding, fosters

³⁹Pablito A. Baybado, Jr., "The Religious Socialization of Selected Families in Diffun, Quirino Province and Santiago City: A Descriptive-Analytical Survey," in *The Filipino Family Survey 2003 Globalization and the Asian Family*, Social Science Research Center, University of Santo Tomas, 2003, 240.

⁴⁰Pablito A. Baybado, Jr., "The Religious Socialization...," 240.

⁴¹Pablito A. Baybado, Jr., "The Religious Socialization...," 240.

⁴²Jocano, *Towards Developing a Filipino Corporate Culture*, 127.

⁴³Jocano, *Filipino Worldview*, 119.

in it a very deep sense of emotionalism or sensitivity. It is never left alone and when the mother is at work, it is left with older siblings or with the female househelp.⁴⁴ This highly personalized practice strengthens the bond that the child has with the parents and the other members of the family. Such closeness that this formation engenders within the family is reinforced by the role played by parents' bedroom as revealed in a research study.⁴⁵ It is easy to attribute personal intimacy that generally marks conjugal relationships in the culture to the early formation of Filipino children – a formation that afforded them a prior direct experience of the cultural value of intimacy. The value of intimacy is not an abstract concept. Various native idioms express such images synonymous to conjugal intimacy as *pag-iisang dibdib*, *pagdurugtong ng buhay*, *pagiging magkabayak*, or even *pagtatalik*.

Emotionalism permeates all kinds of activities and relationships – in the field of music where native songs are “hauntingly melancholic and deeply sentimental,”⁴⁶ of TV/radio soap operas and movies which often depict sad tales of unrequited love or human tragedy, injustice, oppression, infidelity, and early death, in broken families, unfaithfulness and other misfortunes in life. This does not mean that the Filipinos have defeatist attitudes because they are brought up in an ethos given to lamentations or sorrows. The people can channel their sentimentalism to good use as when they make a stand in social issues and express it in an emotionally charged manner.⁴⁷

The stress given to emotionalism also inculcates in the child a deep sense of *pagmamalasakit* (selfless concern to others). *Pagmamalasakit* is considered “the highest ideal in Filipino culture, synthesizing all the other ideals... and translating them into selfless commitment to service for other people and for society.”⁴⁸ To tell a Filipino that s/he does not have *malasakit* is a serious indictment of a self insensitive to the needs and sufferings of others. *Pagmamalasakit* goes in tandem

⁴⁴Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization*, 157, 159.

⁴⁵See Adelaida V. Mayo, “The Parents’ Bedroom: A Reflection of the Closeness of Lower-, Middle- and Upper-Income Filipino Families,” in *Studies on Filipino Familism* Vol. 1, ed. Cecilia A. Florencio and Flor Crisanta F. Galvez, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Family Studies Program, 1995, 174-196.

⁴⁶Jocano, *Towards Developing a Filipino Corporate Culture*, 123.

⁴⁷Jocano, *Filipino Worldview*, 87-88, also 123-124.

⁴⁸F. Landa Jocano, “Filipino Family Values,” in *The Filipino Family: A Spectrum of Views and Issues* with Foreword by Corazon Juliano Agrava, ed., Aurora E. Perez, Quezon City: UP Office of Research and Coordination, 1995, 9-10.

with *pagbabahala* and *pananagutan*. *Pagbabahala* is the native concern shown over the welfare of other people including human rights and responsibilities duly exercised to the community. In its specific manifestation it takes the form of hospitality towards visitors including those who are considered outsiders (*ibang tao*). *Pananagutan*, also close to *pagbabahala*, is to be ready and willing to be accountable for one's actions not only to oneself but to the other members of the family and the community as well.

Reciprocity (*tulungan, damayan, pagbabalikatan, bayanihan*) is another relational value. Its clearest expression is viewed in terms of the traditional exchange of favours and obligations among kinsfolk. There is nothing explicit in the exchange because the observance of the practice "is done almost on the unconscious level." The unspoken rule is that a favour has to be repaid. Except in cases when a party fails to return the favour then s/he may (or s/he may not) express her/himself in recrimination of "I did this for you and so you must do this for me."⁴⁹ Otherwise the unspoken rule is that a favour has to be repaid. Reciprocity

is never all giving or all taking, even between parents and siblings. Who has more will give to one who has less, especially money or material things. If the receiver cannot reciprocate in similar coin, she will repay in terms of personal attention or services, like running errands, caring for some sick member of the family or keeping the donor or her children company.⁵⁰

The ethical and moral meaning of reciprocity is best expressed in the popular concept of *utang na loob* (sense of gratitude). Jose de Mesa has given a hermeneutical spin to its meaning. For him the notion refers to a "debt of human solidarity to a fellow human being."⁵¹ This is demonstrated in a situation of helplessness or abuse or injustice wherein the victim appeals to the *mabuting loob* (good inner will) of the perpetrator by the entreatment: "*Utang na loob maawa kayo sa akin!*" (dynamically translated as "Please, have mercy on me"). *Utang na loob* at its deepest core is not merely a debt to be repaid to a good or kind deed previously done by someone. It is *a priori* being responsible to someone in the name of human solidarity. A

⁴⁹Mendez and Jocano, *The Filipino Family in Its Rural and Urban Orientation*, 66-67.

⁵⁰Mendez and Jocano, *The Filipino Family in Its Rural and Urban Orientation*, 66.

⁵¹Jose M. de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting, Maryhill Studies 4*, Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1991, 69, 70-71.

preexistent instinct exists as it were on the person doing *utang na loob* to the *kapwa* regardless of who and what s/he is.

Pagbabalikatan is derived from the root word, *balikat*, meaning “shoulder,” impels people to “carry over their shoulders” the burden for the well-being and happiness of others. And in times of sorrow *makikiisa sa kanila* (to be one with them). The cultural value is an expression of *pananagutan* (responsibility). *Pagbabayanihan*, closely related to *balikatan*, represents the concept of teamwork and cooperation.⁵² The value conjures up an image of several persons literally carrying together on their shoulders a native house to be transferred from one place to another in a village or town is a powerful image of what *bayanihan* spirit is all about. The *bayanihan* spirit is something that Filipinos working abroad are proud of. Another closely related term is *damayan*. Someone roots it not only in the notion of *damay* but also of *dama*.⁵³ *Dama* as pointed out earlier is literally “feeling” or “emotion” but goes beyond it. For the Filipinos *dama* involves the whole person, her/his feeling yes but also intellect, opinion, experience, judgment. It is more akin with “integrated sensing.” This is so significant in the native culture that something is not held to be true if it is not felt (*hindi nararamdaman*). *Dama* is not merely an inward sentiment; in order to be true to itself it must lead to *damay* (help). Helping others depends on how one “feels with” (*pagdama*) with their condition.⁵⁴

The Filipino Family: Shadows

The Filipino family for all its positive features is not a perfect social institution like any other. The fact is that the family has been the subject not only of praise but also of blame by social analysts of Philippine society.⁵⁵ I focus on at least three major shortcomings based on the writings that I have stumbled upon in the course of my

⁵²Jocano, “Filipino Family Values,” 8-9. See also Padilla, “BEC Spirituality,” 281-284.

⁵³Padilla, “BEC Spirituality,” 277-281.

⁵⁴Padilla, “BEC Spirituality,” 277-278.

⁵⁵Mina Ramirez, “The Paradox of the Filipino Family: A Phenomenological Approach,” in *Towards Building the Filipino Today*, ed., Felicidad M. Dacayanan and Josefina Dy R. Isaac, Social Awareness no. 1, Asian Social Institute, 1974, 25. Cf. Ruby Suazo, “Re-inventing the Filipino’s Orientation towards the Family: A Prospect for Genuine National Development,” *USC Graduate Journal* 26, 2 (March 2010) 221, where the author makes an even harsher judgment on the Filipino family by adverting to the people’s stunted value as the root cause of the country’s underdevelopment.

research. The first is related to the question on the family's patterned response to the larger social setting; the second pertains to the principle of authoritarianism operative in traditional families; and the third is being posed by the feminists in terms of gender inequality in the home.

Extreme Family-centeredness: This has been pointed out as representing a serious flaw in the Filipino character.⁵⁶ To be sure the Filipinos are not typically individualistic in the crass sense of the word. Individual aspirations, decisions and courses of action are very often linked to group interests and concerns. Yet as critics point out they tend to be more clannish in this regard. This is social individualism that marks many a Filipino *pamilya*.⁵⁷ Excessive concern for family is not accompanied by passionate concern for the larger community and society. This can breed "familiarity," making the family an idol above everything else while subordinating ethical norms and values to it.⁵⁸ Social or political indifference, even the commission of graft and corrupt practices, is rationalized by an appeal to family interest.

In the political sphere excessive familism assumes another face: political patronage and political dynasties which spell in turn economic power.⁵⁹ The 1987 Constitution (Article II, Section 26) unequivocally prohibits political dynasties in the country but as of 2013 no anti-dynasty bill ever reached the floor of the Lower House or the Senate due to consistent and strong resistance from those elected representatives who benefit from the status quo.⁶⁰ The recent

⁵⁶Leticia Ramos Shahani, *Moral Imperatives of National Renewal: Readings on the Moral Recovery Program*, Manila: Senate, 1993, 14; Castillo, *Beyond Manila*, 103.

⁵⁷Mina M. Ramirez, *Understanding Philippine Social Realities through the Filipino Family: A Phenomenological Approach*, Malate, Manila: Asian Social Institute, 1984, 50.

⁵⁸Ramirez gives a few concrete cases to illustrate the adverse effects of an excessively inward-looking family system (*Understanding Philippine Social Realities*, 43-44).

⁵⁹See McCoy, ed., *An Anarchy of Families*; also Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista, foreword to *Landlords and Capitalists: Class, Family, and State in Philippine Manufacturing* by Temario C. Rivera (Center for Integrative and Development Studies University of the Philippines Press in cooperation with the Philippine Center for Policy Studies, 1994).

⁶⁰See Tony Begornia, "Congress Won't End Reign of Political Dynasties," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 26, 2010) A1, A22, and Neal Cruz, "Political Dynasties Are Increasing," *idem* (April 26, 2010) A14. The newspaper reports that in "50 provinces, at least 108 families use elections in the Philippines as a virtual playground to keep themselves entrenched in political power."

May 2013 elections which yielded results in favour of many entrenched political dynasties do not augur well for genuine political democratization.⁶¹ Nepotism is another ugly form of excessive familism shunting merit-rocracy aside for the sake of the well-being of one's kin thus stunting possible national development. To be sure children are formed in the families to be concerned with the needs of others including *ibang tao* but this is negated when family interests are jeopardized.

Elite patronage politics synonymous with called *trapos* or *tradpols* (traditional politics) is likely to continue to dominate the political landscape over the long haul. The existence of patronage politics is symptomatic of the skewed socio-political structure in the country. Corollary to this is a reinforced economic inequality which in turn breeds a real sense of insecurity on the part of the Filipinos. The nation's resources hardly, if at all, trickle down to the majority poor.⁶² It is not surprising then if Filipinos seek refuge in their respective families for security considerations. What the larger society cannot offer, the family can.⁶³

In addition politically powerful individuals are not noted for modelling the kind of national and local leaderships that set the good example in respecting and following the laws like paying religiously one's taxes or being honest in the administration of peoples' money

⁶¹<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/05/18/943402/observers-phil-dynasties-prevail> accessed 4 June 2013.

⁶²The remarkable economic growth underpinned by the current Filipino president's *matuwid na daan* (straight path)-slogan since the president assumed power in 2008 is overshadowed from the perspective of the poor by their non-experience of the flaunted robust economy (see "GDP Growth Unfelt by the People – Anakpawis" <http://www.nordis.net/?p=15543> accessed May 3, 2013; <http://manilastandardtoday.com/2013/04/24/28-of-pinoys-dirt-poor/> accessed May 3, 2013; <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/396237/ph-poverty-unchanged> accessed May 3, 2013).

⁶³"A survey of interlocking leadership in the Philippine economy showed that 20 powerful families in the Philippines are engaged in 29 lines of business activity, ranging from mining to financial intermediaries to manufacturing. An unbalanced social structure is a situation of social injustice. It promotes a system of exploitation and oppression and enhances the atmosphere of insecurity in the country. Understandably, the family confronted with insecurity from the larger society takes as its highest value its own security" (Ramirez, *Understanding Philippine Social Realities*, 43).

or in small things like following traffic rules. Law and rules are conveniently bended for their personal and familial interests.⁶⁴

Stifling Authoritarianism: Another issue that can be raised against the Filipino family is related to its traditionally authoritarian structure.⁶⁵ This has led very often to passive and uncritical acceptance of parental or elderly authority. "Parents know what is best for their children" expresses an ideology which stifles any attempt of the children to reason out in a critically intelligent and mature way without being mocked or insulted. In the authoritarian context disagreement with parents (and elders) is construed as disobedience or disrespect or lack of *utang na loob*. There are parents who are not open to their children pointing out their mistakes. Yet culture gives unlimited leeway to the parents to discipline their children even in a most spiteful manner. The children do not then value the importance of a dialogical relationship, so needed in the wider community and society. Deep emotional hurts are repressed in the children for a long time due to the inability of the parents to provide an avenue for honest-to-goodness dialogue.

Since, there is hardly, if at all, a built-in intra-family system of accountability, parental authority can serve as a shield to hide the truth from the children. The passive acceptance of authority, lack of freedom of expression and denial of the truth may determine the Filipino child's attitude towards the civil authority to the detriment of justice.⁶⁶ The repressive rule during martial law which lasted for more than twenty years owed partly but significantly to the tendency of the Filipinos to acquiesce to civil authority without question.⁶⁷

Double Standard in the Family: The third major issue raised vis-à-vis the Filipino family is in the area of husband-wife relationship. Feminist studies in the country take a decidedly critical position on this⁶⁸ contrary to many emic studies done by local socio-

⁶⁴Keen observers claim that Filipinos are not law breakers by nature. When they are in foreign lands they can be as law-abiding as any citizen of that country is. Poor and lax enforcement of the laws emboldens the Filipinos to circumvent them.

⁶⁵Ramirez, "The Paradox of the Filipino Family," 25-26.

⁶⁶Ruben M. Tanseco, "The Role of the Family in the Struggle for Justice and Peace," in *The Family for Justice*, Makati: Salesiana Publishers, 1985, 12-14.

⁶⁷Tantuanco, "The Role of the Family," 12.

⁶⁸See for example Sr. Mary John Mananzan, ed., *Essays on Women*, rev. ed., Women's Study Series 1, Manila: The Institute of Women's Studies, St Scholastica's College, 1989. Linda Woodhead makes a blanket claim that feminism "is not

anthropologist. Influenced in large measure by the feminist movement originating from the West,⁶⁹ these studies approach the subject of conjugal relationship not from a phenomenological but from a purportedly biased viewpoint. They make use of a pre-existing theoretical framework with its own underlying sociological assumptions like the dichotomous socio-economic spheres or the public-private split to judge societies and families in particular.⁷⁰ Their methodology may be circumscribed by a prejudiced ideological position⁷¹ which undermines phenomenological surprises but these studies using a historical-dialectical framework serve to offer a nuanced view challenging self-sufficing familial traditional practices and arrangements. In a world that is constantly changing at an unprecedented rapid pace, it would be well to listen respectfully to the women's voices.

Despite the Western origination of the feminist perspective, there are feminists who recognize the specific conditions peculiar to the Filipino setting which must be taken into account. Delia Aguilar, for instance, believes that

(d)istinct as it is from the public arena where structures of power validating male superiority are erected, the domestic sphere in the Philippines is neither as isolated nor as privatized as that prime target of Western feminist critique: the white, middle-class family of North America and Europe in general."⁷²

notorious for championing the family. Indeed, amongst the barrage of attacks on the family which have been launched since the mid 1960s, the feminist critique stands out as one of the most powerful" (Linda Woodhead, "Faith, Feminism and the Family," in *The Family*, ed., Lisa Sowle Cahill and Dietmar Mieth, Concilium 4 (London: SCM Press; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995) 44).

⁶⁹Women's oppression or sexism is considered by the feminists as a universal system which is embedded in various cultures and socio-economic levels. For them it is as much an issue in the Second and Third World as in the First World countries (Rosemary Radford Ruether, "A Feminist Perspective," in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, ed., Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985, 65).

⁷⁰Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Home and Work: Women's Roles and the Transformation of Values," *Theological Studies* 36, 4 (December 1975) 647.

⁷¹See Delia Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, ed., Marjorie Evasco, Manila: St Scholastica's College and Delia Aguilar & the Institute of Women's Studies, 1991, which admits of a non-neutral Marxist interpretative framework.

⁷²Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 157; also George M. Guthrie, *The Psychology of Modernization in the Rural Philippines*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1971, 37.

This owes to what sociologists describe as

the “kincentric nature of Philippine society,” the family being a “centripetal” force that serves to channel inclinations toward self-centeredness into the enigma of a “social or family individualism.” Cast in terms favored by mainstream thought, the Filipino family is depicted in the transitional phase between “traditionalism and modernization,” with secure ties to biological and ritual kin expanding the range of its nuclear circumference. Consequently, when adversity befalls a family, its impact is softened by the absorbing shield of a network of support wider than that in the West.⁷³

She challenges, however, what she describes as “mystifying concepts devised by social scientists to describe women’s estate.”⁷⁴ There is no truth to the claim that the epithet, “household manager,” awards the women with any degree of influence in the conduct and management of the home. On the contrary there is a clear-cut sexual division of labour serving as the spatial framework of relational operations in the household.⁷⁵ The gender-particularized household division of labour presupposes masculine power and social control of women. For poor women in particular the problem of poverty exacerbates the unequal situation since routine household tasks are intertwined with making both ends meet. Housekeeping is not merely housekeeping but having to cope with adversity while struggling to keep the family financially afloat if only to maintain the prescribed cultural ideal of a good wife. Gender and class then combine to form “tightly interlocking sources of oppression.”⁷⁶

Among the women living in material comforts subservience rears its ugly head in the form of rendering self-abnegating service like accepting her husband’s philandering, washing his car, spoon feeding him, and so on. They can afford to hire two or more maids in whose care menial chores can be entrusted “but only at a high risk of contradicting ideological mandates and damaging (their) self-esteem.”⁷⁷ Thus they would rather not quibble as their emotions attuned to social mores are restrained by pragmatic considerations like avoiding quarrels with their husbands. All these are part of the

⁷³Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 157.

⁷⁴Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 159.

⁷⁵Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 159.

⁷⁶Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 160.

⁷⁷Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 161.

“ideology of womanly self-sacrifice that is the natural adjunct of coping and caring, it is in actuality mere conformity to a highly-prized behavioral model.”⁷⁸

The ideology of self-sacrifice extends as well to the culturally constructed maternal responsibility of the mother: child-bearing and child-care.⁷⁹ This domestic mystification is served by the lack of access to medical facilities and to technology needed to support the woman’s control of their reproduction. This is compounded by religious prohibitions so that the reproductive ordeals women undergo “endow motherhood and children with a biological visage whose apparent normalcy can prove resistant to change.”⁸⁰ The ideology is supported by an essentialist doctrine which views children as ‘gifts from God’ – a doctrine which submerges its deepest and firmest roots in motherhood.⁸¹ Mothers are willing to be martyrs for the sake of the right upbringing of the children. This has to be done not only because children are divine gifts but they offer as well a promise of security in old age.⁸² The ideology of ‘maternal altruism’ is deeply ingrained in a variety of practices associated with adequate maternal care like nursing and physical closeness, including putting children in one’s bed, personally tending to them when they are sick, and refusing to consign their care to maids. These practices “are

⁷⁸Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 161.

⁷⁹Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 163-169.

⁸⁰Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 165. Carolyn Israel-Sobritchea calls this the “ideology of female nature” which privileges female reproductive role at the expense of the woman’s right to decide (Israel-Sobritchea, “Gender Inequality and Its Supporting Ideologies,” in *And She Said No! Human Rights, Women’s Identities and Struggles*, ed., Liberato Bautista and Elizabeth Rifareal, Quezon City: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Program Unit on Human Rights, 1990, 12-15).

⁸¹Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 164.

⁸²The symbolic significance of the Filipino child, however, does not bear any resemblance with that in the capitalist West dominated by a highly individualistic mind-set. In a capitalist context parents are impelled to regard their children as extensions of themselves from whom they exact the emotional price of attaining unconsummated ambitions and mending broken dreams. On the other hand, Filipino children symbolize the continuation of the community and repository of customs and traditions as well as of a more collective memory of the family and clan. In the diffused individualism of the family-centred Filipino society where children are raised in a larger network than the family of procreation and “where the walls of the home are figuratively expanded,” the ‘tyranny of motherhood’ (Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 181), pervasive in the West is accorded “infinitely less psychological space in which to fester” (Page, 168).

assimilated into the syntax of everyday discourse”⁸³ in which women are viewed as feminine objects. The wives even tolerate physical abuse of their husbands for the sake of the children. Data show that when it comes to domestic violence, women, not men are usually the victims.⁸⁴ The violence is on the surface physical but deep down “its existence rests upon the continued subordination of women and the reinforcement of women’s secondary place in society... a violence that attacks the dignity of women as individuals and as a group because it stems from a patriarchal system that refuses the rightful place of women as equal partners and is made manifest in the people around them.”⁸⁵

The feminist position as that espoused by Aguilar puts in a dialectical element into the gender discourse in the country. Seen positively the feminist anti-thesis serves to foster that kind of consciousness among Filipino wives not to be resigned to situations where their husbands place themselves in an absolutely superior position without impunity.⁸⁶ Victims of domestic violence, for instance, have benefited immensely from the services being offered by feminist-oriented groups and organizations. It will be well for socio-anthropological functional studies which emphasize egalitarian elements in the domestic setting to pay attention to the insights of the feminist position.⁸⁷

⁸³Aguilar, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, 166.

⁸⁴See UP Centre of Women’s Studies Foundation, “The Many Faces of Violence: Abusers and Abusive Relationships in Filipino Families” (An Abridged Report. 1999), 7. Women comprise ninety-eight percent of the cases obtained and documented from the files of government and non-government agencies, hospitals, shelters, and transition houses for women and children.

⁸⁵Christine Crisol, “Gender and Social Transformation,” *Philippine Sociological Review* 49, 1-2 (2001) 108.

⁸⁶Cf. Ramirez, “The Paradox of the Filipino Family,” 26-30. The author describes the Filipino family as “double-faced” due to the reality of both egalitarian elements and male-favoured double-standard morality that characterizes many a family.

⁸⁷See for example Robert Fox, “Filipino Family and Kinship,” in *Philippine Quarterly* 2, 1 (1961) 6-9; S.H. Guerrero, “Decision-Making Among Farm Families in a Philippine Barrio,” (M.S. thesis, College of Agriculture, University of the Philippines, 1966); Emma Porio, Frank Lynch and Mary R. Hollnsteiner, “The Filipino Family, Community and Nation: The Same Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow?,” Ateneo de Manila University Institute of Philippine Culture, 1975; Gelia T. Castillo, *The Filipino Woman as Manpower: The Image and the Empirical Reality*, University of the Philippines at Los Baños College, Laguna, 1976; Paz Policarpio Mendez, F. Landa Jocano, Realidad Santico, and Salvacion Bautista Matela, *The Family in Transition: A Study in*

Challenges to the Church of the Home

The above sociological portrayal, albeit partial, of the Filipino family, reveals a family character with positive relational values that can be retrieved and harnessed to bring about needed communal and societal change. In religious parlance they represent, as it were, traces of divine presence in the culture and society. These are core values that, if properly and consistently inculcated in different settings: family, school, business, politics can withstand the winds of change towards the direction of a much morally better Filipino nation. I am not claiming here that the mere reliance on attitudinal virtues are a panacea to the country's ills. This must be complemented by appropriate structural reforms in the field of economics, bureaucracy and politics. On the other hand, alterations in economic and political structures even with the best of intentions will come to naught without accompanying attitudinal renewal and support both on the individual and collective level.

If the Filipino family is not only Filipino but Christian then it should allow itself to be permeated by the Spirit of Jesus. For, the person of Jesus Christ lies precisely at the heart of the Church.⁸⁸ The Christ whose life and self-sacrificial love paved the way for the historical emergence of "a new community, a family of faith born in the Spirit" – the same Spirit whom Jesus 'hands on' to the Church, thus "a new creation, God's 'household'."⁸⁹ In the theological and praxical configuration of the family church-in-progress culture does not have the final word. Blessed as it is with life-giving elements the believing Filipino family must stand in judgment before the normative tradition of the Word of God and expose itself continually

Culture and Education, Manila: Research and Development Center, Centro Escolar University, 1984; Mary Lou Alcid, "Women and Their Status," *Philippine Population Literature* (1984), *An Annotated Bibliography*, Population Center Foundation, 1986; Fely P. David, "Family Planning and Decision-Making Among Families in Three Municipalities in Iloilo Province: A Qualitative Study," Social Science Research Institute, Central Philippine University, 1993; Fely P. David, "The Roles of Husbands and Wives in Household Decision-Making," *Philippine Sociological Review* 42, 1-4 (January-December 1994) 78-93. Ramirez writes that the husband-wife equality in the country is "a unique phenomenon in Asia," Ramirez, *Understanding Philippine Social Realities*, 40.

⁸⁸Joseph C. Atkinson, "Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory, Legitimacy, and Problems of Appropriation," *Theological Studies* 66, 3 (September 2005) 603.

⁸⁹FABC VIII n. 60..

to the affirming, cleansing and empowering operation of the Spirit. This is so because every people-made cultural system contains not only life-giving but death-dealing elements. The Filipino family is no exception as portrayed above. Hence, from merely a cultural entity it is called upon to metamorphose into the new family of Jesus yet profoundly Filipino faith-inspired, guided and confirmed by the Spirit.

The gospel vision of the new family of Jesus challenges the Filipino homes to free themselves from the shackles of social individualism, authoritarianism and patriarchalism. The discipleship of equals must summon the prophetic energy of Christians to expunge these self-serving and de-humanizing aspects of the familial system. Here the Gospel's dangerous memory of the countercultural Jesus, on the one hand, must be rediscovered and brought to bear on the pathologically skewed relational features of the native kinship system.⁹⁰ Familial provincialism, on the other hand, must be replaced by an inclusive solidarity which embraces all as brothers and sisters.⁹¹

A dialogical relationship ought to be fostered between and among parents and children and other members of the household. In Jesus' new family all are equal in dignity and responsibility by virtue of baptism. The cultural family system of hierarchy based on authority and seniority is relativized in the Christian household. In the most basic nuclear family form parents/guardians remain parents/guardians and children remain children but each of them Christians try to work out their domestic roles within the new context of relationship where authority becomes subordinate to the baptismal value of equality *en Cristo*.⁹²

Alluding in particular to the nuclear family form John Paul II himself underlined "the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men"⁹³ even as he explained that equality "is realized in a unique manner in that reciprocal self-giving by each one to the other and by both to the children which is proper to marriage and the family."⁹⁴ Far from being a cultural superstructure of patriarchal ideology that the 'households of God' in the post-Gospel pastoral

⁹⁰See Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Christianity's Dangerous Memory: A Rediscovery of the Revolutionary Jesus*, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2012; also Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1999, 143-152, 163-171.

⁹¹See Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, 73-82.

⁹²See Gal. 3:28.

⁹³John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22.

⁹⁴John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22.

Greco-Roman communities of faith were seen to represent, the family model takes a stand against the kind of unity that is not grounded on the Gospel vision of discipleship of equals.⁹⁵ In the context of Filipino contemporary experience, however, the relatively egalitarian character of the family is negated in numerous cases by the high incidence rate of domestic violence perpetrated by men influenced by the society's double-standard morality. The task of making the principle of gender equality truly operative in Filipino domestic homes remains an ongoing challenge for the domestic churches so that it progressively becomes "a sphere of relative gender equality."⁹⁶

⁹⁵Julie Janlon Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family*, New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2003, 50-54; Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Equality in Marriage: The Biblical Challenge," in *Marriage in the Catholic Tradition: Scripture, Tradition and Experience*, 66-75; Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002; Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, trans. O.C. Dean, Jr., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, 378-388; Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Woman in the World of Jesus*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978, 102-125.

⁹⁶Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, 85.