

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY – 2004

As I was preparing for my usual article for our magazine I felt that it would also be wise to have a look at some of the things that are taking place in our country during the course of this year. I therefore took the liberty of looking at the international calendar for all countries in the world and noted that this year has been declared the international year of the family.

State welfare and other departments are now planning programmes aimed at the family. It is therefore only natural to ask what does the church offer regarding families. Here I must first of all point out that a family is not just a husband and a wife. A family extends to children as well as to grand parents, as well as uncles, aunts and cousins.

Today the family as a concept has been ripped apart by the pressure of demands from a world that seeks to drain every bit of strength and time from family relationships. It is the family that is under attack and it is the Church that must find solutions and strategies to counter this satanic onslaught.

Here I must challenge all parents and point out that the matter of parenting in a family is not something that we can get from a quick read book. Parenting skills are skills that we need to learn, as well as apply to our family relationships.

I guess we need to go back and revisit Ephesians 5 – 6 and closely examine these chapters. In looking at children we need to accept that they are children and expect them to act as children. As recently as the early part of March 2004 I had to attend a two-day meeting dealing with the rights of children. It was at that meeting that I stated that, as a child was not aware of anything called the rights of a child and as any other child of that period I was engrossed in being a child and living as a child.

Today children are faced with expectations and responsibilities that we never had as children. It is possible to say that as a result of the failure of adults to realize their responsibilities to children, children are now expected to act as little adults. Gone are the days of hide and seek or playing “stinger” or “catches”, now children are expected to state what they feel about their rights to, a name, shelter, basic education, health and social services, privacy, self respect and dignity.

Recently a survey was published showing that child abuse cases have increased from 499 cases a year to over 1500 cases a year and still increasing. Just imagine that the majority of these cases are attributed to a mother or a father. Parents are so caught up in making money or just surviving the “rat race” that they no longer have time to love and nurture their children. We need to develop listening skills and listen to our children as well as be patient with our children. Do not try to second-guess your child. Give your child a chance to make a statement without any interruption from you as an adult.

Another basic concept that has somehow vanished is the one of a family providing a foundation with good solid moral and social values. We are quick to call things a sin (and

whilst you may be right') you fail to explain why it is a sin and provide a reasonable explanation. So often when I have been on house visitation I have heard people say that something is wrong because the pastor said so. It is true that the pastor should provide a good example in teaching and guidance but at no time should the pastor be considered as the reason as to whether a thing is right or wrong. Parents must provide the moral standards for children. If parents neglect their responsibility then do not be surprised if a child will take the example of another child or even a teacher and possibly develop a standard that is entirely foreign to the one you hold.

Unfortunately, we as parents, and adults in general have also forgotten that we are social creatures. A quick glance at 1 Corinthians 12 will reveal that Paul speaks of us as being members of a body and that we are mutually dependent on each other. It seems as if we are so concerned with our privacy and close friends that we have neglected the broader society in which we live.

Jesus in Matthew 28:19 –20 as well as Acts 1:8 has made reference to the world at large. The Church needs to be relevant to the world that it is ministering to. We cannot expect to continue dealing with new issues in old ways. Our thinking process must undergo a paradigm shift and we need to encourage our children to get involved with projects that impact on the lives of people in the community.

As we start to show genuine compassion and care for people we will find that people will turn to us for help and spiritual direction. Deny children exposure to the needs of the people in the community and we are building a generation of people who will be insensitive to the pain and suffering that we all must face.

Finally I do believe that we need to realize that the continued strength of a family is based on our respect for each other in the family context. Here, I must point out that we need to promote human dignity and self esteem. There have been times when we have clung to the concept " children must be seen and not heard", and it is time for us to confess that this is a most unreasonable expectation placed on children.

Expect children to be children and parents please be a positive example of what a wholesome man and woman should be in Christ Jesus.

CHILD PROTECTION WEEK 24 MAY – 1 JUNE 2004

Dear friends I am sure that you have been horrified by the increase in child abuse cases that have been reported in the media. You can make a difference by playing a part as local churches or individuals in programmes geared to address child abuse. Please make contact with your nearest office of the Department of Social Development and ask them to give you pointers as to how you can make a difference in the lives of children who have been so brutally maligned.

OPERATION WINTER HOPE 2004.

Winter is around the corner and there are millions of people in all communities who will be faced with the terrible cold. I need assemblies to inform me as to :

1. Whether they wish to be a part of this interdenominational effort by either making their church a place to collect food, clothes and blankets, or are in need of food, clothes and blankets to distribute.
2. Your contact details so that your assembly can be included in newspapers as a participating church.

I would appreciate it if all assemblies in all our provinces will participate so that the Church of Jesus can make a major impact in helping others. Let us not become weary in well doing.